

**Manifesto Drawing:
Embodied Cynicism, Political Cartooning and Drawing-Based Practices
in Extended Encounter.**

An exegesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Author's 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 thesis 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.

Greg Creek

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Project Abstract

This practice-led research project explores correspondences between political cartooning and drawing-based practices in contemporary art that embody cynical attitudinal gestures towards everyday political institutions, figures or discourses.

I examine how art expresses political critique through modes of embodied gesture in the studio, which lead to grotesque depictions of the body in art works and extended encounters with the viewer in exhibitions. The outcome has been several bodies of artworks conceived in series, all engaged with graphic processes on paper, existing as artefacts of studio practice or as installed exhibitions of wall works, table-based assemblages and architectural-scaled constructions.

The aim of the project has been to research such critical modes within an extended field of drawing practice, firstly as the basis for a sardonic response to contemporary politics in and of itself and secondly, as a research method that suggests areas of new enquiry in the field of Australian political cartoon studies.

This research is compelled by the concept of 'grotesque method' that Mikhail Bakhtin develops in relation to medieval parody in *Rabelais and His World* (1968). Bakhtin argues cyclical processes of cynical degradation and scatological bodily expression lead to generative renewal and new meanings within societies. Political cartoons by contemporary Australian cartoonists such as Bruce Petty, David Rowe and Alan Moir published during the period of research along with historical precursors such as James Gillray and contemporary art works by artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Leon Golub and Hans Haacke are examined to realise my aim that such processes materialised in my art practice and employed within an extended field of drawing, manifest an expression of cynicism relevant to debates surrounding political cynicism and its propagation by political cartoons.

The study is informed by critics and theorists Hal Foster, Peter Sloterdijk, Thomas McEvilley and Kendall Walton in relation to the cynical and attitudinal gesture in contemporary art; Benjamin Buchloh, Ernst Van Alphen and Geoffrey Galt Harpham in relation to concepts of the grotesque body re-composited and dispersed; and Elisabeth Bronfen, Doreen Massey and Cornelia H. Butler & Catherine de Zegher in relation to the extended field of drawing and space & time as dimensions of critical meaning.

A general understanding of the historical and contemporary functioning of political cartoons as graphic discourse are based in the satirical categories of Charles Press, notions of the non-ideal developed by Vic Gatrell and the defecatory by Claude Gandelman. Specific themes concerning political cynicism in Australia and its propagation by political cartoons are framed by Michael Hogan and Haydon Manning & Robert Phiddian.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH CONTEXTS, PROJECT OVERVIEW & AIMS

Political cartooning and contemporary drawing practices are modes of expression that may critically reflect on everyday political institutions, figures or discourses. While post-war avant-garde art has questioned its capacity to effect change through political critique (Hughes, 1981; Bürger, 1984), political cartooning has continued much as it has since the 18th century - striking its targets savagely. Political cartooning has provided a direct example of political critique, humour and everyday relevance that art has sometimes sought to co-opt. There is a certain populism about cartooning that art envies. This project has sought to explore that sense of embodied indignation in its creative dialogue between art and cartooning.

The cultural and theoretical imperative for this research is the articulation of a reinvigorated engagement between subject and society, or, in what theorist Hal Foster has described as a desire to break with the 'aesthetic of cynical reason' of the 1970s and 1980s, a return to the figure of the politicised 'engagé', adding that these tendencies mark a 'turn to the bodily and the social' (Foster, 1996: 124). Both cartooning and drawing practices may address the fine grain of local reference and offer means of expression of personal indignation and a timely response to social events occurring within the moments of research. They traverse a line between interior and public address and ultimately, in spite of their participation in mass media and popular culture, as one individual's communication with another. Political critique is well located at the level of the local and embodied.

Correspondences between cartooning and drawing practice offer a mode of material and psychological encounter that can engage the moral responsibility for the actions of those who represent us. I believe that in the absence of relevant theological and mythological symbols, public figures like celebrities, sportspeople and politicians fulfil a surrogate role for us through the media. In Western democracies with a parliamentary political system like Australia the popular media often encourages the public to identify the foibles, wishes, ideals, failures and corruptions of politicians in a personal way (Nelson, 1998).

For this project I have emphasised drawing processes within an extended encounter with the viewer to broaden the idea of drawing-as-art-object to account for the trace of the artist as an artefact of a performed gesture in place and time. Accordingly, this project has a focus on the body, space as a dimension of the social and time as a dimension of change.

This research follows previous scholarship in political cartooning ranging across historical surveys and curated exhibitions (Kayser, 2009; King, 1976; Lindesay, 1979), scholarship that places cartoons in a social context as a 'snapshot' of the political climate at a given time (Coleman, 1978; Fabian, 1982; Mahood, 1973; Stone, 1973) and annual publications of 'best of' compilations (Colgan, 2010; Hansen, 2010; Kayser, 2009; Radcliffe, 2010). Contemporary research increasingly relates political cartoons to specific issues like gender politics (Christiansen, 1992), censorship

(Manning & Phiddian, 2004) and notions of national identity (Clabburn, 1997). Pertinent to this study are the controversies surrounding political cynicism in the general population and its propagation by political cartoons (Bean, 1993; Hogan, 2001; Decker, 2005). Some investigations are concerned with the impact of cynicism upon the electorate's behaviour (Goot, 1999) while others are concerned with cartooning's critique of cynicism generated by politicians themselves (Manning & Phiddian, 2000). Anna Day from the Department of Journalism of the University of Queensland, has written broadly on political cartoons and cartoonists in Australia in relation to their US contemporaries, and has noted links between a cynical tradition of *larrikanism* and a negative depiction of politicians (Day, 2000: 97-99).

In debates about cynicism and politics it is often the role of contemporary media that is prosecuted (Dekker, 2005; McNair, 1998; Schyns, 2005). In their study of voter apathy, broadcast media and the public good in the United States, *Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good* (1997), Joseph Cappella and Kathleen Jamieson claim the media reduces politics to a *game* (Cappella, 1997: 166). Such media-induced cynicism encompasses an historical dimension by which, firstly, since the Second World War, public broadcasting is 'compromised' by organised parties exercising a 'dynamic political will to control the new means of communication.' (Burgelman, 2000: 57). This is often characterised as the politics of 'spin' (Grattan, 1998). And secondly, media's role as a purveyor of news information and editorial opinion is usurped by the entertainment industries.

The media treats politics like a national sport, spotlighting scandals, telling the nation who "won" this week, and reducing political analysis to the thumbs up-thumbs down style used by movie critics. The result is that, so far as the media is concerned, politics has become an extension of the entertainment industry (Avram, 1999).

In his analysis of American political cartooning Roger Fisher states,

By its very nature, political cartoon art in a democratic society has been one of the purest artefacts of popular culture, seeking to influence public opinion through its use of widely and instantly understood symbols, slogans, referents, and allusions. The artist must exploit conventions in fundamental harmony with the 'cultural literacy' of the public... (Fisher, 1996, p2).

Fisher's note equally describes the remit of this project in which I have sought to research a form of 'artist's critique' (Chiapello, 2004). This is not ideologically driven but is guided by a creative engagement – in this case with art and political cartooning that allows flexibility, responsiveness, public access and a sense of social dialogue.

The project exegesis will closely build upon the foundations of research into Australian political cartoons and cynical attitudes established by Michael Hogan, Research Associate of Government

and International Relations at the University of Sydney and Flinders University academics Haydon Manning & Robert Phiddian who research political satire, parody, and humour in Australian politics at both state and national levels. Their trilogy of essays published between 2000 and 2004 provided the analytical stimulus for the examination of cynical gesture in cartooning and art.

Cynicism, grotesque

The embodiment of cynicism is a central concern of this project. The Oxford English Dictionary Online characterises cynicism as a type of *skepticism*, like the 'public cynicism about politics'. A *cynic* is a person who 'questions whether something will happen or whether it is worthwhile'. Being *sardonic*, is 'grimly mocking or cynical' ("New Oxford American Dictionary," 2010). Cynicism is seen as both a retreat from the world and as a perversion of its ideals (Eiguer, 1999; Stanley, 2007). At its most direct cynicism refers here to critically skeptical attitudes towards politicians, their political institutions and ideologies.

In his *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1987), German cultural theorist Peter Sloterdijk shapes cynicism as the dominant operating mode in contemporary culture, both on the personal and institutional levels, and suggests reviving the tradition of kynicism [*kynismos*] as a counterstrategy. Kynical critique is embodied antidote to the false consciousness of cynical reason embracing action, laughter and silence. It is 'a subversive variant of low theory that pantomimically and grotesquely carries practical embodiment to an extreme' (Sloterdijk, 1987: 102). Sloterdijk nominates as chief among its proponents the Greek cynic Diogenes of Sinope, 'the first in the tradition of satirical resistance' (Sloterdijk, 1987: 151), whose pissing before the eyes of the Athenian market makes of cheekiness a political response.¹ Kynicism, according to Sloterdijk, lies within a 'tradition of satire in which the freedoms of art, the carnival, and criticism combine' (Sloterdijk, 1987, p290), a reference to Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas of grotesque method and cynicism. Bakhtin frames cynicism as an essential phase of the cycle of regenerative meanings available in contemporary art and cartooning engaged in critical commentary about politics (Bakhtin, 1984).

I want to briefly introduce here two political cartoons; both from the mid 1960s. The first is by well-known editorial cartoonist who worked for the *Melbourne Herald*, John Firth. The other is an anonymous cartoon from Monash University student magazine *Lot's Wife* [see figures 1.1 and 1.2].

¹ Diogenes of Sinope famously demands of Alexander the Great to 'stop blocking his sun'. An anecdote has Alexander say that he would like to be Diogenes if he were not Alexander (Sloterdijk, 1987: 160).



Figure 1.1. John Firth *The End of the Joust*, *The Herald*, January 1966

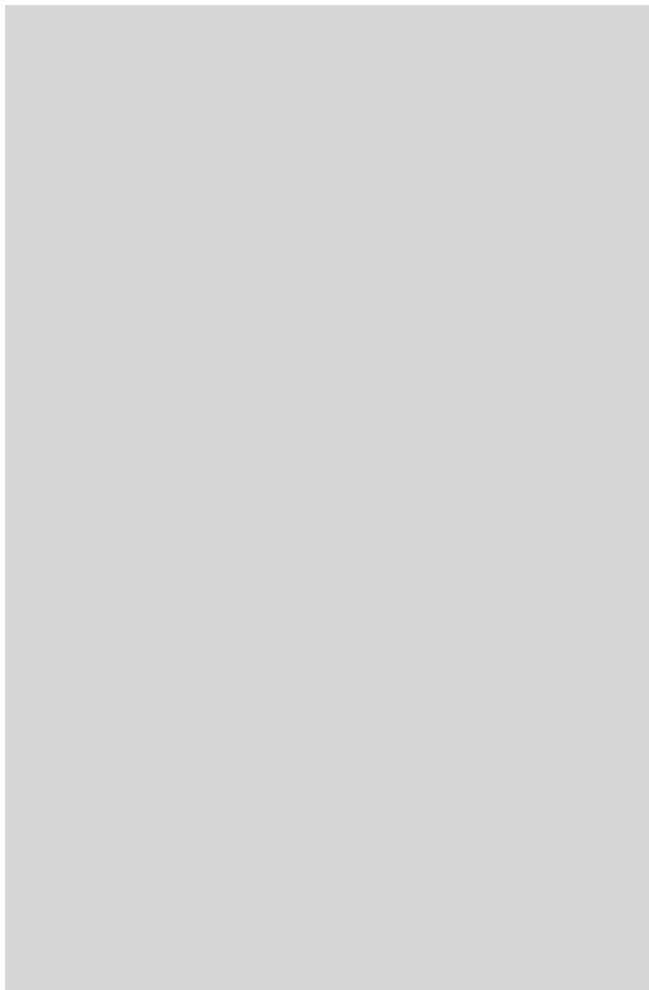


Figure 1.2. Anonymous student cartoon, *Lots Wife*, July 1965

Both cartoons refer to the ending of Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies' period in power and iconologically² represent him as a recipient of the knightly honour "Order of the Thistle" bestowed upon him by Queen Elizabeth II in 1963. In each he bears the symbols of royal patronage; the plumed headwear, sceptres and chivalric vestments. But something is different - in Firth's cartoon, the clean graphic idiom bestows an attitude of respect while the student cartoon has a peculiarly negative tone. Sure, there is caricatural play of physiognomies, and in the *Herald* Menzies' status is ambivalently enhanced by the rearing charger while in *Lot's Wife* there is the re-deployed chamber pot. But somehow the second cartoon has a certain... well, decrepit aura about it that goes beyond ironic symbols or a comedic small hat. In the student drawing there is something of the cynical attitude mixed with the bodily grotesque; it is those little flecks of ink that flutter about Menzies' face like a fly-blown crusty eczema and the opened-out jacket with pot belly.

Professor of Modern Art History at the University of Missouri, Frances Connelly writes in *Modern Art and the Grotesque* (2003) there are three actions or processes at work in the grotesque image: actions that are both destructive and constructive;

- those that combine unlike things in order to challenge established realities or construct new ones
- those that deform or decompose things
- those that are metamorphic (Connelly, 2003: 2).

The bursting out of clothes as evidenced by the student drawing of Menzies above epitomises Mikhail Bakhtin's popular imagery of the grotesque body. 'Contrary to the classic images of the finished, completed man', Bakhtin writes, the grotesque body is always unfinished, emphasizing apertures and convexities; there is 'growth which exceeds its own limits', an 'unfinished and open body (dying, bringing forth and being born)' that compresses into a single image both death and regeneration (Bakhtin, 1984: 25-27). The student's Menzies becomes grotesque (and so critical) compared to the Firth because of the deformation of both the rules of depiction and those of etiquette: Menzies is a decomposing, combinatory creature whose bodily state becomes a metaphor for the passing of his own era.³

Connelly has explained that a critical feature of the grotesque's relationship with both the beautiful and the sublime is its 'struggle with boundaries' (Connelly, 2003: 5). This project seeks to identify, research and exploit such implicitly critical grotesque methods through art practice and its boundaries of encounter with the viewer.

In Australian political cartooning no artist has depicted this relationship with such embodied boundaries as cynically as Larry Pickering [see figure 1.3i-ii].

² *Iconology* is the study of visual imagery and its symbolism especially in social or political terms ("New Oxford American Dictionary," 2010).

³ Compare this with the work of contemporary artists like Mike Kelley who employ very similar strategies [see figure 1.9].

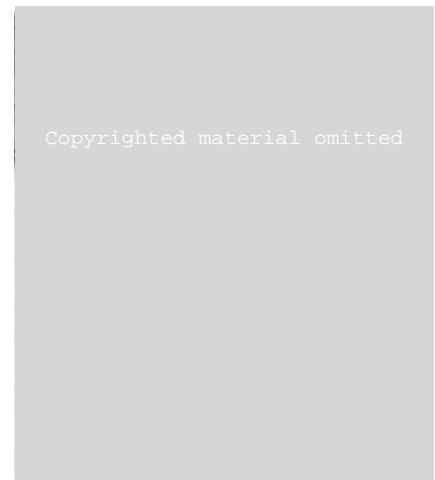


Figure 1.3i-ii. Larry Pickering, *1983 calendar* (1983) and detail.

In this project my work synthesises the pictorial traditions of graphic cynicism and the grotesque into a method that encompasses extended gesture, materiality and the space of the viewer as a way to contribute to the research field and to add to its array of critical strategies.

Drawing Extended

From the outset I want to define drawing as a diversity of gestures and marks expressed in materials and media of various duration that range across depictions and diagrams to written texts and delineations in real space and time. This includes and encompasses modes of cartooning and their publication as printed matter. Patrick Maynard in *Drawing Distinctions: The varieties of graphic expression* (2005) introduces drawing as a broad group of propositional, denotational and connotational practices including illustration, writing, cartoon and decoration. He states, 'drawing is an efficient way of allowing our slower integrative perceptual processes to work' (Maynard, 2005: xxii).

Drawing as both noun and verb supplies a methodological framework for action research and its outcomes. It is also an acknowledgement of the nature of my practice from which this project arises and it is a framing of drawing within what has been termed an 'extended field' (Butler & de Zegher,

2010: 68).⁴ I use their term *extended* but recognise its relation to the phrase *expanded field*, originally coined by Rosalind Krauss in her important essay on sculpture and spatial practices of the late 1960s, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979). The concept of the expanded field in relation to drawing is consistently employed by Bernice Rose, from 1976 curator in the Department of Drawings at the Museum of Modern Art, New York who, writing in the second of her important surveys, *Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing* (1992) states, 'a new language of the visual arts has thus emerged in the last two decades based on an expanded field of operations for each of its disciplines' (Rose, 1992: 11). Beginning with Rose's earlier 1976 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Drawing Now* (1976) the last three decades have seen a proliferation of exhibitions and literature examining drawing practice from extended perspectives, including Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York John Elderfield's important re-appraisal of drawing over a 100 year span, *The Modern Drawing, 100 Works on paper from the Museum of Modern Art* (1983), philosopher Jacques Derrida's re-viewing of historical works from the collection of the Louvre Museum in Paris seen from a contemporary perspective, *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993), curator and writer Laura Hoptman's focus upon the wall drawings, site-specific installations, and series work of young artists from Europe, Asia and the Americas, *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions* (2002) and The Drawing Centre, New York presentation of *Pathways: Drawing In, On, and Through the Landscape* (2011) documenting through film drawing practices engaged with public, private, urban and natural landscapes.

In this project the term *extended* readily refers to both time and space. I have emphasised in this project the ways in which drawing into space and time underpins the viewer's encounter with artwork in exhibition. Butler & de Zegher, cite American artist Avis Newman (UK, 1946) as characterising the conceptual space of drawing as,

an encounter with the materialisation of the continually mutable process, the movement, rhythms, partially comprehended ruminations of the mind: the operations of thought. In that domain the work becomes a process of enunciation (Butler & de Zegher, 2010: 109).

Manifesto Drawing

A manifesto is a public declaration of policy and aims ("New Oxford American Dictionary," 2010). It originates in the mid 17th century from the Italian *manifestare*, from Latin, 'make public,' from *manifestus* 'obvious'. It is both didactic and a call to action.

At the genesis of this project as I reflected upon drawing practice and politics I instinctively thought of *political cartoons*. As a child I was fascinated by them, their everydayness and direct graphic

⁴ Cornelia Butler and Catherine de Zegher in *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century* (2010), survey the emergence of drawing practices from 1960 - 2010, 'as a field coextensive with real space, no longer outlining an illusion marked off from the world' (Butler & de Zegher, Butler, 2010: 68).

presence. I collected caricatures of Australian politicians and gathered them in books [see figure 1.3].



Figure 1.3. Greg Creek, *John Spooner's Mal Fraser image in Magic with Science*, 1974, cartoon collection

As research however, I thought about how drawing both represents and manifests meanings and how the manifesto statement can be declarative and sardonic. This became the focus for this project. The manifesto *function* and *drawing* links studio processes and the audience for art. Gregory Ulmer in *Heuristics: The Logic of Invention*, (1994) suggests the idea of *manifesto* can be construed as a studio research methodology, one that lays out a 'program of experimentation' (Ulmer, 1994, pxiii). I would expand this to include notions of play, humour and irreverence.

The title of this project, *Manifesto Drawing* suggests the act of mark-making can be a gesture *and* contain political content. It alludes to a discourse on politics and visual art. It also represents the challenge and scope of this research project, addressed by three research questions;

The first asks: How does embodied cynicism correspond in art and political cartooning? This is an enquiry into creative practice and studio method.

The second asks: How can critical responses to everyday politics be enacted through an Extended Encounter with drawing? This an enquiry through contemporary art into the possibilities of exhibition practice and encounter with the viewer.

The third asks: What new knowledge can art practice reveal about cynicism and gesture in political cartoons? This is an enquiry into ways by which political cartooning activates its relationship with its viewers.

Political Cartooning

Political cartoons are a specific type of visual communication, which focus upon the field of politics. They generally, but not always, appear in News Media, Trades Union or student publications (bearing an attitude that ranges from the *descriptive to the destructive* (Press, 1981: 75). Usually they communicate a tone of irony and skepticism aligned with commentary upon events from the daily news cycle in modern politics, of which they themselves are sometimes a part.

Political cartoons are occasionally referred to as 'editorial cartoons', a recognition of their professional employment in the newspaper industry, usually in the 'editorial' pages. Outside of the newspaper industry, 'editorial' is redundant and hereafter usage of 'political cartoons' or 'political cartooning', 'political cartoonists' will refer to the form, activity and authors of graphic satirical works unless otherwise noted. Historically, political cartoons, in the form of individual prints, predate newspapers (Gatrell, 2006: 9).

Political cartoons can be distinguished from other types of cartoons and comics although they share much of the same formal language. Comics and cartoons in general address alternative subjects, have a different range of outlets, are found in a much broader range of types and forms and use metaphor, narrative techniques and graphic styles in different ways. They do not, per se, focus upon the field of politics. A large body of literature addresses the history and workings of this broader field of cartoons and comics (Bergson, 2005; Eco, 1984; E. H. Gombrich, 1963; Groensteen, 2000; Koestler, 1975; McCloud, 1994).

Political cartoons are composed mainly from three elements: figure, text and context. The figure is a politician or subject personified, often through caricature. Text is used in the form of speech bubbles, captions, labels and titles. The context is both pictorial (reproduced marks, grounds, depictions both symbolic and illustrative, compositional effects and the stylistic attitude of the cartoonist) and conceptual (referring to a current event, set of ideas or people). The context is also at times the physical materiality of paper page or screen and the surrounding articles, titles, information and references upon the printed page or pages and even where the newspaper is read (train, kitchen or café). Daniel Henry Backer refers to these elements of 'allusion' in political cartooning, 'which creates the situation or context into which the individual is placed' (Backer, 1996: par. 1). The idea of 'allusion' suggests interaction between the political cartoon elements is fluid and suggestive, not necessarily explicit. Allusion is an artistic device, a transference of meaning from one site to another. One work makes allusions to another. The word originates from the mid 16th century French *alludere* denoting a pun, metaphor, or parable. It shares a root with *illusion*

from *ludere*, the latin 'to play'. There is a sense of play here between internalised and externalised imagery, between perception and projection that captures some character of this research project in which mark and depiction, allusion and illusion are brought into dialogue.

Correspondences with Art

Political cartooning and art have a long history of correspondences. Art has influenced political cartoons, is quoted by cartoonists and artists have often worked as cartoonists (Hoffman, 1957; Lindesay, 1979; Shikes & Heller 1984; Shikes 1969). For instance Australian artist Rick Amor worked for 15 years as a weekly contributing cartoonist for 'The Tribune', the newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia in Melbourne.

The politically engaged, editorial aspects of graphic practice developed in Northern Europe around the time of the Protestant Reformation, even though aspects of *political caricature* had developed earlier within the circle of the Caracci, the Bolognese painters, brothers Agostino (1557-1602) and Annibale (1560-1609) and cousin Ludovico (1555-1619). Ernst Gombrich (writing with Ernst Kris) in *The Principles of Caricature* (1938) cites several medieval precursors. For instance, the custom in the late Middle Ages was to use pictures (often painted on the town hall) to ridicule and degrade individuals adding humiliation to the acts of penal law or political debate (Gombrich, 1938: 26). Martin Luther's socio-religious Protestant reform in the 16th Century depended on particular mechanisms of social dialogue. A merchant class and a leading core of people within the growing villages and towns who could respond to his message was one, and the discursive capacity of graphic art, both woodcutting and metal engraving, was another, as was a distribution system for the broadsheet posters or illustrated pamphlets that carried his message to large numbers of people (Backer, 1996: par. 3). Most importantly a high illiteracy rate amongst the general population enabled Luther to make extensive use of visual propaganda based on the pictorial tradition of grotesque panoplies of social observation of artists like Hieronymous Bosch (c. 1450-1516), Matthias Grünewald (c. 1470-1528) and Peter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569), (Shikes, 1969: 13-17). Most notably Lucas Cranach (1472-1553) contributes woodcuts of images of the Passion of Christ and those mocking the Pope in Luther's anti-catholic pamphlet *Passional Christi und Antichrist* of 1521 [see figure 4.1i].

The pictorial potential of such carnivalesque traditions is patently still active, evidenced by Michael Mucci, cartoonist and blogger for *The Australian* newspaper and his appropriation from Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* (c1480-1505) of a hellish fire and water landscape with its central focus of a grotesque tree-like man with a broken-egg-shell, voided torso and backward looking glance that expresses a mix of wistfulness and resignation (Gibson, 1973: 98). This image of the torment of the damned becomes Mucci's comment upon Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd after his abandonment of an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), [see figures 1.4 and 1.5].

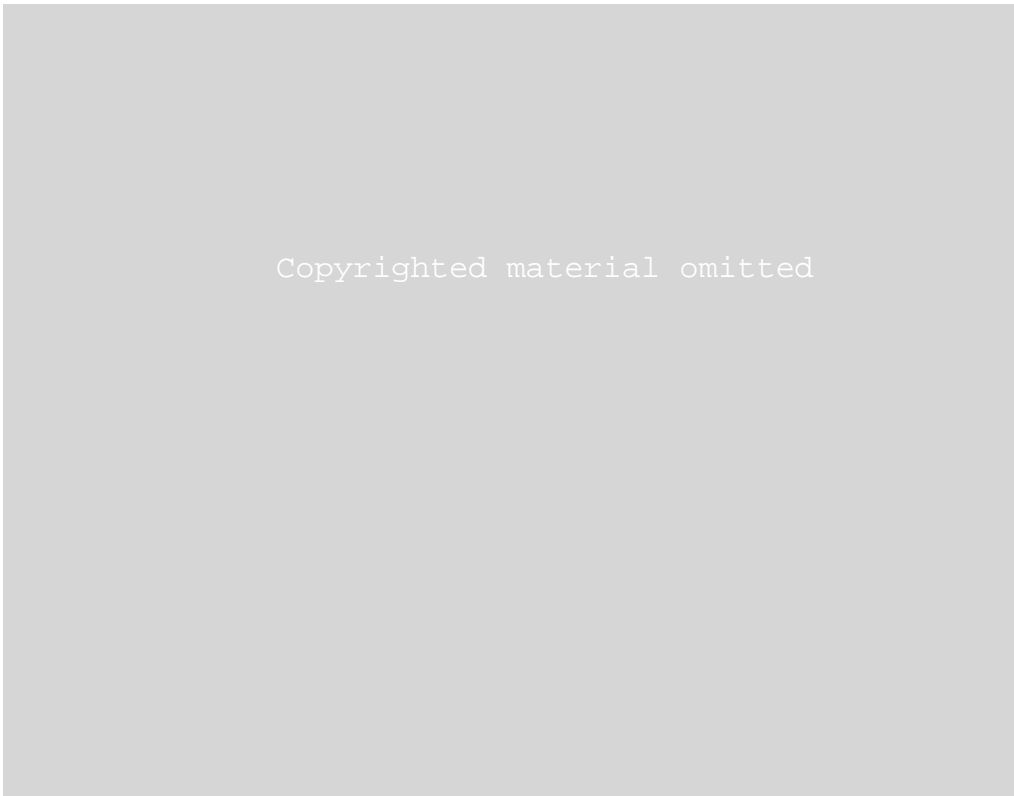


Figure 1.4. Michael Mucci. *Editorial Page*, *The Australian* (on-line version), 22 June, 2010.

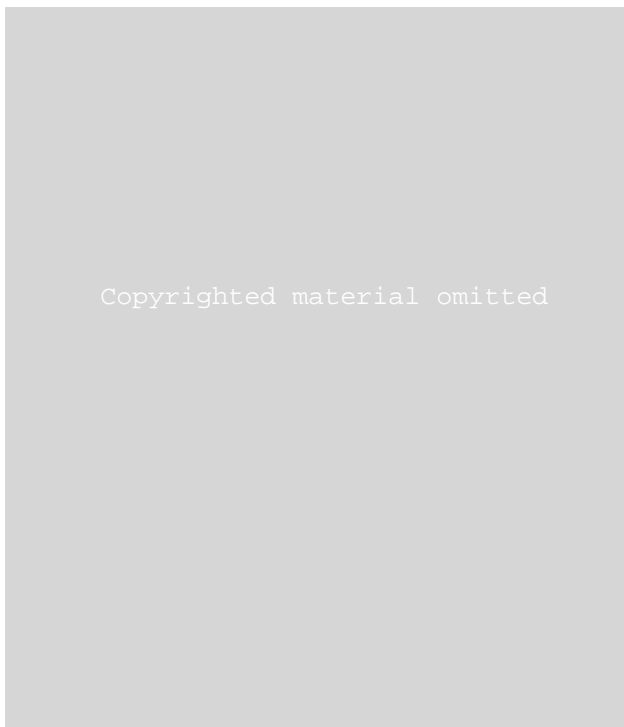


Figure 1.5. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1480-1505, (detail of the right panel of three), oil on wood triptych, 220 cm x 389 cm.

Such appropriations of imagery are a common instance of correspondence between cartooning and art, of the one by the other. But correspondences also apply to the use of graphic or iconographic idioms, compositional devices such as distortion, captioning, sequencing and to a lesser extent, the use of humour. Here is a drawing by US artist Raymond Pettibon from his

exhibition, *Here's Your Irony Back (The Big Picture)*, 2007, David Zwirner Gallery, New York, followed by a drawing by Australian cartoonist Geoff Pryor commenting in 2007 on Australia Prime Minister and the Iraq War [see figures 1.6 and 1.7].



Fig. 1.6 Raymond Pettibon, *Why Press Him?*, 2007.



Figure 1.7. Geoff Pryor. *Canberra Times*, 7 July 2007.

Obviously Pettibon has not appropriated Geoff Pryor's image. Rather Pettibon and Pryor correspond in their use of the (common enough) motif of raised soiled hands as an iconic image of

dawning moral self-realisation of the political cost that increasingly faced USA President George W. Bush and Australian Prime Minister John Howard in the shadow of implications of the 2003-2011 Iraq war. Pettibon's use of cartoon cell elements like speech bubbles announce his debt to political cartooning. What is also important is *how* Pettibon does *not* illustrate the soiled liquid dripping from Bush's hands as Pryor does that dripping from Howard's. Pettibon deploys an incongruous depiction - a staccato striking of red pigment that reads as both a bloody soiling *and* as a disfiguring gesture towards President Bush.

This tradition of social commentary in an art context extends from Francesco Goya (1746-1828) and his *Los Caprichos* (1797-1798) that condemn the foibles and failings of the Spanish ruling classes through to Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) and his influential series of caricatured French Parliamentarians, *Representants Représentés* (1848). Daumier etches for the first satirical newspaper *La Caricature* (1830-35), published in Paris and edited by Charles Philipon, the famous image after Philipon's own sketch of the French King Louis-Philippe morphing into a pear (1831); a drawing for which Philipon was subsequently gaoled. In Parisian slang 'poire' means 'fat-head' (Gombrich, 1938: 132). Inevitably the viewer is complicit in this satire and perhaps here is the power of such cynical gestures and bodily disorderings: the capacity to have internalised by the viewer seditious image-thoughts [see figure 1.8].



Figure 1.8. Charles Philipon, *La Métamorphose du roi Louis-Philippe en poir* (1831). Pen and bister ink. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Significant historical practitioners of the art of the political cartoon I have referenced in my work are the British 'enlightenment' graphic satirists and polemicists (who often as not responded to events flowing from the social upheavals of the French revolution). These include Thomas Rowlandson (UK, 1756–1827) and James Gillray (UK, 1757–1815). Rowlandson was also an artist whose work took its inspiration from everyday public events whereas Gillray was concerned with the visual satire of political and society life⁵ (Gatrell, 2006; Wright, 1868). Another is George Cruikshank (UK, 1792–1878) who created political prints that attacked the British royal family and leading politicians of the time. In 1820 he received a royal bribe of £100 for a pledge 'not to caricature His Majesty (George III) in any immoral situation' (Gatrell, 2006: 221). This satirical print tradition, which continues today in the editorial cartoons of daily newspaper also encompasses its cross-over to contemporary artists such as David Shrigley (UK, 1968), Robert Crumb (USA, 1943), Banksy (UK, c.1974) and Jeremyville (Aust., n/a).

It is in 1855 that Charles Baudelaire writes his important essay *Of the essence of Laughter, and generally of the Comic in the Plastic Arts*. It begins with a discussion of caricature, which for Baudelaire is emblematic of the double nature of the comic. The *significant comic* or satirical is based upon a sense of superiority while the *absolute comic* is based in caricature and the grotesque (Connelly, 2003: 10-11). Ideas of satirical judgement and the grotesque as a critical gesture will be examined more fully in Chapters 3 and 4. Baudelaire's essay developed the first theoretical defense of the value of satire as an art of critique in a political context. Baudelaire outlines an aesthetic in which contradiction, the grotesque, the ironic, the violent, the farcical, fantastic and fleeting define the discourse of modernity as a duality (of identity) and play between one's position as subject and object (Hannoosh, 1992: 4). The role of the viewer and his or her encounter with art will be examined more fully in Chapter 5. Walter Benjamin defined those processes representing and revealing the alienation of modern experience that we see exemplified in the 20th century cynical traditions of Weimar republic artists like George Grosz (Germany, 1893-1959), Otto Dix (Germany, 1891-1969), John Heartfield (Germany, 1891-1968) and Hannah Höch (Germany, 1889-1978) which were used as formal means of critique of political figures and ideas as *Baudelairean allegory* (Benjamin, 1978).

Academic Deanne Petherbridge under the heading of *Vernacular Bodies and Charged Lines* notes that cartooning as,

the optimum cross-over genre, has always occupied a special space alongside 'high' art with which it is entwined as popular commentary and critique. It has subverted and challenged classical traditions and privileged the temporary, the non-hierarchical and the experimental, as a sort of anarchic pre-vision of modernity (Petherbridge, 2010: 377).

⁵ See the exhibition, *James Gillray: The Art of caricature*, 2001, Tate Gallery, London (Gatrell, 2006).

Arising out of an ambiguous involvement with everyday life,

it has become the political and populist tool of city life and modern individualism. While pricking the carapace of power in situations of all kinds from both the centre and the margins, the artist/cartoonist is implicated in a continuous shift as cool author and rueful subject (Petherbridge, 2010: 377).

In post-war contemporary art many artists have used political cartoon elements as part of their critical practices. In a 'history painting' context, often characterised by a Soviet 'Social Realism' style, these include the Russian artists Komar and Melamid (Russia, 1943, 1945), American narrative painter Mark Tansey (USA, 1949), Neo Rauch (Germany, 1960), Australian-Chilean painter Juan Davila (Chile, 1946) and several Chinese artists; Zhang Huan (China, 1965), Ge Xiaoguang (China, 1953), Zhang Hongtu (China, 1944) among them, whose use of the image of former Chairman of the Communist Party of China, Mao Zedong links irony and critique without the use of caricature. I also want to add in here the "moral tableaux" installations of Ed Kienholz (USA, 1927-1994) and American artist Paul McCarthy's (USA, 1945) process-oriented assemblages like *Pig Island*, (2003 - 2010) in which US President George W. Bush's visage is grafted onto a a jumble of swine bodies amid a sty of refuse [see figure 1.9].



Figure 1.9. Paul McCarthy, *Pig Island* (detail), 2003 - 2010

Project Overview

This is a Practice-led Ph.D research project. Outcomes are:

- several series of art works and installations, developed through a studio research method, many of which have been installed publicly during the project and are documented in the exegesis
- a final exhibition of artwork that address the key research questions
- an exegesis that articulates the critical context for the outcomes and areas of new knowledge developed through the research incorporating an Appropriate Durable Record of documentation of the creative research

The practice-led outcomes developed through studio research and exhibition practice are autonomous artworks that rehearse an embodied cynicism towards everyday political institutions, figures or discourses through drawing practice within an extended field of encounter with the viewer.

The exegesis is a contextual explanation and interpretation of the research processes, outcomes and exhibited work that explores correspondences between political cartoons and art, mediated by bodies of literature which define these fields.

New knowledge is expressed in two ways:

- in artworks themselves as outcomes of creative research that embody the subject they examine
- in the exegesis, whose part conclusions derived from art practice as research contribute to the field of political cartoon study

The project was undertaken between 2007 and 2012. This means it has seen the later period of the Iraq War, the 2007 Howard-Rudd Australian Federal Election, leadership changes in both the Liberal and Labor Parties, the 2010 Gillard-Abbott Australian Federal Election and political controversies such as the treatment of asylum seekers, the Wiki-leaks scandal and the Mamdouh Habib detention and rendition controversy.⁶ Many of the political cartoons cited address these events in the Australian political cycle, as well as some State Parliament issues. The research outcomes at times explicitly address such events.

The project draws on four distinct but related bodies of research:

- historical and contemporary political cartoons and their sites of dissemination
- research into the field of contemporary political cartooning
- contemporary (and historical) artists practices
- critical theories about ideas of embodied graphic gesture, the depicted grotesque body and reception in an extended field of drawing.

⁶ Mamdouh Habib is an Egyptian and Australian citizen with dual nationality held in US Guantanamo Bay detention centre, by the United States as an enemy combatant and released to return to Australia in 2005. Habib alleged that at Guantanamo, he suffered mental and physical abuse; claims disputed by then Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer. Habib filed suit against the Australian government for cooperating in his detention and treatment. In December 2010, Habib reached an out-of-court settlement with the Australian government, see (O'Brien, 2011).

The structure of the project was designed to embody a key aspect of the research: the frequent and regular public dissemination of material that echoes the daily publication of political cartoons in newspapers and the related political (or news) cycle. Therefore short, studio intense cycles of drawing, making, reading, researching and workshop and installation activities correlated with the range of drawing series produced and their exhibition or publication.

Exegesis

In Chapter two of this exegesis, I discuss the methodology and methods of the project. I introduce ideas of action research and the use of cycles of making as a method of research within the studio. The chapter also introduces the ironic and self-reflexive role mapping plays in creative research, day-to-day studio production and the spatialised outcomes of exhibition.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of 'grotesque method' is introduced as a basis for studio practice through which relations between cynical attitudes, the disordered-grotesque body and embodied encounter are established and rehearsed. A section on methods within the studio describes specific patterns of actions and production in the project including relations between differing series of work, the collection and use of cartoons, literature review, sketchbooks, digital archive, exhibition preparation and titling.

The plan of each of the following three chapters follows the primary recursive method of mapping correspondences from cartoons to studio processes to installed outcomes back to political cartoons. In each chapter images of artworks are fully embedded with the text as part of the research narrative.

In Chapter 3, 'Cynical & Attitudinal Gestures Amended', I discuss my research into graphic modes of cynical gesture contained within the scale of the body. Cynical gestures are a type of non-representational drawing mark or recorded trace in the form of hand traces, splashes, scratches, spills, drips, stains, strikes and perforations. They embody critique and may enact a cathartic response to political events.

Studio processes and related sets of works; (*1st - 17th Manifesto Desktop Drawings, 1st - 12th Amendments*) are described and framed within the context of cynical gestures in both contemporary art and cartooning. Following a discussion of these bodies of works I suggest ways in which we may identify and consider uses of depictions of cynical gestures, marks and material traces in political cartooning itself.

In Chapter 4 'Grotesque Bodies Disordered & Dispersed', I outline the further development of cynical and attitudinal gesture extended to the scale of the body. Studio processes and the display

of corresponding sets of works (*1st - 13th Bodies Politic, Dead Iraqis*) are described and framed within the context of the grotesque fragmentation of the body and its parts in political cartoons and contemporary art and historical precursors. These works enact a cynical attitude that reflects on politics through concepts of the fragmented and disordered figure coupled with an approach to the dispersal of display that involves the viewer in an exchange between disparate parts of a political homunculus. Following a discussion of these bodies of works I suggest ways in which we may identify and consider uses of depictions of the disordered body in political cartooning itself.

In Chapter 5 'Extended Encounters Manifested' I focus upon the extension of cynical gesture and the grotesque and disordered body into the realm of installation practice and encounter with the viewer of art. Studio processes and the display of corresponding sets of works (*1st - 4th Party Machines*) are described and framed within the context of public gesture and situated installation practice not available to political cartoons but fully realised by contemporary art and its precursors. In these works, the viewer's experience may be construed as a gesture itself and (narratively) structured in architectural space and time, which are conceived of as dimensions of the political and of change. Following a discussion of these bodies of works I suggest ways in which we may identify and consider manifestations of the extended encounter in political cartooning itself.

Chapter 6 'Conclusions' summarizes the creative outcomes derived from the project and reiterates how they develop new knowledge in the field of creative practice that embodies cynicism towards everyday political institutions, figures or discourses through drawing practice within an extended field of encounter with the viewer. I affirm that art practice as research can contribute to the field of political cartoon study and re-iterate areas of enquiry deriving from the research that specifically address the creation of new knowledge about political cartoons.

Project Aims

My aim has been to examine correspondences between art and the field of political cartoons that embody cynical attitudes through processes of graphic mark and gesture and disordered and grotesque depictions of the body.

These have been researched through my practice in the context of an extended field of drawing that has sought to add ideas about installation, materiality and the construction of the subject in art – as a basis for my own critical and sardonic response to contemporary politics.

From such outcomes of the research I have in turn sought to realise new ways of thinking about and understanding political cartoons – particularly around the issues of cynicism – and how both art and political cartoons generate new meanings.

CHAPTER TWO - METHODOLOGY & METHODS

This chapter will address the research premise and working methods employed throughout the research project.

The methodological framework of the project is a combination of practice-*led* research employing action research methods based within my visual art practice and qualitative or interpretative practice-*based* research focused primarily upon Australian political cartoonists' work and artists whose art embodies attitudinal gestures towards everyday political institutions, figures or discourses.

Studio practice, sited exhibition, literature review, documentation and exegesis constitute action research, involving a recursive cycle of observation, activity and reflection in which material from each informs the other (Frayling, 1994; Lewin, 1988: 41), [see Figure 2.1].

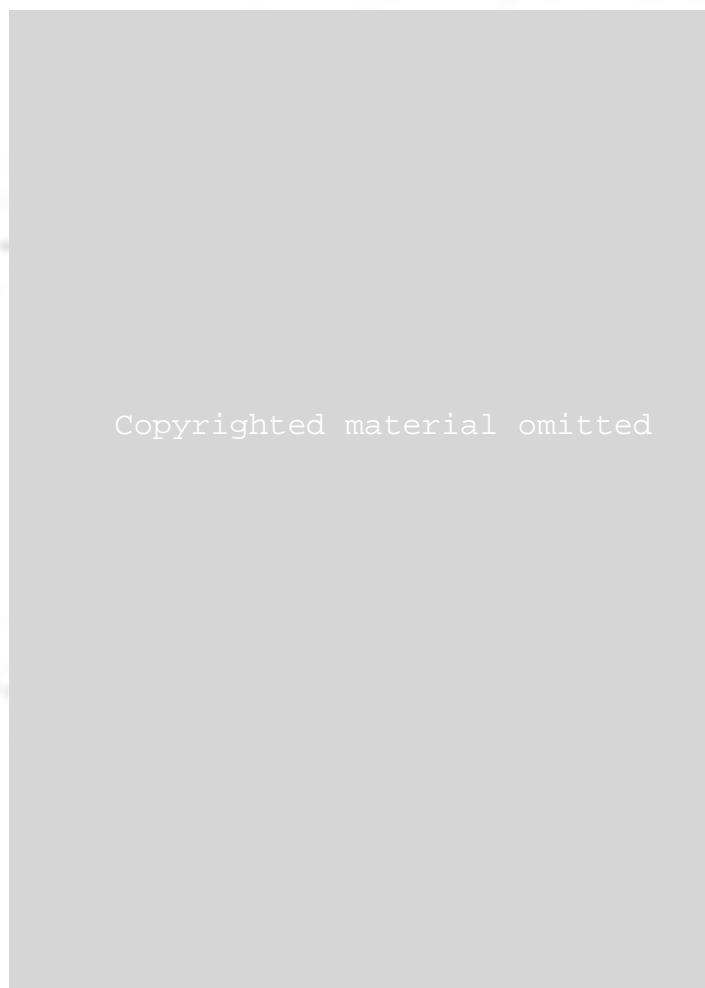


Fig. 2.1 Simple Action Research model (Yasmeen, 2008: 47)

Research in creative practice fields is defined by Christopher Frayling in *Research in Art and Design* (1994), as comprising of three types. Research *into* art involves pure theoretical investigations where the main objective is to understand a context or history from different perspectives such as design criticism and historical research (theory based). Research *through* art involves both understanding the process of making itself and developing new actions, artefacts or methods (practice-led). Research *for* art involves the development of new artefacts of which the goal is to visually communicate new knowledge, but the practice does not lead the whole research process (practice based).

In this project we might describe

- creative art practice in the field of embodied cynicism and political commentary as Practice-led research
- new knowledge that arises from my practice *about* political cartoons as Practice-based research

The project therefore displays a composite attitude towards research, on the one hand it affects a 'doubled-faced' attitude to its subject, which is both sympathetic and cheeky.⁷ On the other, it demonstrates a 'combinatory strategy' that Frances Connelly associates with the grotesque and the disordered and describes as a conjoining of 'diverse methods and topics to explore the ... ever-changeable realities of imagery' (Connelly, 2003: 12). The studio methodologies in particular exercise an oftentimes playful distortion and malleability of form that reveal new meanings in their blurring of boundaries, incongruity and potential encounter with the viewer. As German critical theorist Walter Benjamin famously stated 'method is detour' (Benjamin, 1999: 460).

The project has employed a consistent method that links the three modes of this Ph.D creative research project; studio, exhibition and exegesis. I have systematically began from the analysis of cartoons; I have collected them, cut them out and copied them, categorised them and analysed their depictions and pondered their making to suggest ways of making in the studio.⁸ I have sought to identify methods of cynicisms evident in political cartoons and through studio practice I have researched and identified corresponding methods in studio practice and contemporary art (cynical gestures to attitudinal gestures, grotesque bodies to disordered bodies, publication to extended encounter with the viewer through installation). I have then mapped these methods back onto political cartooning.

These independent studio investigations that involve paper and brush and ink and body and mops and cutting and imagination and associations have extended and developed the links from cartoons into autonomous works and artefacts which may be expressed in exhibition and

⁷ 'In cheekiness lies a method worthy of discovery' (Sloterdijk, 1987: 101).

⁸ I collected contemporary political cartoons from Australian newspapers (such as The Age, The Australian, the Herald-Sun, the Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian Financial Review).

installation. Exhibition extends the work into an encounter with the viewer in the world, whose mind and body are engaged with a felt experience pervaded with cognitive and psychological insights. Each of these research processes has suggested new ways that we might consider the operations of political cartoons, which are captured in this exegesis as summary findings at the end of each chapter.

Mapping

Action research approaches lend themselves to mapping (Fuster Morell, 2009; Pontis, 2010) and this is an important component in the methodology of my practice and this project. Scrivener in *The Roles of Art and Design Process and Object in Research* (2009) states mapping is a way to both produce and analyse artefacts within practice-led research. Mapping arises heuristically within the making of work through generative processes and amendments (Hester 2007; p.11), through referencing precursors (Cass, 1986), appropriation (Buchloh, 2005) and recycling of materials or self-curating of artefacts (Aguirre, 2007 on the practices of Florian Pumhösl) as well as self-reflexively through archiving practices, documentation, note keeping and sketchbooking. It occurs of course as well in art historiography (Seerveld, 1980). I regularly find that the schematic relations of forms in mapping is echoed in later compositional or installation solutions.

In action research, ideas are not validated independently and then applied to the practice but are validated through practice and outcomes and then reviewed (Bell, 1999: 57) and later re-mapped through exegesis. By their nature, such outcomes of practice-led investigations contribute to the practice of the discipline in which they are immersed (Rust, 2000). The artefacts and outcomes of this research project do that, having attracted several reviews in published contexts (Crawford, 2008; McKenzie, 2009; R. Nelson, 2009).

The diagram map of this research project illustrates ways in which components of the research project interact and relate [see figure 2.2].

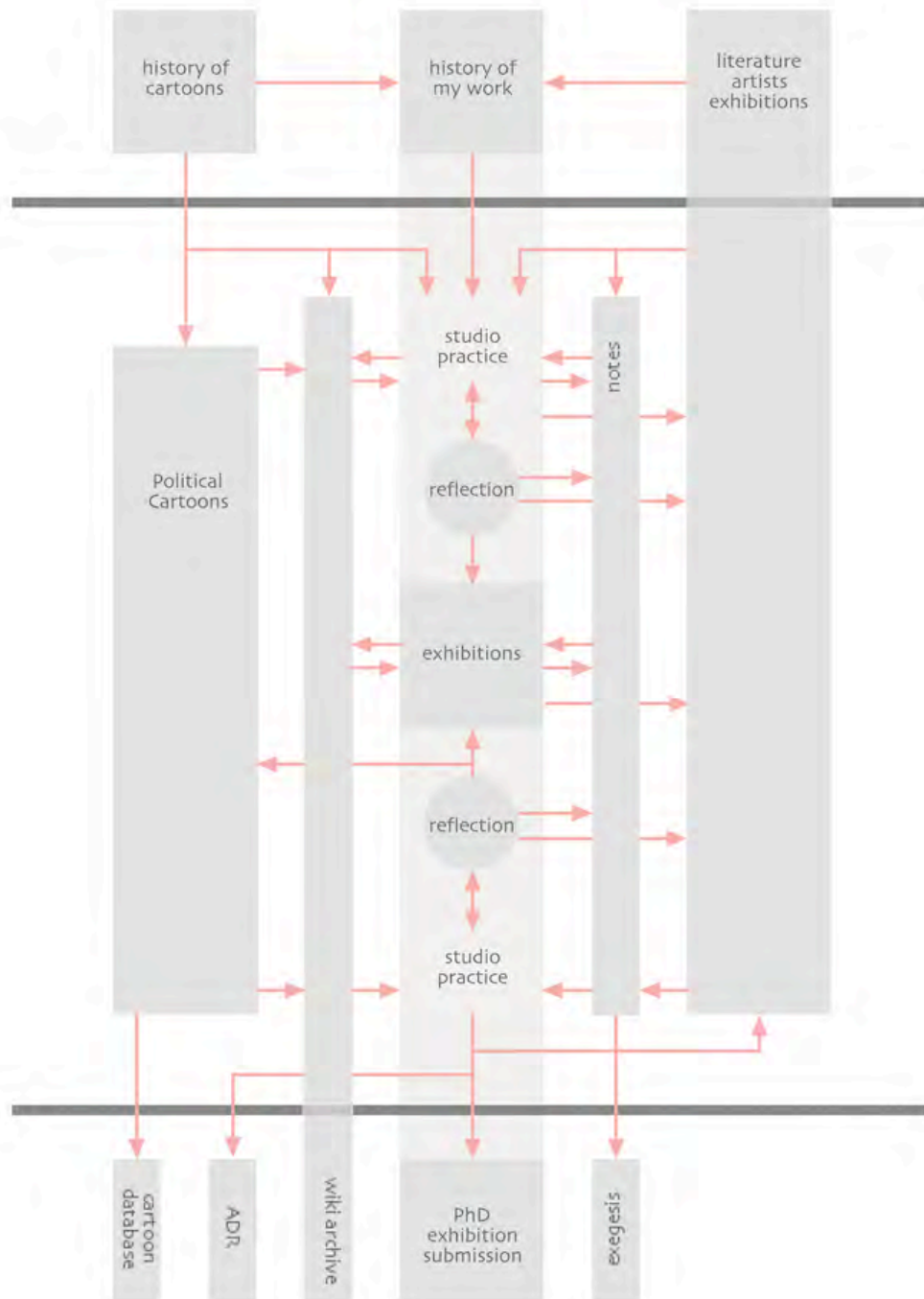


Figure 2.2. Greg Creek, *Ph.D Research Map #5*, 2011.

As Patrick Maynard observes in *Drawing Distinctions, the varieties of graphic expression*, mapping is a way of establishing ‘correspondences’, ‘continuity/discontinuity’ and ‘ordinal arrangements’ between information (Maynard, 2005: 58). This is an important cycle within the project and prefigures aspects of Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas of grotesque method introduced below. In effect my knowing about the project truly revealed itself only after the embodied cycling through of my making and doing. At a key stage, such visualisations and maps, proved an important aid in my understanding of the dynamics between practice and influences and in their creative adaptation.

So just as my Ph.D Research diagram maps correspondences between processes in time suggesting open-ended delivery and recovery of information, it might also stand as a trace of embodied spatial movements (gestures) within the studio or as a narrative schema for exchange between parts in which the depicted 'arrows' form scatological or dialogic relations between bodies; what one gives up another other takes in [see figures 2.3 and 2.4).

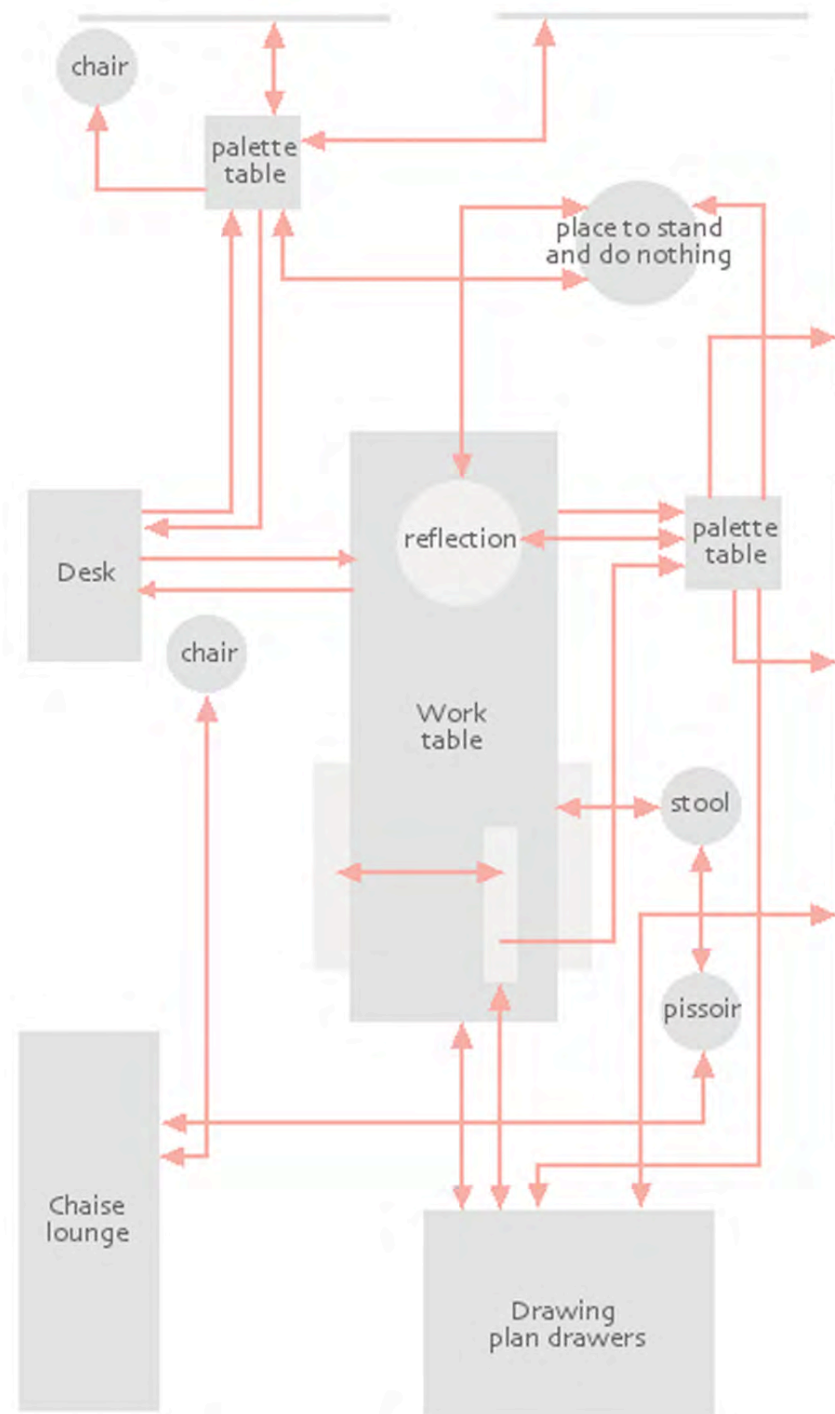


Figure 2.3. Greg Creek, *Studio movements map (Amendments)*, 2011.

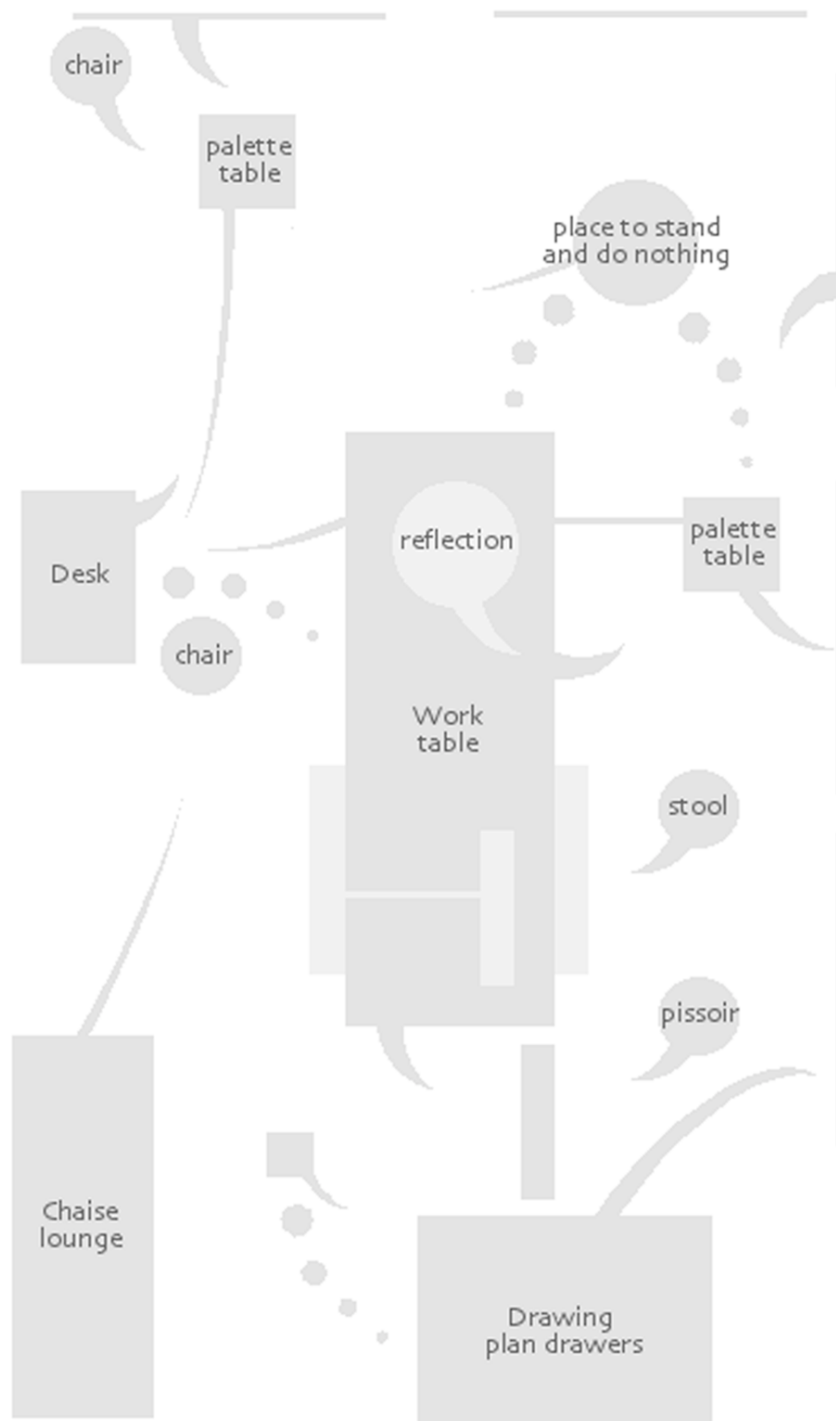


Figure 2.4. Greg Creek, *Studio talking map (studio talk)*, 2011.

Playful-ironic mapping of dependent relations like those above bear a number of literal correspondences in form as well as sardonic or metaphorical readings in drawings of cartoonists and artist's alike who have influenced this project, such as James Gillray, Bruce Petty (Aust., 1929) and Dan Perjovschi (Romania, 1961). These experiential pathways play a crucial role in project outcomes such as the *Party Machine Drawings* (see Chapter 5) and the final exhibition submission [see figures 2.5 to 2.8].

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 2.5. James Gillray, *The French Invasion or John Bull bombarding the Bum-Boats*, (c1793).

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 2.6. Bruce Petty, *Government, Australia Fair*, 1967.

Copyrighted material omitted

Fig. 2.7. Dan Perjovschi. *Projektíl Architekti*, 2012, National Technical Library, Prague.



Figure 2.8. Greg Creek, *1st Party Machine*, 2006, (detail)

Grotesque Method, Mikhail Bakhtin and Cynicism

The phrase 'grotesque method' is coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in his *Rabelais and His World* (1984). It is developed in relation to medieval parody and the 'carnavalesque' in which Bakhtin argues that cyclical processes of cynical degradation lead to generative renewal and new meanings within the societies. Bakhtin indicates a *grotesque method* is 'the method by which grotesque cycle of degrading (in to the grave) and renewal (womb) out of which regeneration (metamorphosis) takes place', but that it is additionally the method of studying this cycle (Bakhtin, 1984: 28). Certain

abusive language, images and gestures degrade subjects,

according to the grotesque method: they send [the object] down to the absolute bodily lower stratum, to the zone of the genital organs, the bodily grave, in order to be destroyed (Bakhtin, 1984: 28).

In this negative condition only 'bare cynicism and insult' survive. But from this negative pole positive meaning is made available. He cites examples of the carnival clown, which exist as precursors to modern satirists like cartoonists (Bakhtin, 1984: 308-317). Bakhtin describes the grotesque body (eating, drinking, gesticulating, defecating, copulating, birthing, ageing, decaying) of French novelist Francois Rabelais's medieval carnival as a comic figure of profound ambivalence. In his *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (2006) originally published in 1532 Rabelais' use of fantasy and the burlesque, gross figure allow his gigantic protagonists to satirise the French court, the clergy and common political ideologies. This ambivalent engagement of the individual subject, in the forms of laughter, scatological embodiment and the experience of incongruity form the positive, creative, pole of the grotesque method.

I have employed my understanding of grotesque method systematically throughout the project. It underpins a range of studio processes outlined in Chapter 3, approaches to enactment and synthesis of these processes outlined in Chapter 4 as well as issues of exhibition and encounter outlined in Chapter 5. In this project Bakhtin's grotesque method has provide a way to understand a variety of attributes of political cartooning, from caricature and mocking of figures and the use of degrading metaphor to the iconography of gesture, humour and the resolution of incongruity. It is the sense that the world may be upturned – the high may be mocked sardonically to good affect.

It is fair to note however that Bakhtin's concept of grotesque method is contested by a number of contemporary writers including Marina Warner in *No Go the Bogeyman. Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock* (1998). She argues that Bakhtin's conceptual framework arises from an idealised view of the medieval world, which only 'affirms existing ethnic, class and gender hierarchies in the the town and wider ... setting' (Warner, 1998: 124). There is an unease that his claims for what he saw as a people's power to renew and regenerate the entire social system has been overtaken by modern communications in democracies.⁹ Bakhtin afterall, was writing in a pre-war Soviet context. More telling is Roger Harpham in *On the grotesque: strategies of contradiction in art and literature* (1982), who states:

Bakhtin's use of the term "grotesque realism" implies that reality is all on the side of the carnival and scatological democracy, a fiction we believe only with disastrous psychological and social consequences (Harpham, 1982: 100).

⁹ Especially in the political arena, see (Burgelman, 2000), Chapter 1.

However, the grotesque method has capacity to model critical modes of thinking and doing in specific and local domains like political cartooning. For instance, Professor David M. Boje, Ethics Fellow at New Mexico State University applies a grotesque method to an examination of the regeneration and renewal of a long-lived corporation such as McDonald's who have continually negotiated activists' use of the negative pole of grotesque method to connect the *corporate body* to grotesque bodies of the slaughterhouse and modified meats (Boje, 2004: 11). Boje identifies not only the gestures of criticism leveled at McDonalds but also several actions that McDonalds itself has employed during its corporate life to turn around potential cynical critiques - like the evolution of Ronald McDonald from chef to clown-as-chief-happiness-officer (Boje, 2004: 4).

In several other important studies Bakhtin's concepts of the grotesque are cited to frame discussions around political cartooning (Connelly, 2003; Eco, 1984; Gatrell, 2006; Porter, 2001; Storr, 2004).

In this project the condition of art and creative research is fundamentally one of encounter and materiality and its outcomes are felt as rich cognitive and psychological experiences. For me grotesque method and embodied cynicism is not *about* the carnival, *it is* the carnival.

Studio, exhibition and exegesis

Studio and exhibition practice comprise two methodologies of this research whose functions overlap. Studio is a fluid research practice category. It may be as simple as the place-time in which 'studiowork' is done.¹⁰ Certainly, it is a category that has a history and development, which since the 1960s, has been extensively documented, valorised and critiqued by cultural theorists and artists alike (Buren, 1979; Doherty, 2004; Fer, 2010; O'Doherty, 1999; Pigrum, 2007). Additionally we should acknowledge debates about whether the studio as creative research method can create new knowledge at all (Barrett, 2004; Mäkelä, 2007; Scrivener, 2009). Mäkelä writes of 'annoyance' when the making of artefacts is argued as comprising a research method - she cites Durling et al, (2002) – when the artefact is regarded as the embodiment of new knowledge (Mäkelä, 2007: 159). At the least we may suggest, as does Australian artist Bianca Hester in her Ph.D dissertation, that studiowork entails the 'thinking-practice component' of the research (Hester, 2007: 15).

There are studio researches and meanings; the establishing of grounds, material tests & amendments, drawing, sketchbooking and embodied prints and traces on paper and other supports, as fragments or finished elements. These contribute to and help manifest exhibition researches and meaning where spatial and architectural contexts, installation structures, narrative time and encounters with the viewer combine with political contexts. These specific methods are described in more detail around specific outcomes in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

¹⁰ For the phrase *studiowork*, see Briony Fer (2010) on the the indeterminate studio processes of Eva Hesse.

Yet, the experience of encounter with the work in exhibition is undeniably different from the experience of both the studio and the exegesis. It is a situation that has about it the sense of what John Shotter in his studies of social constructivism and language has called conversational practice. Within their 'flow of responsive and relational activities' these can be a 'participatory or dialogical form of research activity' (Shotter, 1993:9). Exhibition is an important mode of the *manifestation* and *dissemination* of new knowledge. It is a situation that is open-ended, additive, proliferating and generative for both embedded meaning and the experience of the viewer. The exhibition strategies and formal devices of display employed in these project outcomes activate the viewer as a participant in the work rather than a passive spectator (see Chapter 5). This suggests a certain generosity of address is present in both maker and viewer that creates resonance particularly in the sense that there is an common coming together (Steiner, 1989: 39). Perhaps ironically and certainly more causally, this is also characteristic of the encounter with political cartoons, whether that is in a newspaper under one's cereal bowl in the morning, or in one glimpsed between bodies on the train on the way home. The way we come to works and ideas, the manner of encounter influences our response [see figures 2.9 to 2.15].



Figure 2.9. Greg Creek, *establishing gesture as ground*, (studio detail)

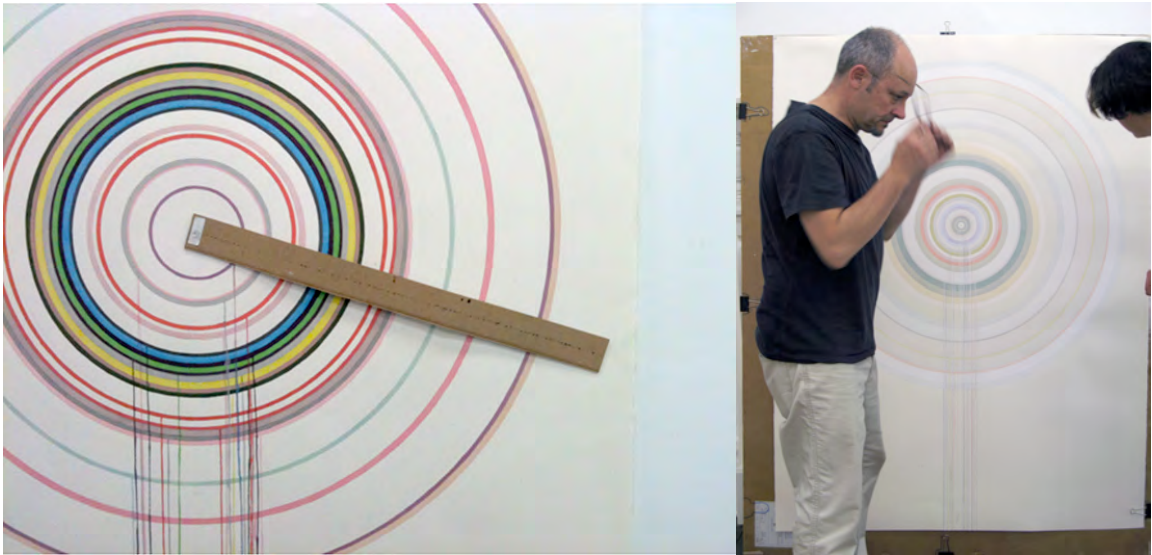


Figure 2.10. Greg Creek, *material tests & amendments* (studio detail)



Figure 2.11. Greg Creek, *embodiment & gestures* (studio detail)

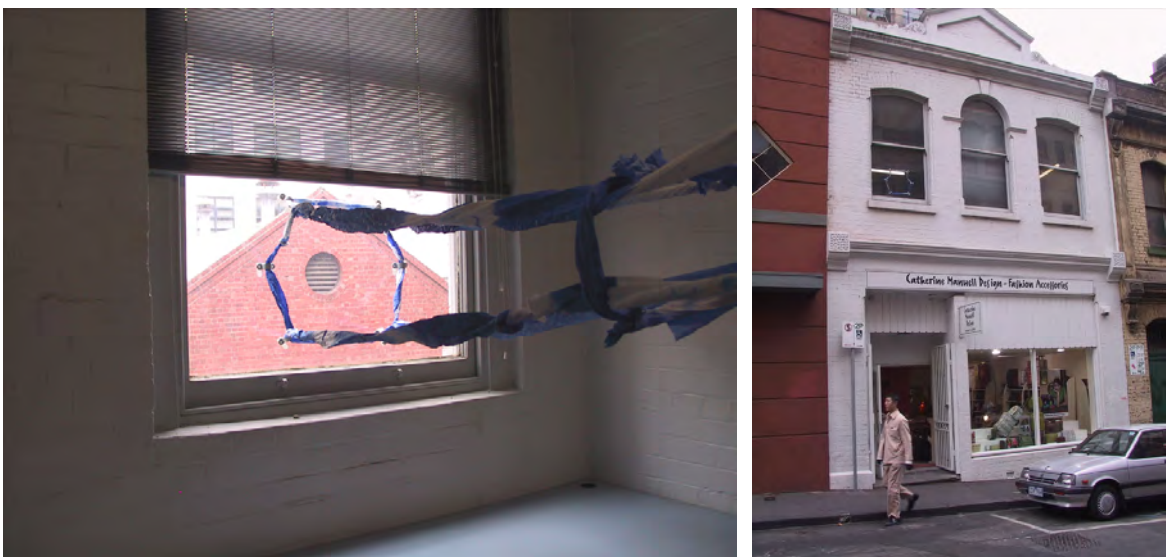


Figure 2.12. Greg Creek, *spatial contexts* (interior and exterior exhibition details)



Figure 2.13. Greg Creek, *installation structures* (studiowork detail)



Figure 2.14. Greg Creek, *encounter with viewer*, (exhibition detail), Carlton Hotel & Studios, Melbourne, 2008

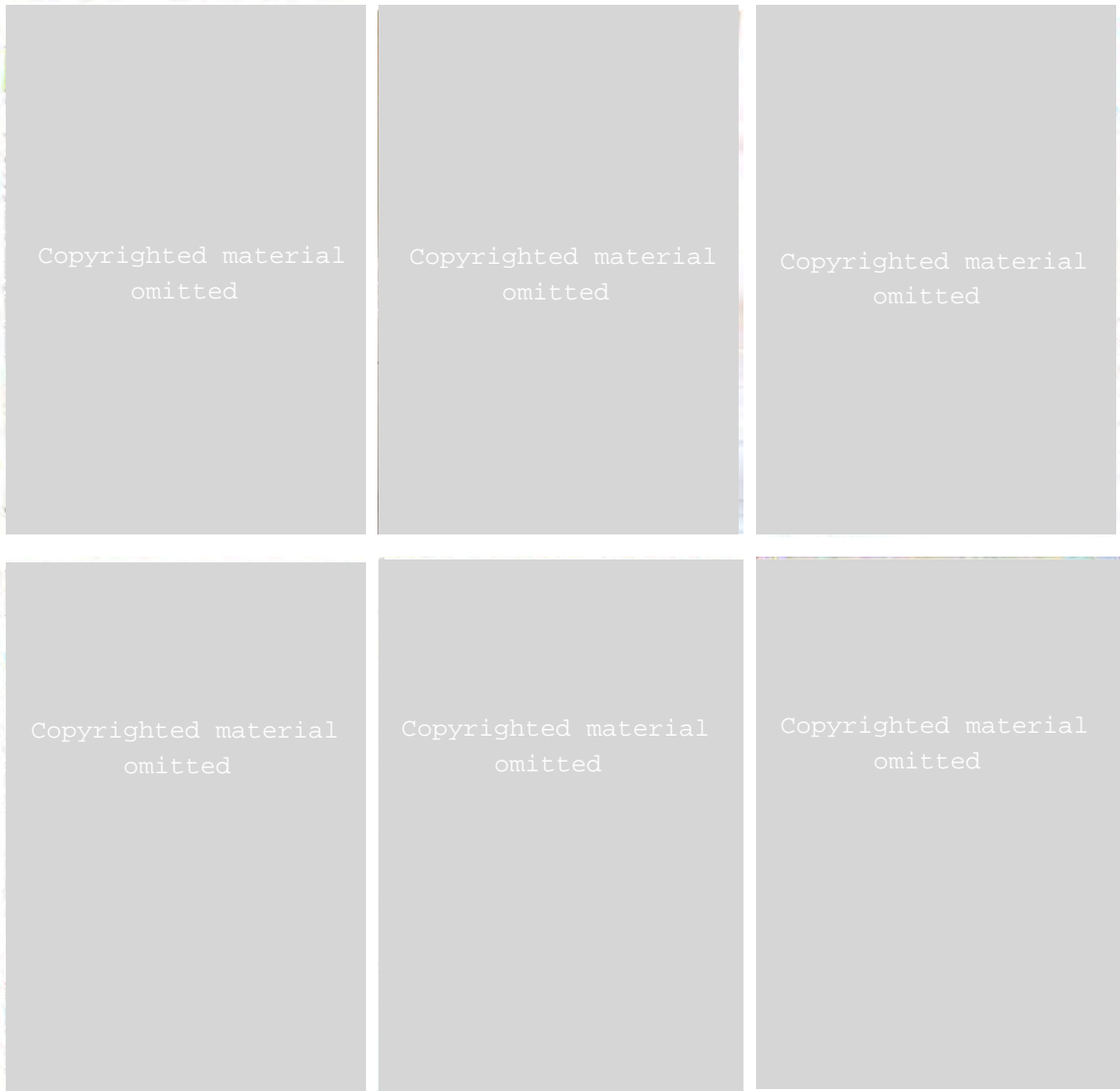


Figure 2.15. Greg Creek, *political contexts* (newspaper front pages)

CHAPTER THREE - CYNICAL AND ATTITUDINAL GESTURES AMENDED

In this chapter I discuss my research into graphic modes of *Manifesto Drawing* expressed at a scale contained within my body that reflect critically upon everyday political institutions, figures or discourses.

I introduce what I have identified as *cynical gestures* within a specific framework of cynicism as it is debated in the literature on Australian political cartooning (M. Hogan, 2001; Manning, 2000, 2004). In political cartoons cynical gestures appear as depictions of acts performed by and against figures and objects.

Following this I outline how, in the studio I have researched such cynical gestures as drawing actions around a notion of embodied 'kynical' critique framed by Hal Foster in *Return of the Real* (1996) developing ideas derived from German cultural theorist Peter Sloterdijk in his *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1987).

These artefacts of performative drawing processes are a type of non-representational drawing mark or record on paper of hand traces, cuts, scratches, spills, drips, stains, strikes and perforations, which in turn may be subject to further processes of amendment. I describe in detail the studio series of works; *1st - 17th Manifesto Desktop Drawings* and the *1st - 12th Amendments* that, in the context of contemporary art and Thomas McEvilley's *Art and Discontent: Theory at the Millenium* (1991) are conceived of as employing 'attitudinal' gestures as means to address political themes.

Summarising the discussion of these bodies of works I suggest as findings ways in which we may identify and consider uses of attitudinal (cynical) gestures, that is embodied marks and material traces, in political cartooning itself as an area of new research.

My research suggests that cynical gestures in political cartoons and art may be further linked to a concept of the grotesque and disordered body that is developed in Chapter 4.

Cynical Political Gestures

People will say to me sometimes, don't you think you are contributing to a cynical atmosphere by constantly making fun of politicians? I don't think so. Because nested in the negative art form is a suggestion that things could be different

- Dan Wasserman, Boston Globe cartoonist (Leff, 2004: 70).

Michael Hogan, Research Associate of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney, in his paper *Cartoonists and Political Cynicism* (2001) notes 'a tendency to encourage some measure of popular cynicism about politicians and politics is built into the democratic system' (Hogan, 2001: 28). Within the world of politics and its ideologies critiques come just as readily from politicians themselves as they do from commentators or the public. Such criticism, Hogan affirms, lies at the heart of liberal-democratic systems of government.

But for Hogan political cartoons express an excess of cynicism. Such cynicism in cartoons is a consequence of 'negative and conflictual' depictions (Hogan, 2001:28). He states the work of political cartoonists 'tends to reinforce almost completely the negative images of politics and politicians, with almost no countervailing positive images' (Hogan, 2001: 29). To support his view he examines a selection of fifty cartoons derived from a much larger database of over 500 historical Australian cartoons published by Hogan and Clune (2001). Hogan contends cynical cartoons are often savage to politicians and that they are unfair and lampoon mercilessly (Hogan, 2001: 31). The reproduced examples with which he illustrates his thesis reveal another story as well. What we see are politicians depicted as scurrying like rats for their share of power (Ted Scorfield, p36), parliament dripping with the stains of 'abusive language, personal invective, and occasional physical assault' (Emeric, p40), political candidates all (pathetically) spruiking the same message with the same repetitive pointing fists (Eyre Jr., p42), and political parties compromised by unionists swiping on gummy posters that reveal the true sources of power (Eyre Jr., p44) [see figure 3.1].

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 3.1. Eyre Jr., Sydney Morning Herald, 22 April, 1965.

The other notable discussions of political cartooning and critical cynicism in Australia are the essays written by Haydon Manning and Robert Phiddian, *Where are the Clowns? Political satire and the 1998 federal election campaign* (2000) and *In defence of the political cartoonists' licence to mock* (2004), which book-end Hogan's article cited above. The first preceded and provoked Hogan and the later responded to his essay suggesting that, like Wasserman political cartoons displaying cynicism is not a bad thing.

Together these three articles form a trilogy that provide the [analytical] stimulus for the examination of cynical gesture which is the focus of this chapter.

In *Where are the Clowns* Manning and Phiddian provide an analysis of the work of newspaper cartoonists in the 1998 Australian Federal Election campaign.¹¹ They focus upon the 'sharper focus' of graphic political satire, 'its shafts of lateral intelligence applied to issues that can be easily be buried under spin-doctored or expert rhetoric' (Manning & Phiddian, 2000: 48).

¹¹ The 1998 Australian Federal Election was dominated by two issues: the proposal of a goods and services tax by the incumbent Liberal/National Party Coalition government and the campaigning of all parties against the policies of the right-wing, anti-immigration party *One Nation*, led by sitting member Pauline Hanson, who subsequently failed to retain her seat in the Federal parliament.

A satirical cartoon will tend to reflect any number of the following features: it is derisory of its subject and cutting, cynical or skeptical of its subject's purpose or state of being; it is punitive in its force (Manning & Phiddian, 2000: 52).

Cartoons reproduced by Manning and Phiddian also underline how the presence of cynical attitudes in cartoons is established through depicted actions and gestures that amount to an iconographical evocation of critical bodily actions. For example there is the repeated pointing and spitting of gesticulating Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Opposition Labor Party Leader Kim Beasley figures in a Jon Kudelka cartoon (p50), the rolling in the dirt of an everyman figure in a Michael Leunig cartoon (p51), Bill Leak's depiction of Pauline Hanson smacking a bare-arsed aboriginal boy (p57), his genuflecting John Howard (p62) and the you'd-only-touch-a-stinky-Pauline-Hanson-with-a barge-pole prodding sticks of Bruce Petty (p62), [see figure 3.2].

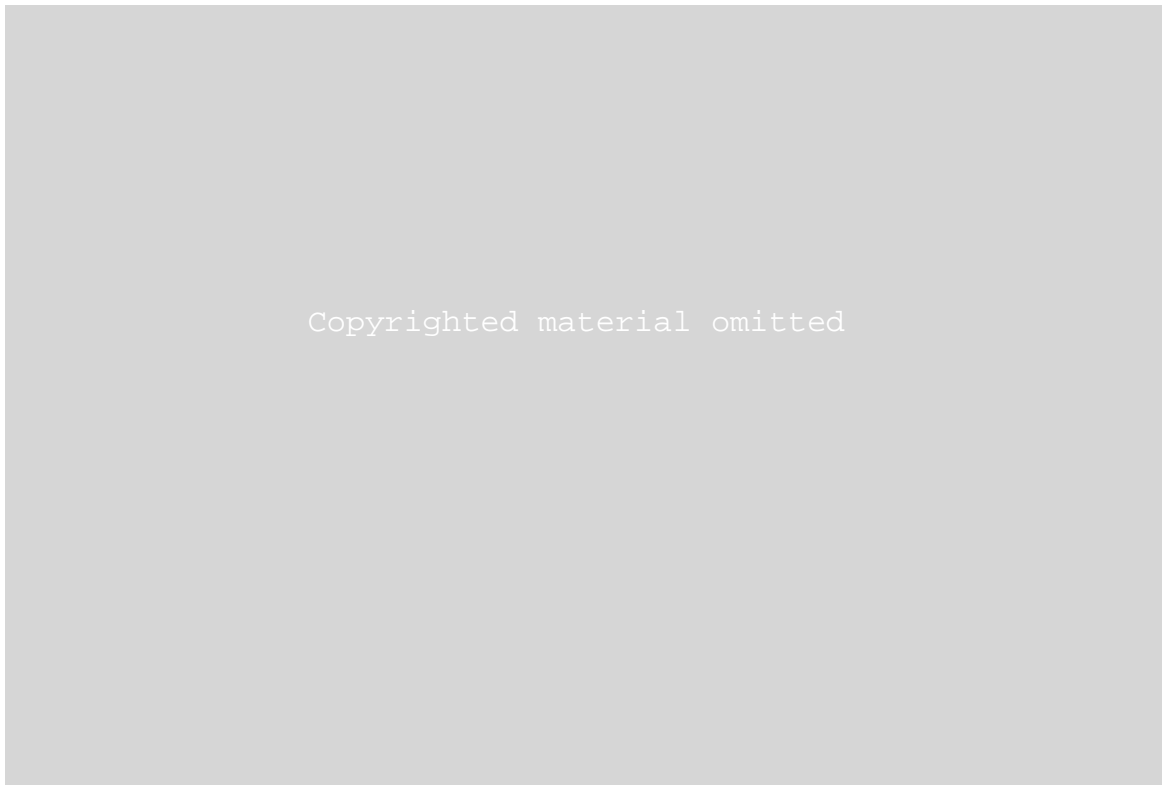


Figure 3.2. Bruce Petty, *The Age*, 28 September 1998.

In their second article published in the *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, *In defence of the political cartoonists' licence to mock*, (2004) Manning and Phiddian extend an interpretative taxonomy of political cartooning based on that developed by US art historian Charles Press in *The Political Cartoon* (1981) to categorise a range of cartoon types. They use the phrase 'savage indignation' to describe those cartoons that have a greater sense of urgency than either of Press's *descriptive cartoon* or *laughing satirical cartoon*, both of which they claim concede politics a respectful authority and 'naturalise the political process for the audience' (Manning & Phiddian, 2004: 27).

For savagely indignant cartooning, the legitimacy of the system and those who hold office in it is not the urgent issue. Rather, the urgent issues are such things as lies over weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, or politically correct suppression of information about sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities (Manning & Phiddian, 2004: 32).

They note the presence of Press' similar category as well, the 'destructive satirical' cartoon¹² which they subsume into the savagely indignant. Destructive satirical cartooning does not accept the legitimacy of the system and is, according to Charles Press (1981), consciously revolutionary. This kind of extreme cartooning seldomly appears in mass distribution daily newspapers. It tends to be confined to journals of extremist groups, though there have been times (Press cites James Gillray in Regency England and artist George Grosz in Weimar Germany) when this sort of satire becomes widespread. The most famous of all cynical gestures against the political body is, of course, the decapitation, which Gillray appropriated to good effect in the shadow of the French Revolution [see figures 3.3 and 3.4].

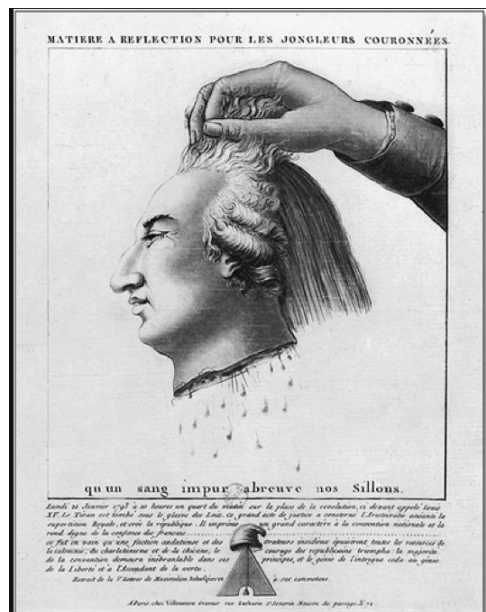


Fig. 3.3. James Gillray, *Destruction of the French Colossus*, 1798 (detail).

Fig. 3.4 Unknown artist, *Matter for reflection for the Crowned Jugglers*, 1793.

An example of similar pictorial force in a mainstream newspaper cartoon is Michael Leunig's controversial image *Leadership Qualities. 2003 AD* (2003), whose critical power arises from the weight of its bleak depiction of a violent stabbing action. As Manning and Phiddian note:

¹² For the categories *descriptive cartoon*, *laughing satirical cartoon* and *destructive satirical cartoon* see Charles Press (1981) *The Political Cartoon*, Fairleigh Dickinson, Rutherford. The *descriptive cartoon* is neutral in address, indicating 'this is the way it is' (Press, 1981: 75), the *laughing satirical cartoon* pokes fun but 'accepts the legitimacy of those they criticise' (Press, 1981: 75), the *destructive satirical cartoon* 'is meant to be cruel and hurt' (Press, 1981: 76).

Leunig's horror at an approaching war when political leaders have conjured only unconvincing justifications is simply, though shockingly apparent, in his reminder of innocence facing butchery and never knowing why (Manning & Phiddian, 2004: 32), [see figure 3.5].



Figure 3.5. Michael Leunig, *Leadership Qualities, 2003 AD*, *The Age*, 21 February 2003

Cynicism in political cartoons is associated with key attitudes like the cutting, the sardonic, derisive and savage as well as indignation, disturbance and catharsis and it can be mapped through enacted gestures.

In my collection of contemporary political cartoons from daily newspapers I have identified a wide repertoire of depicted cynical gestures performed by or against politicians, emblems and institutions. These gestural means employed by cartoonists as either depictions or graphic processes remain (apart from decapitations) a poorly addressed area of research in the literature on cartooning and I want to highlight a range of these before moving on to how I responded to them through studio practice [see figures 3.6 to 3.28].¹³

¹³ For a survey of the severed head in art see Julia Kristeva, *The Severed Head. Capital Visions* (Jody Gladding, Trans.). New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press (2011)

DECAPITATIONS

The most famous of all savage gestures: of severing, the fall, the holding aloft



Figure 3.6. Mark Knight. Sun Herald, 18 December 2007



Figure 3.7. David Rowe. The Australian Financial Review, 15 February 2011

FACIAL DISTORTIONS

The face disfigured through its own volition; not through caricature or decapitations: of mutation, ugliness, erasure.

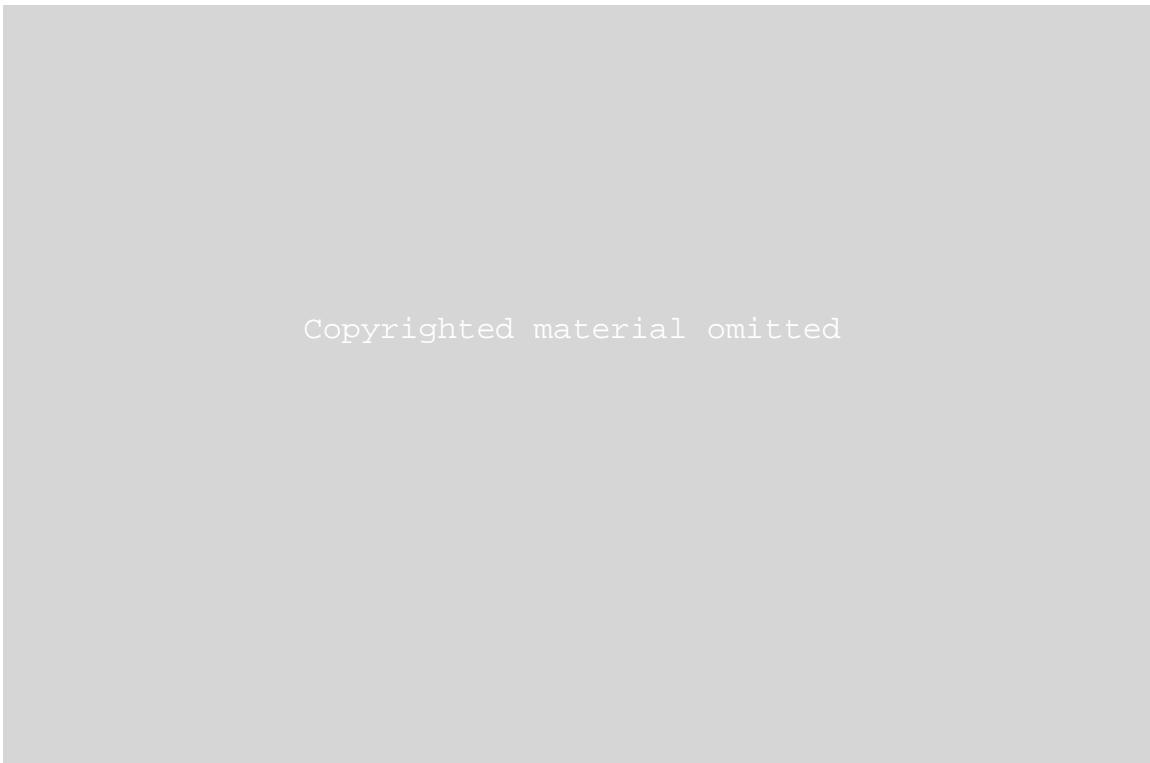


Figure 3.8. John Spooner, *The Age*, 1 November 2007



Figure 3.9. Andrew Joyner, *The Sunday Age*, 16 September 2007

STABS & POKES

Of punctures, cuts, excisions, haemorrhage



Figure 3.10. Ron Tanberg, The Age, 16 August 2007

POURS & SPILLS

Often with unpleasant bodily connotations: of fluids, semi-solids, dumping and coverage

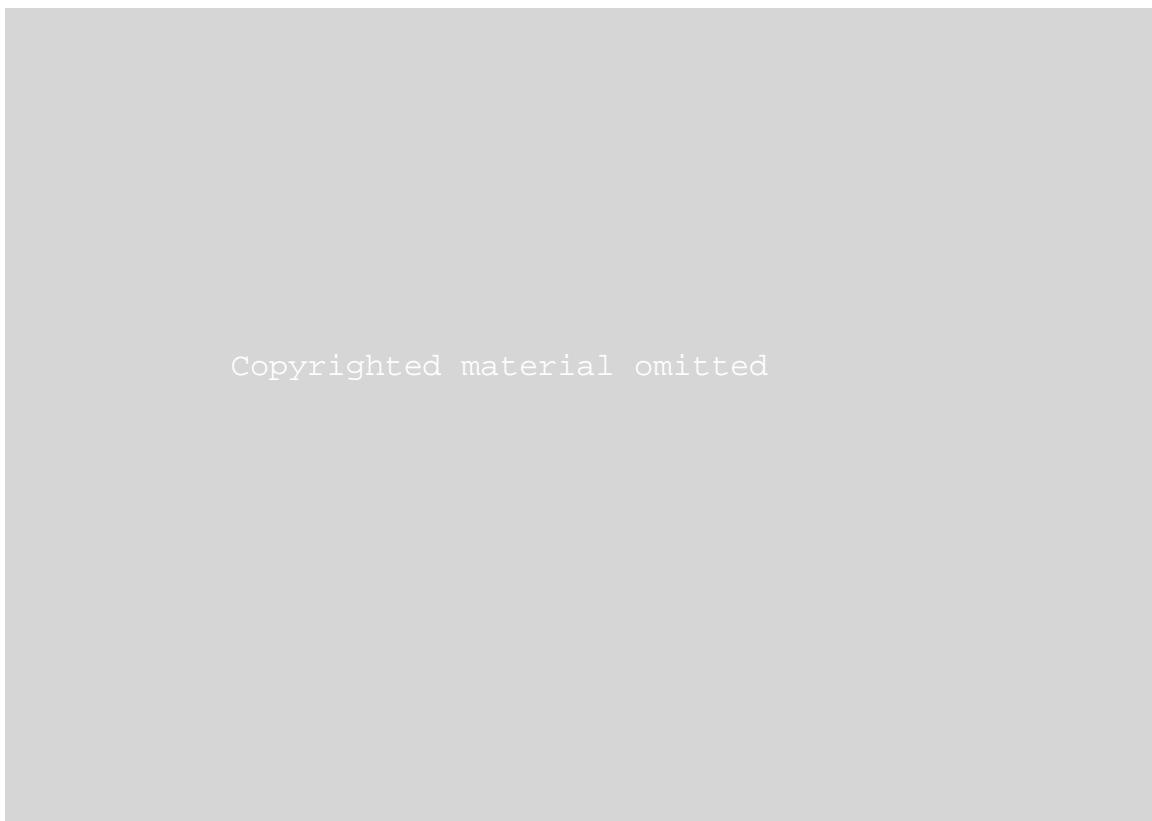


Figure 3.11. Bruce Petty, The Age, 22 October 2007

THROWS & PROJECTIONS

Of release and space and impact



Figure 3.12. Peter Nicholson, *The Australian*, 18 December 2010

DRIPS & STAINS

Of discharge, decay and gravity



Figure 3.13. Bruce Petty, *The Age*, 11 December, 2007

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 3.14. John Spooner, The Age, 6 October 2007

RESHUFFLES & SWIPES

Of movements, amended shapes and effacements and blurs

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 3.15. Bruce Petty, The Age, 29 March 2010

TAPS, TICKLES & PATS

Of subtle motions, small scale and ironic moves



Figure 3.16. David Rowe, The Australian Financial Review, 17 July 2007

GRIPS & SQUEEZES

Of compression and pressure



Figure 3.17. David Rowe, The Australian Financial Review, 2 December 2009

SUPPRESSED ACTIONS

Of absences and lack of action, build-up and containments



Figure 3.18. Alan Moir, Sydney Morning Herald, 27 August 2010

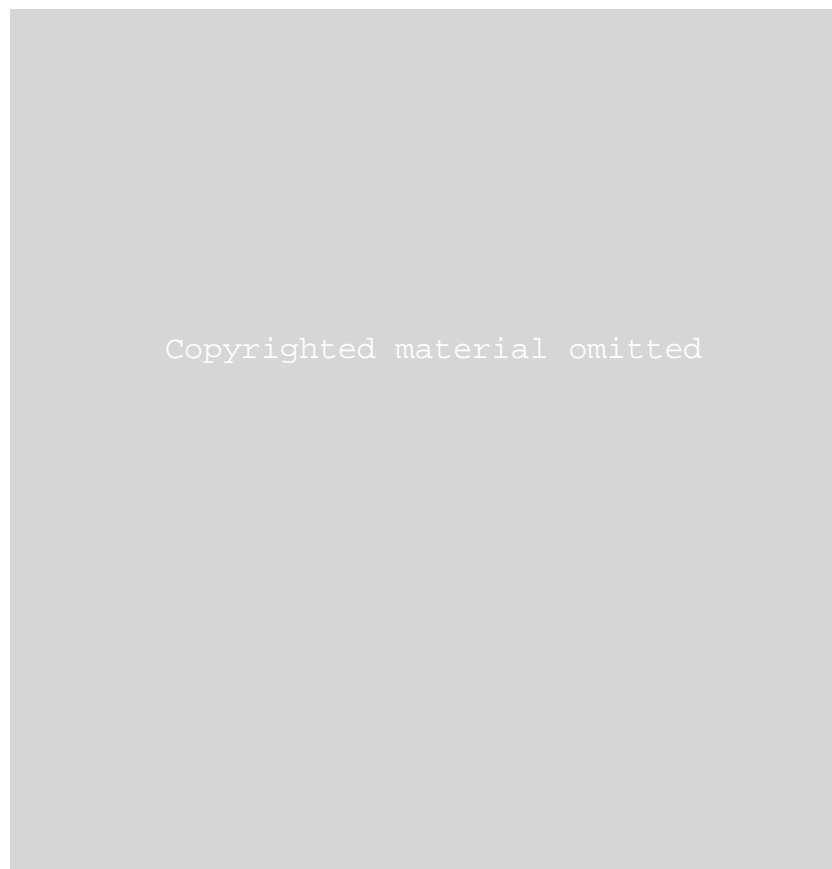


Figure 3.19. Ron Tanberg, The Age, 17 December 2010

DANCES & FOOTPRINTS

Of body movements, traces, shapes and stomps



Figure 3.20. Mark Knight, Herald Sun, 31 March 2013



Figure 3.21. Andrew Dyson, The Age, 17 December 2010

INSERTIONS

Of ingestions, placements and sarcomas



Figure 3.22. David Rowe, The Australian Financial Review, 23 July 2007



Figure 3.23. Mark Knight, Herald-Sun, 27 October 2007

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 3.24. John Spooner, Herald-Sun, 1 November 2007

PURGINGS

Of evacuations, ejaculations and expellings



Figure 3.25. Jon Kudelka, *The Australian*, 19 February, 2011



Figure 3.26. John Spooner, *The Age*, 3 November 2007

OBSCENITIES

Of abuse, billingsgate, imaged thoughts and voice



Figure 3.27. Peter Nicholson. *The Australian* (on-line version), 31 May, 2007



Figure 3.28. Jon Kudelka. *The Australian*, 27 July, 2010.

Studio Actions

Expressing derision or mocking in the form of what Umberto Eco terms the comic-obscene, 'even when authorised, and hence understood as a safety valve for tensions that otherwise would be uncontrollable' is a sort of 'compensatory-rebellion' (Eco, 2007: 135). In this sense, political cynicism as it is expressed in savagely indignant and *destructive* political cartoons shares many aspects with the idea of 'artists critique' that is outlined by Eve Chiapello in *The 'Artist Critique' of Management and Capitalism*. 'It is the active existence, within capitalist society, of a critical view of this same society' (Chiapello, 2004: 586). In this sense we can understand Leunig's cynical gesture at both the level of depiction within his cartoon as well as at the level of destructive-cartoon as gesture itself. But in Leunig's case the depiction goes beyond metaphor into an altogether more visceral identification (and that is what I have aimed to research through my art practice).

Following Wasserman, Hogan and Manning & Phiddian I began my research into ways in which artist's critique and my sense of savage indignation (often about the very same issues the daily cartoonists addressed) might be manifested through cynical gesture, producing both negative attitudes and a cathartic outlet.

1st - 17th Manifesto Desktop Drawings

The earliest works in this project that researched a range of cynical gestures were the *Manifesto Desktop Drawings* studio works on paper. The drawings began as plain sheets of heavy rag printing paper laid down over drawing desks in my studio rather like a protective blotting-paper-come-skin. On each sheet, from periods between a week and a month, usually individually but also across sheets concurrently, I captured gestures and actions that were recorded or imprinted graphically and materially on the sheets. I employed my hands (both left and right) or blades or blunt objects like the ends of a metal ruler that left indents or pigmented prints or the non brush ends of brushes in series of gestures like wipes, stabbings, cuttings, scratches and striking. These both mimicked those gestures depicted in the cartoons noted above and echoed conventional drawing techniques (it is hard to unlearn the function of familiar tools!) I used water-colour, acrylic, graphite, chalk and ink and utensils like pens, pencils, sponges and mops in a non-determined and often accidental manner.

The resulting surface of the sheets often became disrupted, soiled, burred and cut resulting in a rather suppressed palette: the reduced greys, off whites and soiled browns evoke the monochromatic graphic traditions of Francesco Goya (Spain, 1746-1828), Victor Hugo (France, 1802-1885) and Honoré Daumier (France, 1808-1879). But as immediate products of the materials used there are evident echoes with 20th Century materialist art practices, like Lucio Fontana's (Italy 1899-1968) *Concetto spaziale* drawings of 1957-59 or the gashed self-portrait prints of Australian Mike Parr (Aust., 1945). Each of these references flags the importance of the extended drawing traditions in contemporary art that since the 1960s have employ embodied gesture under the rubric

of conceptualist practices. Cornelia H. Butler and Catherine de Zegher write comprehensively on this subject in *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century* (2010), [see figures 3.29-3.45].

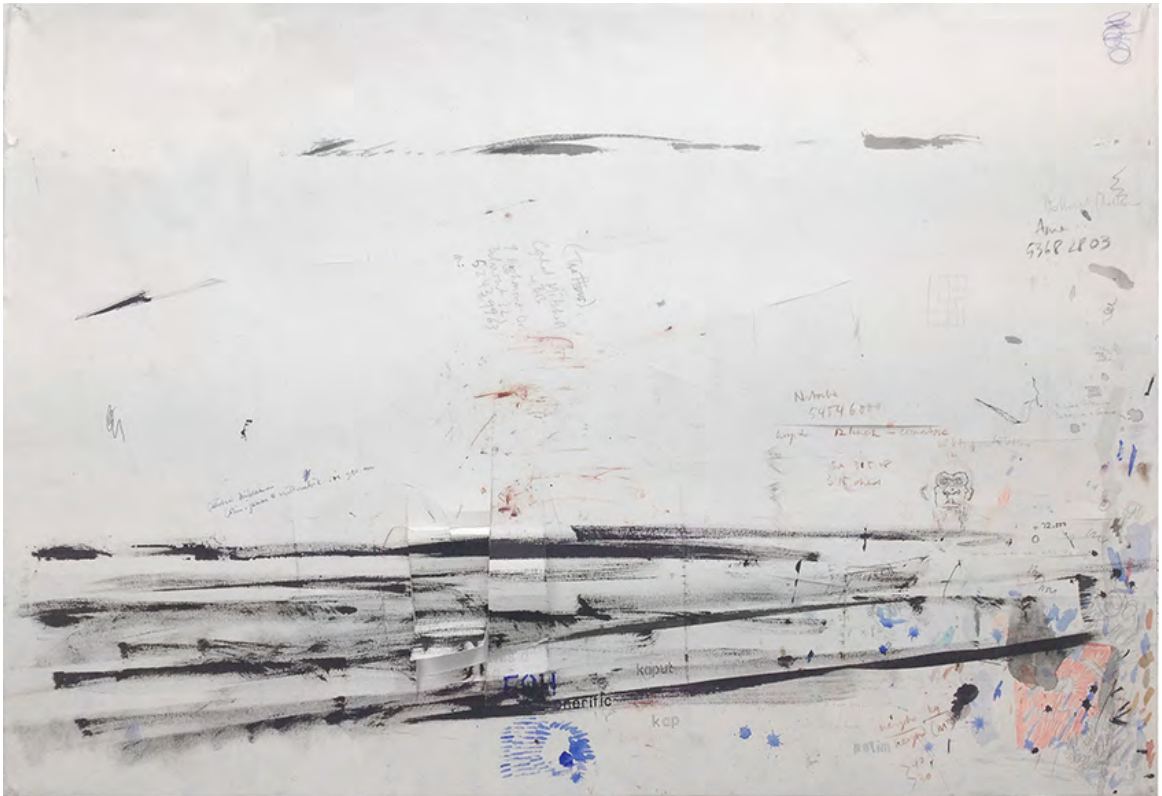


Figure 3.29. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 1* (strikes, cuts, stains), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm

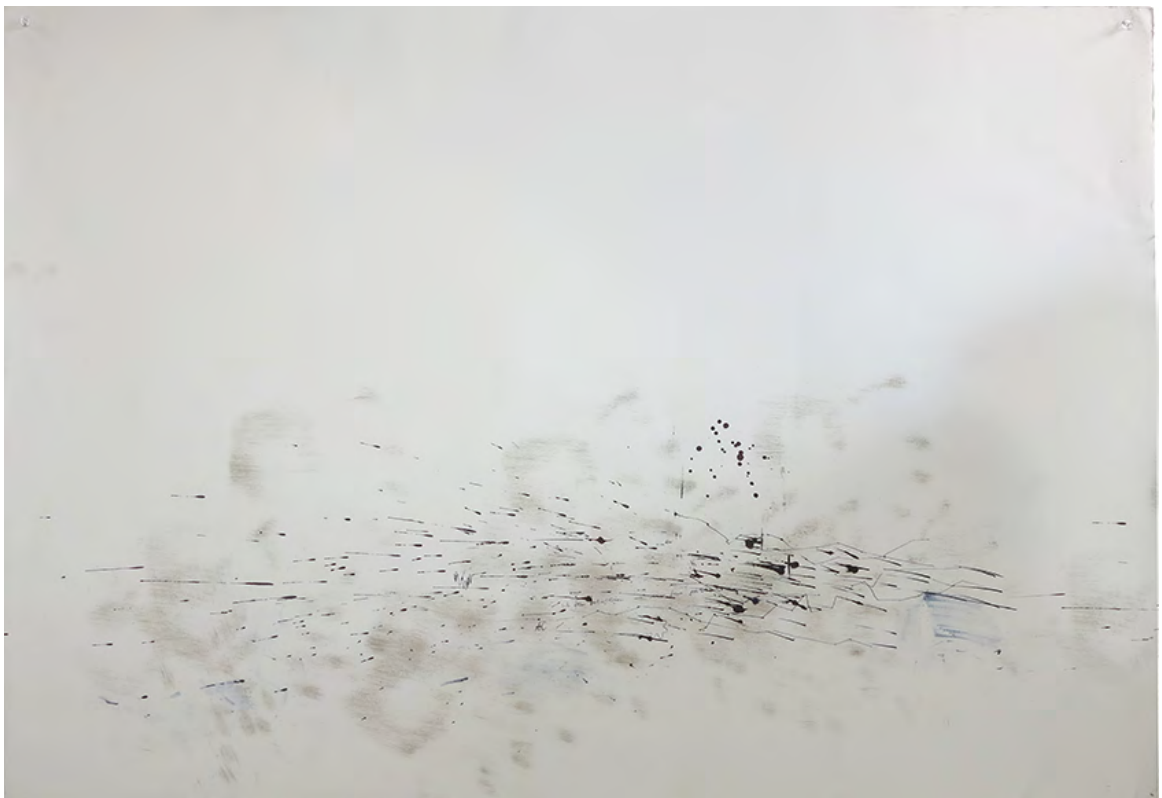


Figure 3.30. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 2* (strikes splatters, cuts), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm

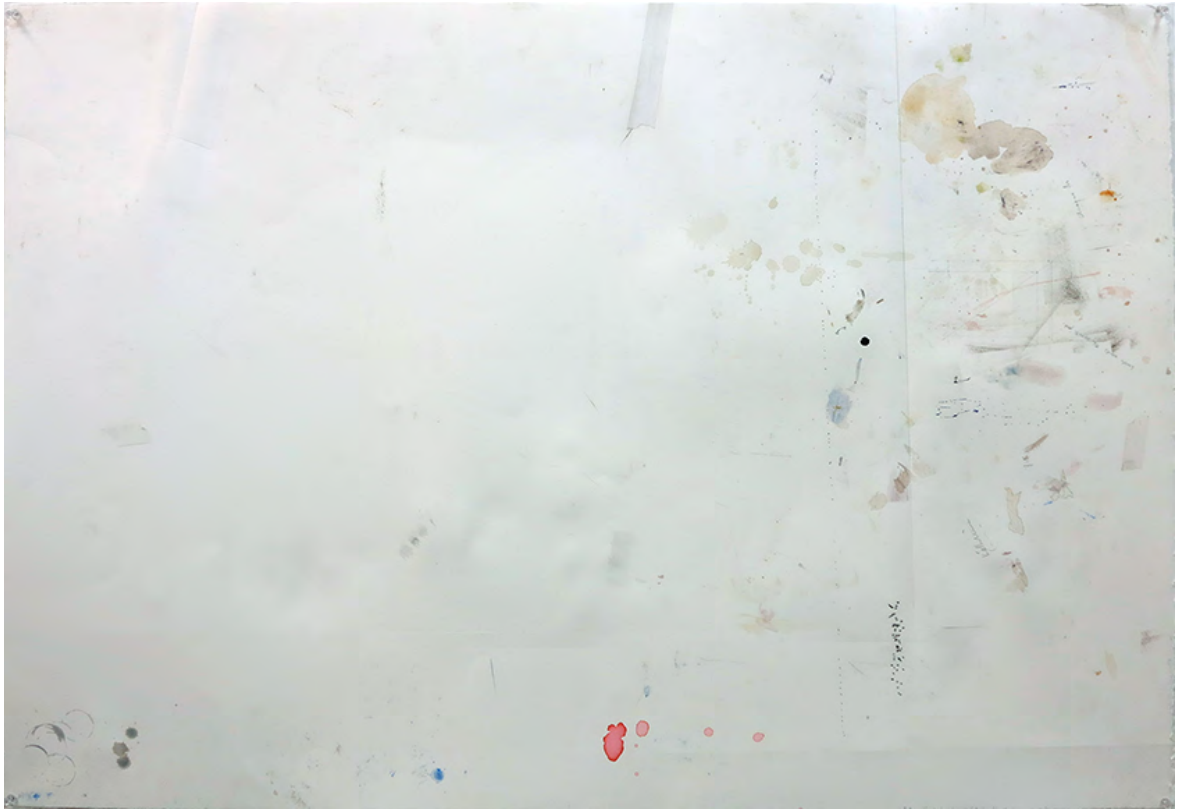


Figure 3.31. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 3 (stains, purges)*, 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.32. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 4 (swipes, hands)*, 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.33. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 5* (swipes, drips), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.34 Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 6* (incisions, stains), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.35 Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 7* (scratches, stains), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.36 Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 8* (scratches, stains, cuts), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.37. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 9* (pencil strikes, excisions), mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.38. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 10* (hands, pressings, collage, Tim Howard), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.39. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 11* (blue targets, texts), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.40. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 12* (pours, nodes, cuts, tapes), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.41. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 13* (stains, drips), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.42. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 14* (large hand gesture), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.43. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 15* (drips, pours, Howard's shadow), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.44. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 16* (hand scumble, names), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 3.45. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 17* (strikes, dripping circles, amendments), 2006-2008, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm

My drawing defacements; the strikings, abrasions, erasures, drips, stains, swipes, stabs, and moppings occurred while I mulled over current media stories, personalities or political events. Australian artist and academic Tom Nicholson has written of these drawing methodologies in relation to my practice as a 'heterogeneous kind of drawing, without the stricture of synthesis, selection and design which characterises the Renaissance tradition of drawing, or *disegno*' (Nicholson, 2000: foreword). In my mind these graphic gestures were not symbolic of any particular subject or conceptual conceit rather, in a spirit of Manning and Phiddian's savage indignation and Press' destructive satire they tested a range of emotions around my perception of Australian political events of 2007-2010 and the on-going Iraqi War. If anything the works capture the formlessness and exasperation of a frustrated domestic response to political events.

Art theorist Hal Foster suggests that from the early 1990s contemporary art tackles issues of cultural cynicism, of which capitalist nihilism (p131) is one and political dysfunction is another (p223). Foster sees in Peter Sloterdijk's concept of 'kynical' provocation (p218) ironic redemption of a prevalent cynical reason (Foster, 1996: 123). It is part of a dichotomy: kynicism - cynicism, that corresponds to self-embodiment in resistance and self-splitting in repression (Foster, 1996: 160). To quote Sloterdijk:

The phenomenon of kynicism [] becomes a type that crops up again and again historically whenever, in crisis civilisations and civilisations in crisis, consciousnesses

clash with each other. Kynicisn and cynicism are, accordingly, constants in our history, typical forms of polemical consciousness “from below” and “from above”. In them, the opposition of high culture and people’s culture is lived out as the exposure of paradoxes within high-cultural ethics (Sloterdijk, 1987: 218).

A work like *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No.9* (pencil strikes) exhibits a futile, repetitive, rather suppressed scratching gesture. I simply used a Staedler Mars Lumograph pencil on its side edge to burnish the paper, which produced a cerulean - cobalt blue abrasion.¹⁴ Those patches of scratched and burnished paper disrupt the pictorial field, which I later echoed by cutting in other sections. [see figure 3.46].



Figure 3.46. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 9* (detail)

At a fundamental level I enquired into whether the *Manifesto Desktop Drawings*, which are a self-centered and autographic activity can provoke a parallel between maker and viewer different to a representational image - that if a spectator will ‘see’ the drawings they might in effect imagine me making them.

¹⁴ In later drawings this monochromatic cobalt palette predominated, imbuing these sheets with the associative and psychological aspects available to colour See the following *Bodies Politic* drawings that are informed by Yves Klein’s body prints (Chapter 4).

In *Drawing Distinctions, the varieties of graphic expression* (2005), Patrick Maynard, Professor Emeritus at the University of Western Ontario links depicted mark and imagined action in maker and viewer through a notion of philosopher Kendall Walton's theories of depiction and self-imagining outlined in *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (1993). Walton stresses the significance of imaginative participation and self-imagining for visual depictions (Walton, 1993: 90). For him visual depictions are *functional* items. They are usually purpose-made artefacts that mandate we imagine in certain ways, depending on their relevant properties (Maynard, 2005: 88), they prescribe certain kinds of imagining activities to those who look on them. In short we imagine our own actions regarding a depiction (Walton, 1993: 52-53). Or, as I might suggest a self-evident (hand swipe) brush stroke allows a spectator to imagine a brush making a stroke (their hand making a swipe). Furthermore, I extrapolated how a viewer might occupy the space I occupied to make gestures and marks - bent above and over a sheet at a table - an attitude which emphasises the material surface of the paper and its duration over time and one which rehearses its history.¹⁵

Pamela Lee in *Some Kinds of Duration. The Temporality of Drawing as Process Art* (1999) cites Richard Serra's dictum regarding process drawings, that there is no way to 'make' such drawings - they simply are.

The conventional routes followed by artist and academician alike—are outstripped by the sheer fact of the gesture itself. Here, the question of what properly constitutes drawing, of drawing technics, is bypasses by the condition of its actuality (Lee, 1999: 25).

I have not wanted to over-stress the links within this drawing project to the historical categories of Minimalist and process practices of the 1960s discussed by Lee. For as she cautiously points out the institutionalisation of process art 'verged paradoxically on becoming an art historical category, or even worse, a kind of style' (Lee, 1999: 26). I have intentionally avoided a discussion of cartoons or my practice in terms of style.¹⁶ Unlike contemporary artists like Rebecca Horn (Germany, 1944) or Janine Antoni (Bahamas, 1964) I wanted to remain focused within the range of the everyday political as distinct from the politics of gender or other specific identity issues. Furthermore I want to underline the essence of these processes in drawing as studio based actions and primary making and doing research activities.

¹⁵ This had important ramifications for the ideas of display of these works as outlined in Chapter 5 and notions of extended encounter with works discussed in Chapter 6.

¹⁶ A number of international exhibitions over the last ten years have surveyed historical developments around categories of processes of drawing. See, *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act*, New York, Sydney, Liverpool, (Newman, 2003).

Amended 'attitudinal' gestures

In addition to their primary 'kynical' attitudes (to employ Sloterdijk's term)¹⁷ I allowed the *Manifesto Desktop Drawings* to accrue a secondary level of actions or gestural attitudes to the original sheets themselves. These responses, rather in the mode of recursive action research methods (see Chapter 2) revisited and re-addressed the works. As is often the case in creative practice, the maker (myself) often adopts the first spectator-role in relation to his or her own work. This re-mapping of the works included references to other studio process like water-colour rings,¹⁸ additions of images, cartoon-like doodles and copied cultural motifs as well as editing processes like collage and montage - either literally as a cut and paste of sections of drawings into and from other sheets (often the backs of drawings are like repaired sites with tape criss-crossing the page) or as print transfers of marks or images. The drawings also accumulated lists and semi-autobiographical reflections and notations about friends or relatives. Emending imagery from both public and private sources forged a type of empowering ownership of ideas and located many of the cynical gestures in a local context.¹⁹ They were also a way of understanding how cynical gestures might operate in relation to a broader field of images, depictions and texts.

Much later I made additions of printed and transferred captions, internal dialogues and malapropisms. All these additions inflected the field of depictions, which become narratively quite similar to political cartoons. As an example *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 15* (drips, pours, Howard's shadow), worked on during the time of the 2007 Howard - Rudd Election campaign began with an arbitrary set of drips emanating from a spill at the top of the page. An undulating line of staccato tapping marks began on the right side of the page and after a few days began to suggest a monster-figure of sorts that came into a perpendicular relation to a cluster of splotches running parallel to the bottom of the sheet (made by blowing ink puddles with air through a straw). At some point these suggested a figure-ground shadow relationship and I intuited this suggested a simile for John Howard's seeking during the election campaign for a rationale for his re-election. The text line 'John Howard searching for his shadow' was added to the drawing as an extension of the repetitive drawing lines (an accumulative tapping motion). The drawing lasted 3 weeks or so, from its initial cynical gesture phase through its amended stages, before it was abandoned [see figure 3.47].

¹⁷ Pamela Lee refers to Old Master drawings, whose contours we witness unwinding in space and whose each stroke is 'kinesis graphically embodied' (Lee, 1999: 27)

¹⁸ See the *Amendment drawings*

¹⁹ See Chapter 4 on James Gillray's use of the domestic

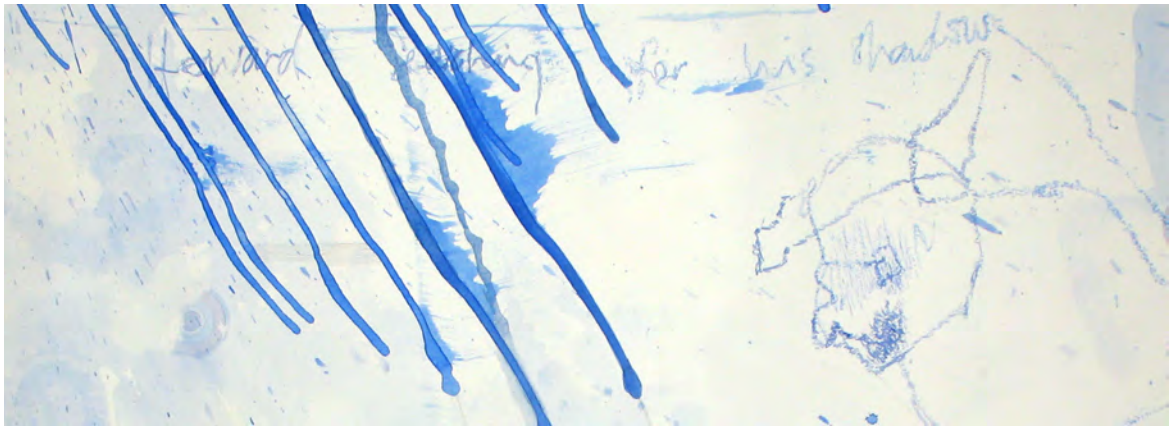


Figure 3.47. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Desktop Drawing No. 15* (detail), mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm

A number of contemporary artists whose works are closely aligned with cartooning sensibilities, or whose works employ graphic gestural elements and pictorial amendments alongside formal cartooning motifs like cells, gutters, speech bubbles include Chris Johanson (USA, 1968), David Shrigley, Dan Perjovschi, Kerry James Marshall (USA, 1955) and Raymond Pettibon (USA, 1957). Each works with a similar methodology, including an excess of the autographic gesture, flips between depiction and trace, the political address and often scatological humour. There is a facility and speed associated with raw graphic mark-making that is communicated to the viewer, a sense of accumulating montaged metaphors and multiple allusions to both the domestic everyday and the political and as well as an expressive charge achieved through a populist idiom. Some, like Johansen began their career as a cartoonist.

In response to developments in the *Manifesto Desktop Drawings* I wanted to examine a specific set of cynical gestures and amendments sustained through a series of works fully realised in the context of contemporary art. From Australian political cartoons I identified the drip, the stain and the chance accident suggested by Bruce Petty (see figure 3.13 above) but also a sense of ironically nuanced and conflicted desires reminiscent of Alan Moir (see figure 3.18). From art I was interested in a mix of attitudes, exemplified in Jasper Johns' (USA, 1930) series of 'device' drawings that derived from his large gestural drawing in charcoal, *Diver* (1961), the dadaist iconoclastic gestures of Francis Picabia (France, 1879-1953) exemplified in the versions of *La sainte verge* (1920)²⁰ and particularly, the savagely ironic Marcel Broodthaers' (Belgium, 1924-1976) work, *la peste*, (1973). I was also drawn to the whimsically 'laughing satirical' cartoon of New Yorker magazine cartoonist Saul Steinberg (USA, 1914-1999), *New World 'Spiral'* (1964)²¹ [see figures 3.48i-ii to 3.50].

²⁰ See Legge, Elizabeth (1996) 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Virgin: Francis Picabia's La Sainte Vierge'. *Word & Image*, 12(2), 218-242.

²¹ See Rosenberg, Harold (1979) *Saul Steinberg*. London: Andre Deutsch.



Figure 3.48i-ii. Francis Picabia, *La saint verge*, 1920, 1st & 2nd versions, ink on paper, each 32 x 24cm



Figure 3.49. Marcel Broodthaers, *la peste*, 1973, acrylic and ink on canvas, 144 x 112cm

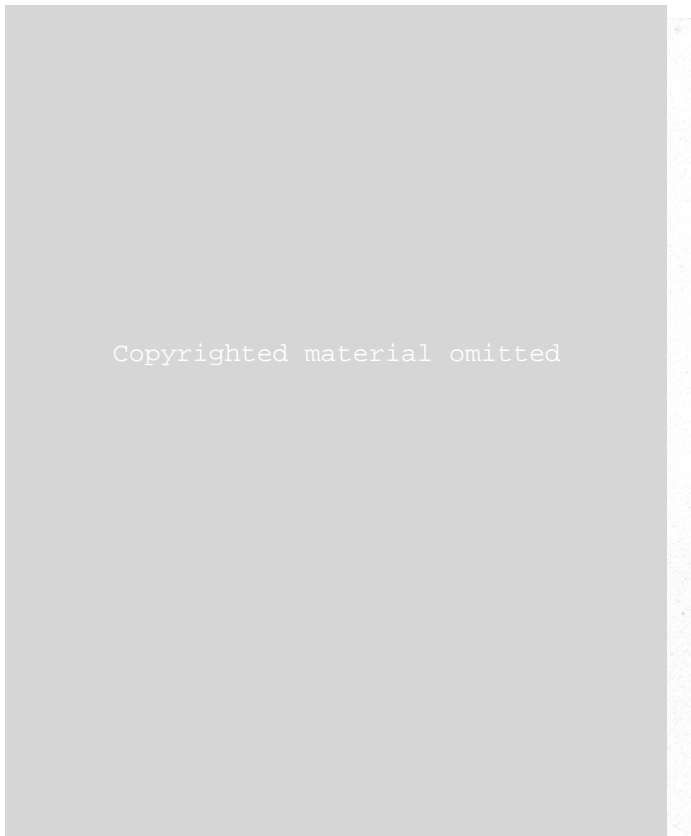


Figure 3.50. Saul Steinberg, *New World (The Spiral)*, *New Yorker*, 1964

American critic Thomas McEvilley has described Broodthaers' form of interventionist image-making as: 'the world of political divisions becomes an arbitrary, artificial overlay on a material reality that lacks it' (McEvilley, 1989: 110). The title and embedded text caption of Broodthaers *la Peste* is a reference to Albert's Camus 1947 novel *La Peste* (The Plague). Where Camus' novel has been read as a treatment of the French resistance to German occupation during World War II (Gray, 2007), Broodthaer's drawing, in line with his object-based works has been interpreted by Benjamin Buchloh as encoding Marxist doctrines or reflections of them.²² *La Peste* conflates metaphorical readings of fascist political intent with an ideological critique of the commodification of art by mainstream culture. However, McEvilley doubts whether Broodthaers' connections to Marxism, 'to varying degrees, but hardly pervading the artist's life - should control interpretation of the oeuvre' (McEvilley, 1999: 71). McEvilley highlights that when Broodthaers did talk about his work, 'it was not in terms of ideological content but, with whatever ironies in place, in terms of beauty. A level of sentiment and nostalgia sweetens the sometimes-bitter draught of the oeuvre' (McEvilley, 1999: 85).

These combined references map an area in which a kind of reflective political response might be researched, ranging across defacing iconoclastic gestures, pictorial ironies and optical beauty. Crucial to this is a more subtle reading of cynical gesture than that evident in cartoon depictions already discussed. What we are calling a cynical gesture (in a critical political context) in cartooning

²² See Buchloh, Benjamin (Ed.) (1988), *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*. Cambridge: MIT Press; Crimp, Douglas (1989), *This is Not a Museum of Art, Marcel Broodthaers*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center; Oppitz, Michael (1974), *Marcel Broodthaers : Catalogue*. Brussels: Société des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts Bruxelles.

is referred to by McEvelley in contemporary art terms, as an *attitudinal* gesture. In his *Thirteen Ways of looking at a Blackbird*, McEvelley characterizes 'attitudinal gestures (wit, irony and parody and so on)' as the *qualifiers* of already existent content (McEvelley, 1991: 70); whether the existing content is the material ground, metaphorical ground or social ground it constitutes part of the work's content.

The desire to persuade, for example, is a form of intentionality that saturates some works and involves itself in all their effects. []. In irony, wit and so on, some level of content is presented by the artist with indications that his or her attitude toward it is not direct and asseverative but indirect and perverse. The process is complex. The viewer's mind compares the statement received with another hypothetical statement which the mind constructs as representing the normal or direct version, and by contrast with which the abnormal and indirect approach can be perceived and measured. Thus ironic indirection, entering into another category of content, criticizes that content at the same time it states it, and alters the charge of meaning (McEvelley, 1991: 82).

Attitudinal gestures supply a broader scope for making that encompasses not only primary drawing artefacts but those that create new meaning when directed against the works themselves as disorderings of existing depictions, captions and so on. This refers as much to the spiral in the context of the drawing figure in Steinberg's image (a character who traces his world in spite of its political complexities), the text "La Peste" in the context of the stains in Broodthaers' work *and* the stains themselves against the whole ground of the support. Typically for art, complexities abound. And typically, the work is not simply dogmatic in its approach to the viewer but seeks to engage the viewer in the process of content construction.

1st - 12th Amendments

The *Amendment* drawings were larger body-scale water-colour works on paper made up from many concentric watercolour rings, traced in pencil and hand coloured one-by-one applying a continuous circular gesture and head of wet medium. In the studio each drawing took an extended period to complete as the rings gradually accrued. As I completed each ring (they begin at the top and are drawn down each side in parallel arcs), I loaded a head of wet pigment such that it eventually and inevitably spilled from its path and gravitated to the bottom of the sheet down and over earlier rings, sometimes deviating or finding a new path, but always modifying those rings over which it passed until it fell from the paper and was captured by and stained a balsa wood tray or 'receiver'.

Materially explicit in the *Amendments* is the fact that the water-colour rings are a co-centric, rendered ground controlled and directed by me against which the drip is to a large extent an

autonomous gestural vehicle commanded by gravity and the absorption capacity of paper. There is alongside a pure optical impression a strong material presence, coupled with a sense of spoiling. There is a tone of growing complexity and self-defacement.

The series began as more crude tracings of the circular form and evolved into more tightly-serried rings with a honed sense of colour palette. The amount of drips increased correspondingly. Initially the receiver trays were not present in the works and the drips merely puddled on my studio floor. My reading of Michael Bakhtin's 'grotesque method' alerted me to the fact that crucially these drips needed to be both acknowledged and recycled into the drawing. Thus the receiver arrests the drip from its 'normal' discharged state and redeems it via the base, lower bodily realms and back into the pictorial body of the work. Not only would this formally acknowledge lost aspects of the studio process and allow them to re-enter the meaning of the work but it would sublimate their material objectiveness into symbolic readings.

In visual-pictorial terms the *Amendments* contrast the concentric rings forms with vertical columns, which elicits a number of associative readings of the incongruities between disk and column, the elevated or grounded, the head and trunk and the perfect-imperfect. Melbourne based Age newspaper art reviewer Robert Nelson epitomised this narrative (allegorical) function in a published review of the works,

ultimate sublimity is experienced as the supreme anticlimax. I wonder if that's also the discourse around Greg Creek's perfect circles at Sarah Scout. At the heart of their geometric perfection, as if in the otherworldly orbits of Dante's Paradise, there's a catastrophic leak (Nelson, 2009).

In my preferred reading the viewer's resolution of such incongruities in the *Amendments* works renders the topic of political law-making compromised and failed but also about a positive congress. Such were my aims therefore to suggest that all ideals must be amended and their purity or indeed beauty as concept or ideal must to some extent be compromised to co-exist in the real world real-politic [see figures 3.51i-iii, 3.52 to 3.64i-ii].

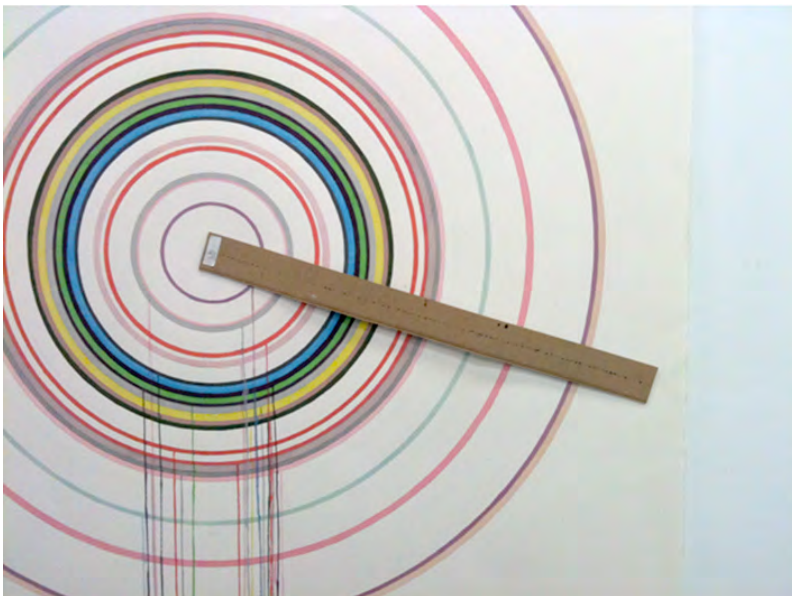
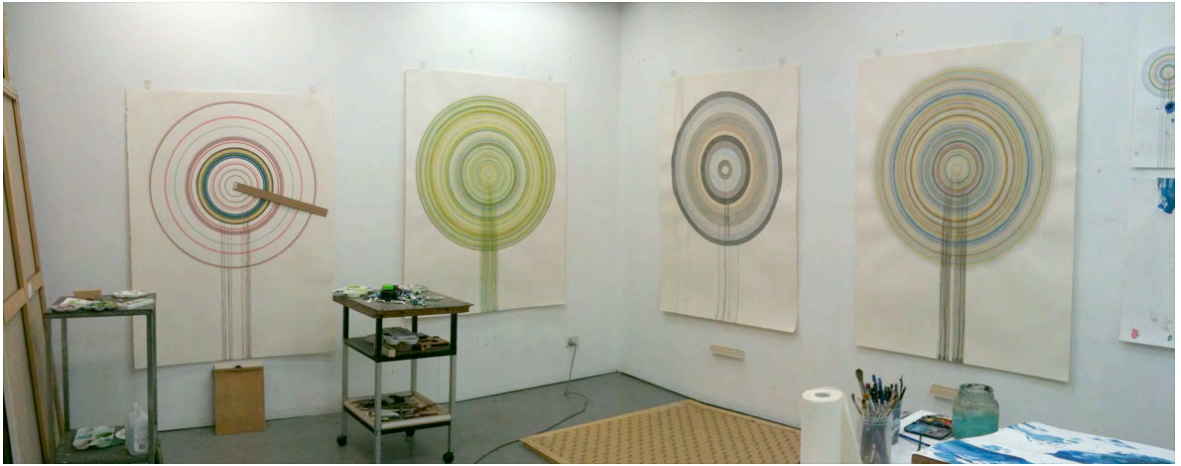


Figure 3.51i-iii. Greg Creek, *Amendments*, Studio views (Northcote, Melbourne)



Figure 3.52. Greg Creek, *1st Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm

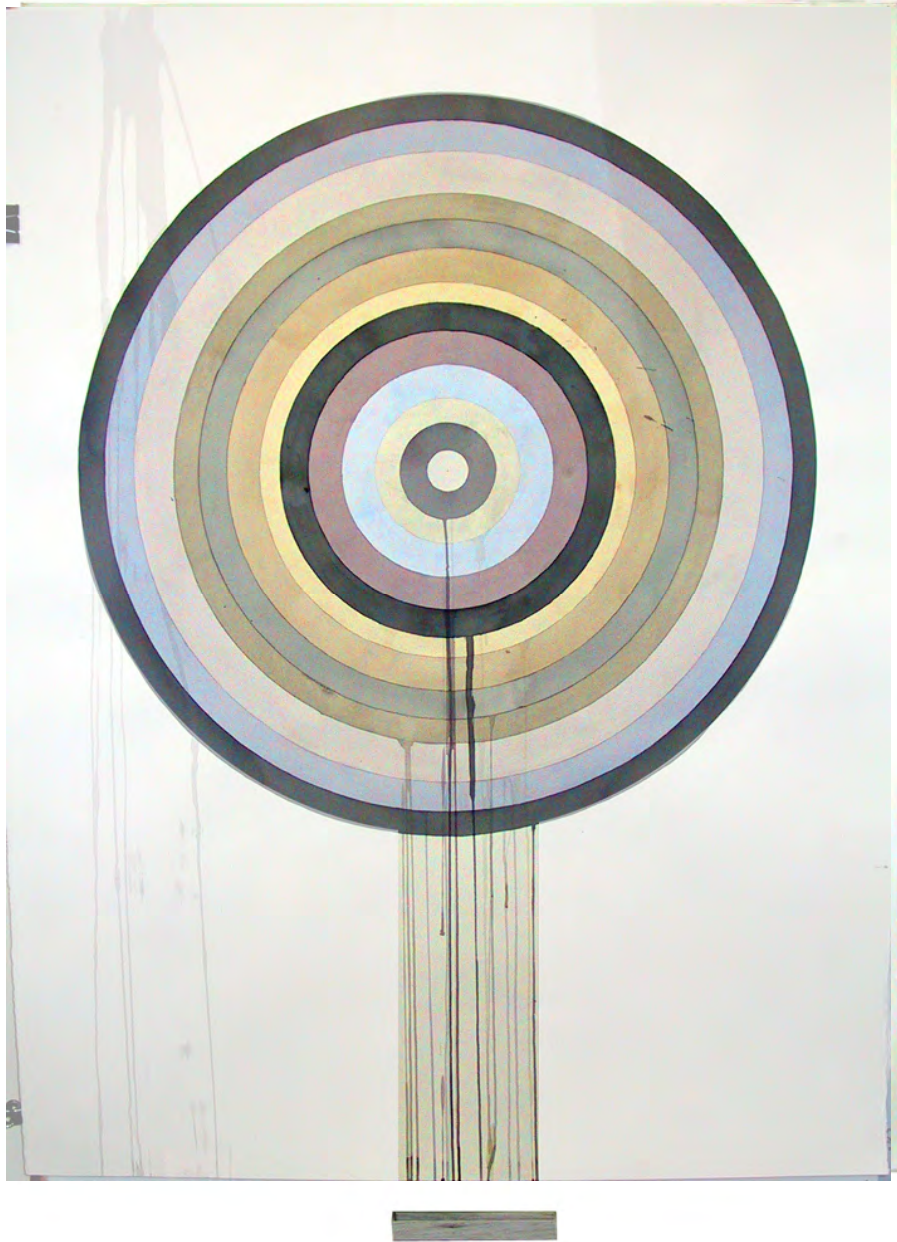


Figure 3.53. Greg Creek, *2nd Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm

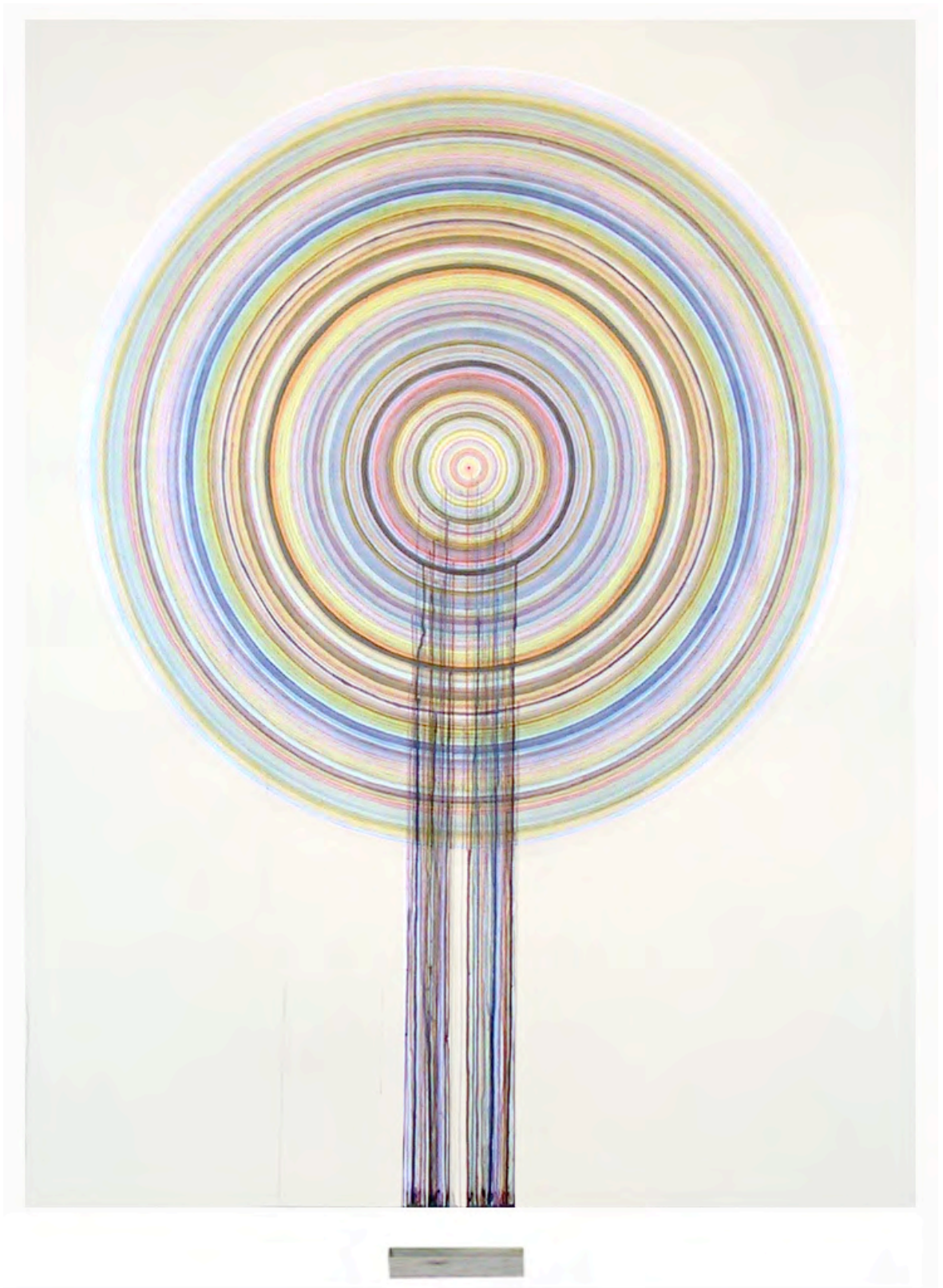


Figure 3.54. Greg Creek, *3rd Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm



Figure 3.55. Greg Creek, *4th Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm

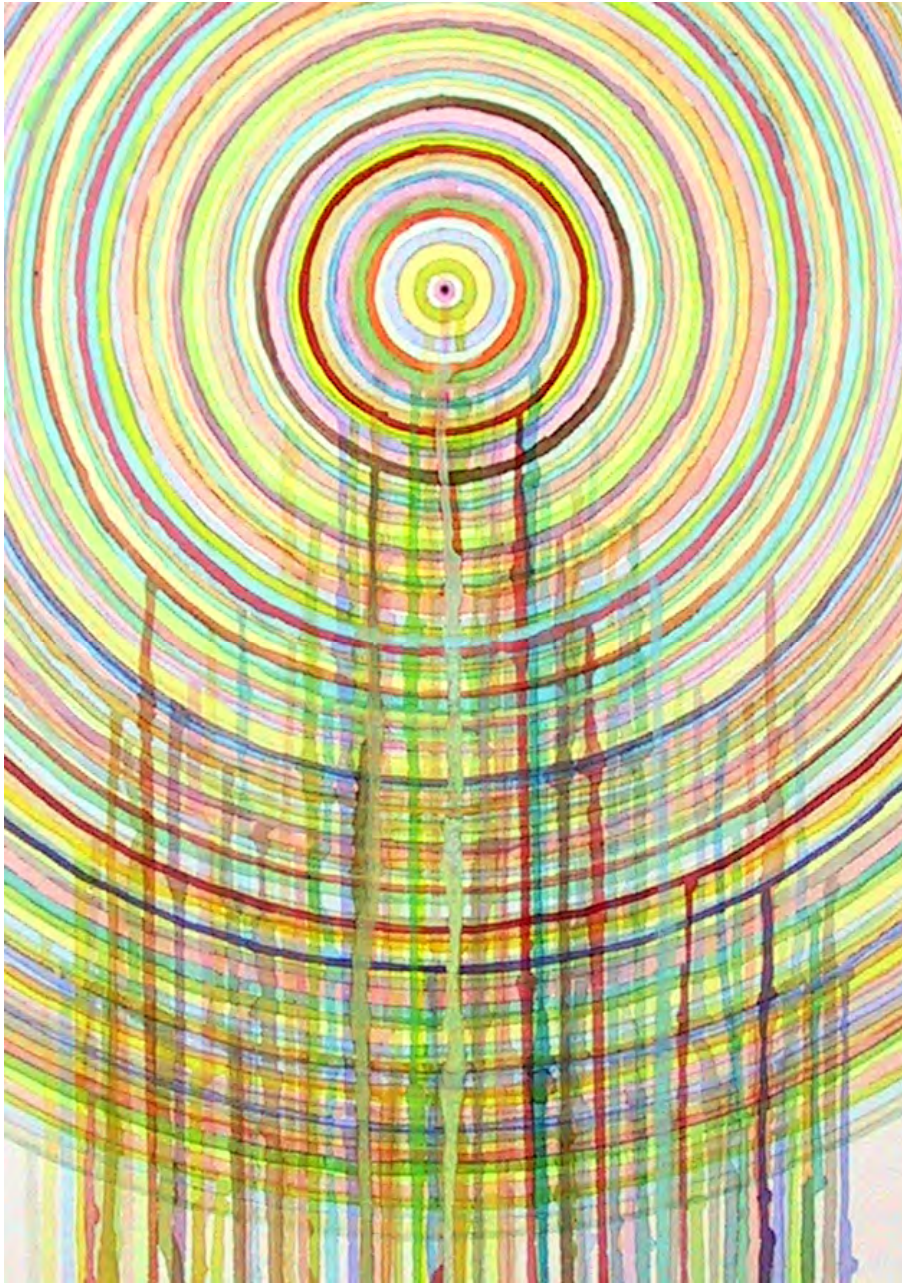


Figure 3.56i-ii Greg Creek, *4th Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm (drip detail, 'receiver' detail)

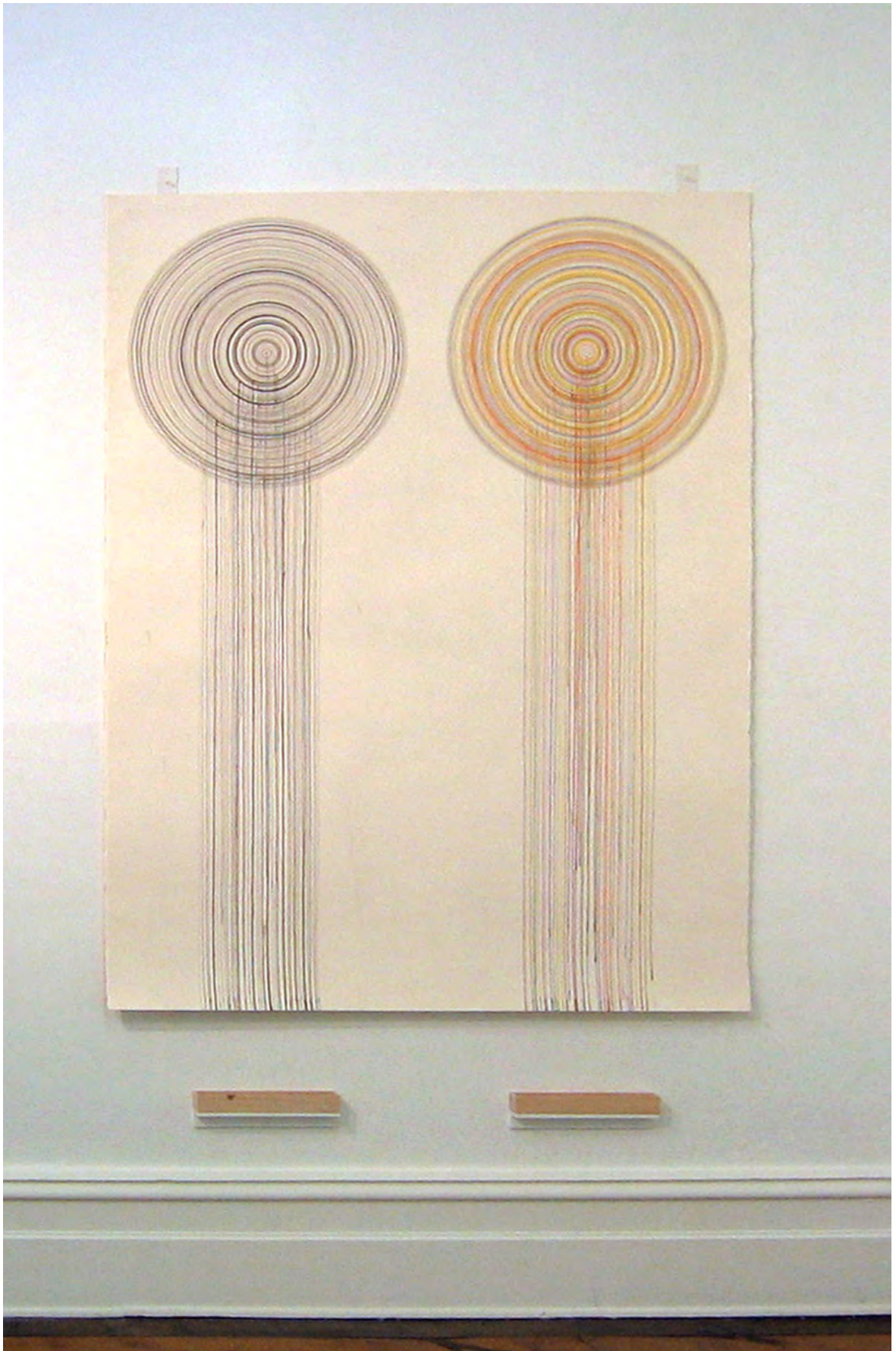


Figure 3.57. Greg Creek, *5th Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip trays. 120 x 180 x 3cm

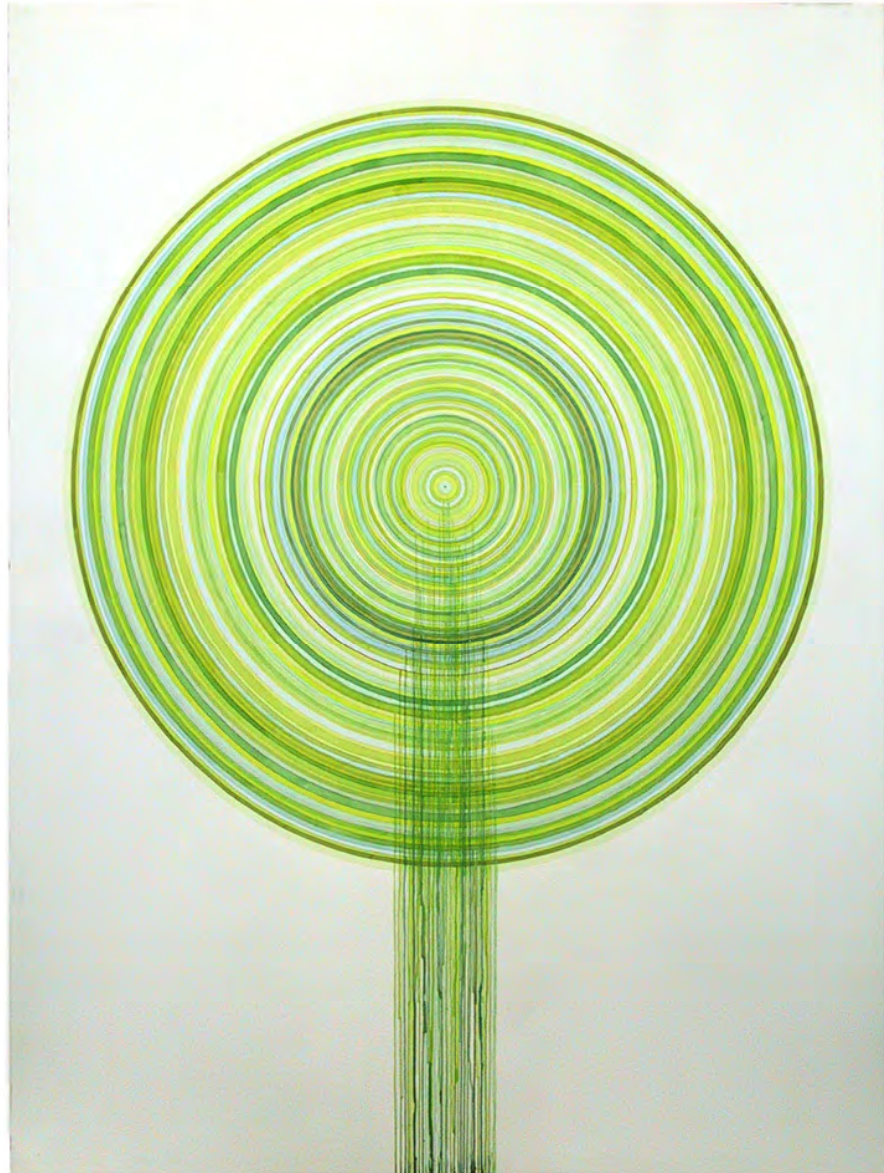


Figure 3.58i-ii. Greg Creek, *6th Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm (and drip tray detail)



Figure 3.59. Greg Creek, *7th Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm



Figure 3.60. Greg Creek, *8th Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm

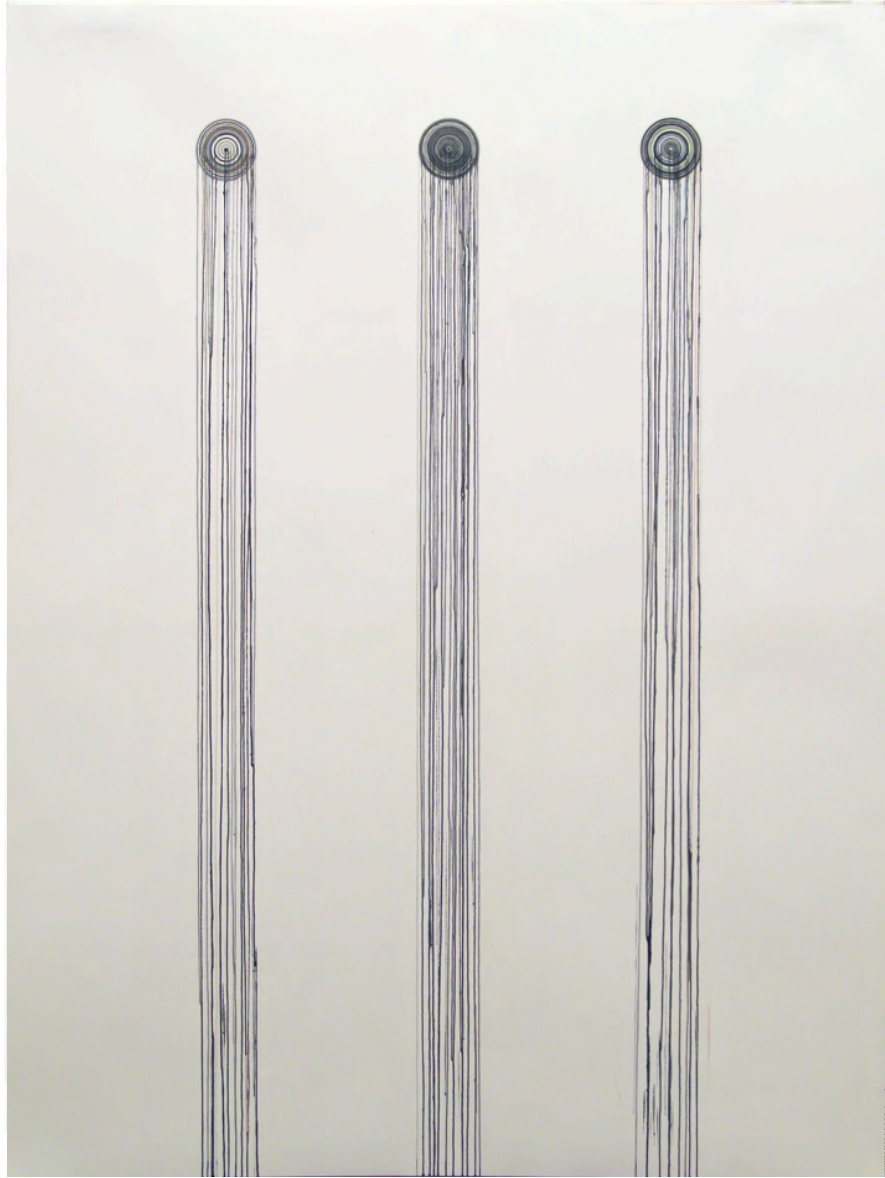


Figure 3.61. Greg Creek, *9th Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm

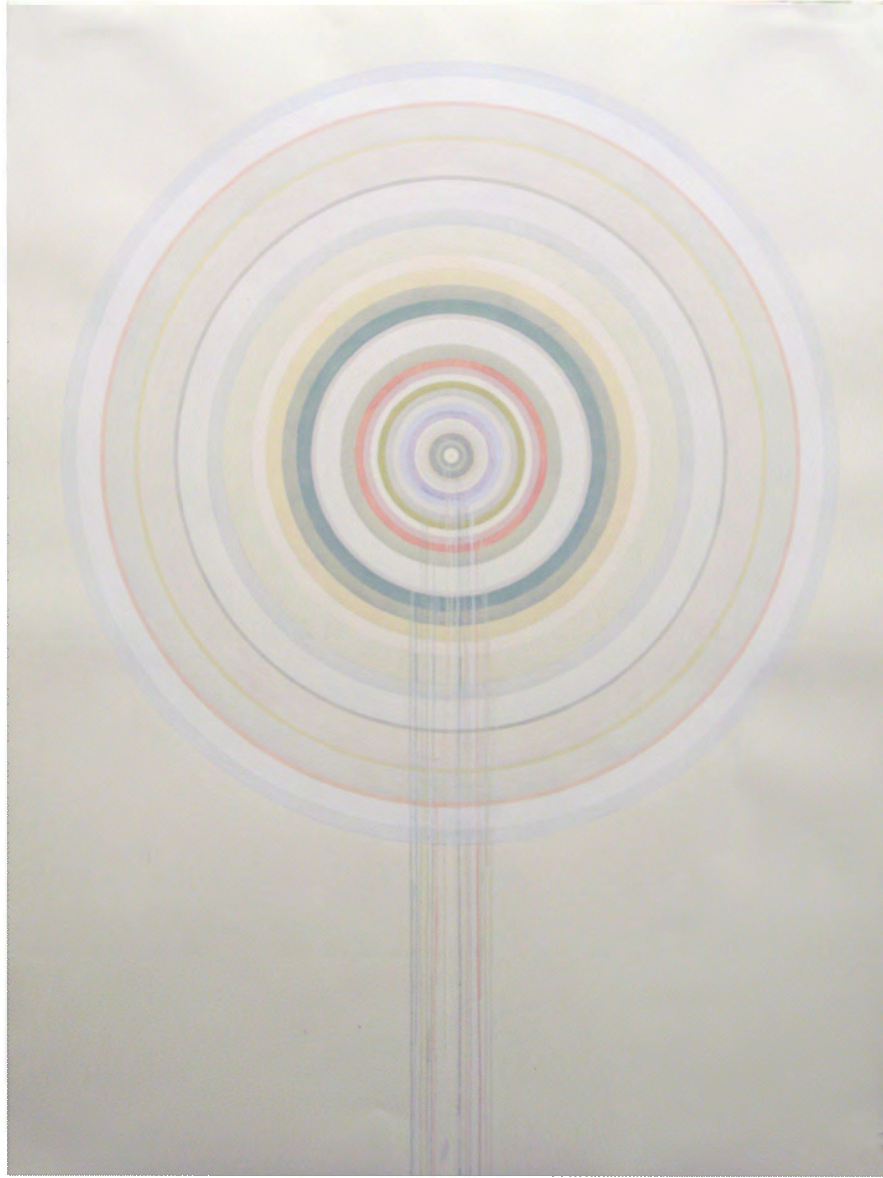


Figure 3.62. Greg Creek, *10th Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180cm



Figure 3.63. Greg Creek, *12th Amendment*, water-colour on paper, balsa drip tray. 120 x 180 x 3cm



Figure 3.64i-ii.
Greg Creek, *Amendments*. Installation view (8th, 9th, 10th, 3rd Amendment). Sarah Scout Gallery
Greg Creek, *Amendments*. Installation view (6th, 7th Amendment). Sarah Scout Gallery .

Attitudinal gestures in political cartoons

My research through the *Manifesto Desktop Drawings* and the *Amendments* has suggested ways in which we may identify and consider uses of (cynical) attitudinal gestures in political cartooning itself as an area of new knowledge.

I may define certain *attitudinal gestures* in political cartoons as the use of embodied gestures and material traces employed within and against the cartoon itself as a means to further engage the viewer in critical reflection. They differ from the *depiction* of actions and gestures as examined earlier in that they are the reproduced artefact of performed gestures by the graphic artist him or herself. Such meta-gestures potentially activate Walton's theories of depiction and 'self-imagining' (Walton, 1993) as well as McEvelley's notion of ironic indirection that alters the charge of meaning (McEvelley, 1991: 82). As I have earlier suggested, a self-evident hand swipe allows a spectator to imagine their hand making a swipe. Taken further, such invited gestures potentially co-opt the viewer into a cathartic and social action; an event in which agency becomes attitudinal as well.

In this there are similarities with the German Weimar republic director and writer Bertold Brecht's concepts of the *social gest*. In his discussion of gestures and representation in theatre, film and visual art, *Diderot, Brecht and Eisenstein* (1977) Roland Barthes frames Brecht's concept of a social gest (or gesture) through a notion of the staged tableau. When such representations occurs, Barthes argues, it must be decided whether the gesture within it is social or not (Barthes, 1977: 74). As Barthes writes,

the tableau is a pure cut-out segment with clearly defined edges... it has something to say (something moral, social) ... it is simultaneously significant, impressive and reflexive (Barthes, 1977: 70).

Barthes might well be writing of the site of the daily political cartoon. This instant for Barthes and Brecht of the social gest is that of a gesture bearing the weight of a history (it is never only a gesticulation) in which a whole social dynamic can be read. Not every gest is social, Barthes makes explicit. For him there is nothing social in a man pushing off a fly but there is when pushing off guard dogs. The public contexts of gestures activate the gesture as potentially political.

When I formulated these insights through making in the studio I revisited my collection of contemporary political cartoons from daily newspapers in order to identify examples of such attitudinal gestures. In the following examples the cartoonist's attitudinal gesture occurs against the ground of the newspaper itself or invites of the viewer a real-world gesture as a form of cynical, regenerative critique [see figures 3.65 to 3.70].

EDITORIAL GESTURES

At the editorial level of the newspaper, of self-deprecation.



Figure 3.65. *Dirt Trail*, Sunday Age, 21 October 2007, p11

SPLATTERS, SIGNS and SCHEMATICS

Of actions introduced against the body of the cartoon itself



Figure 3.66. Matt Golding, The Sunday Age. 30 September 2007.



Figure 3.67. Peter Nicholson, *The Australian*, 17 March 2007

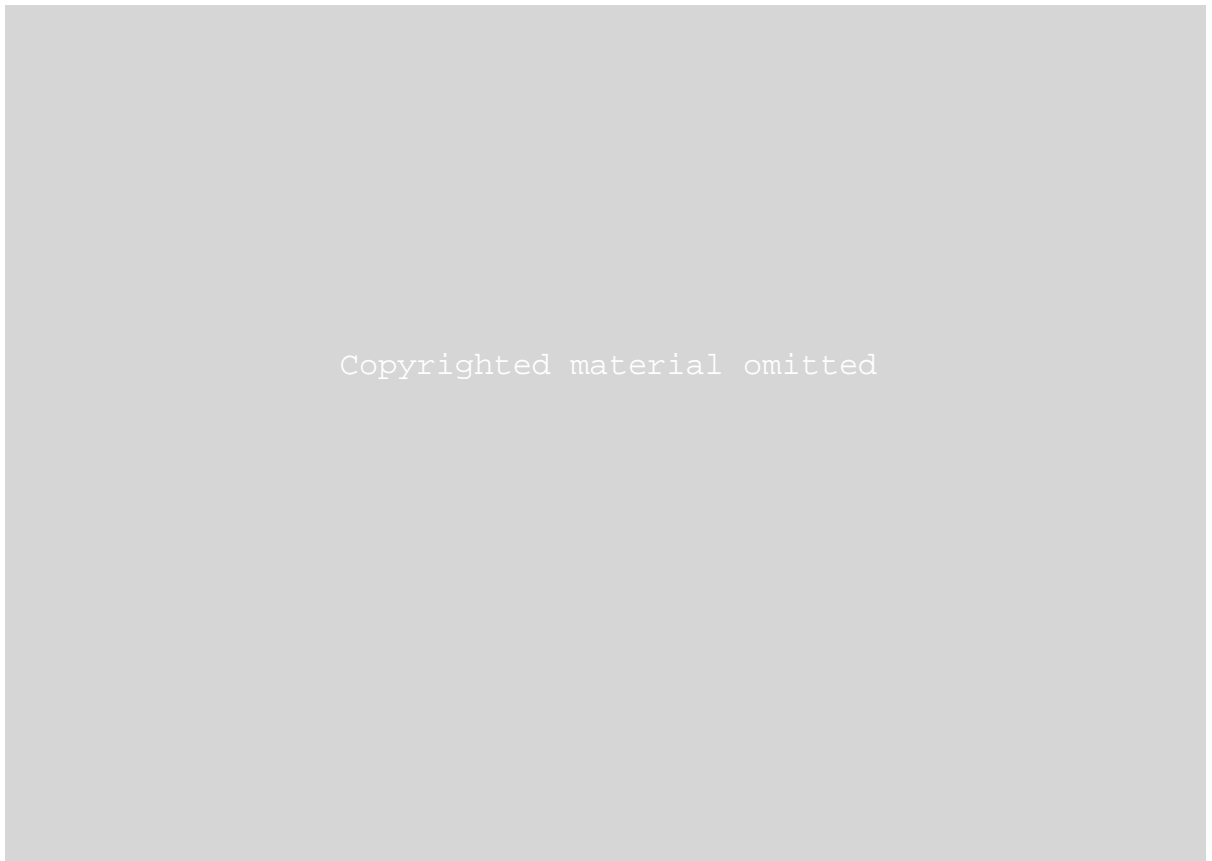


Figure 3.68. Michael Atchison, *Adelaide Advertiser*, 25 September 2007

INVITED VIEWER ACTIONS

Of interventions, viewer agency and kinesis



Figure 3.69. Glen Le Lievre, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 July 2010.



Figure 3.70. Warren Brown, The Daily Telegraph, 18 August 2010.

Summary findings

In this chapter I have outlined how across two bodies of works I have begun research into correspondences between art and political cartooning that embody *kynical* reflection upon everyday political institutions, figures or discourses. Each offers means by which studio-based art practice can enact critical responses to politics.

The first has been effected through the making of primary cynical gestures as well as through processes of amendments to those works within the studio. These are the *1st - 17th Manifesto Desktop Drawings* series.

Primary gestures capture qualities of directness and graphic presence, a sense of savage indignation and personal catharsis, while secondary gestures evince a self-referential approach that brings primary cynical gestures into a broader dialogue with other pictorial and narrative structures and the local in dialogue with the social. These works were not exhibited. *Cynical gestures* in this research project are forms of depictions and graphic artefacts that offer the potential for sardonic or kynical critique. They evoke a response in the viewer that imaginatively sympathises with the depicted actions as an insertion of the personal into a larger narrative.

The second series of works have examined the idea of 'attitudinal' gestures as a nuanced development of cynical gestures realised fully within the context of contemporary art. These are the *1st - 12th Amendments* series. This series of works emphasis a focused set of formal, material and structural concerns that engage the viewer in the construction of new meaning through the play of existing art, social and political contents. These works were exhibited. *Attitudinal gestures* in this research project are processes in contemporary art that direct disordering operations as a means to critique various existing content and other categories of content. They engage the viewer in a comparative construction of social meaning.

Further, in this chapter I have indicated how creative practice has correspondences with and can produce insights into related domains of knowledge.

I have identified the presence of a range of depictions of what I have termed cynical gestures that appear in political cartoons and which contribute to their critical functioning under the rubric of savage indignation. *Cynical gestures* in political cartoons are the depiction of violent acts and cathartic motions by figures or towards figures as a way of attributing corresponding emotional and psychological states to destructively satirise political institutions, figures or discourses.

I also want to suggest how conclusions derived from art practice as research may contribute to the field of political cartoon study. I posit that there is an area of further research into political cartoons that may be pursued; that is a use of enacted gestures or *Attitudinal* gestures within political

cartooning, either employed by the cartoonist him or herself or encouraged within the beholder as a means to further engage the viewer in critical reflection.

The *Manifesto Desktop Drawings* and *The Amendments* series suggested a further range of practice-led research: the cynical and attitudinal gesture enacted at the larger scale realm of the body-as-print. This lead onto the *Bodies Politic* and the *Dead Iraqis* series of works contextualised in the following Chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR - GROTESQUE BODIES DISORDERED AND DISPERSED

In this chapter I discuss my research into graphic modes of *Manifesto Drawing* expressed at the scale of my body that reflect critically upon everyday political institutions, figures or discourses. At the scale of the body the cynical gesture enters the realm of the grotesque.

I introduce the use of *grotesque bodies* within a general framework of the grotesque as it is discussed in the history of political cartooning (Eco, 1984; Gatrell, 2006; Porter, 2001; Wright, 1868). In political cartoons grotesque bodies employ depictions of the non-ideal, the incomplete, the hybrid and the scatological.

Following this I outline how, within the studio and through preliminary display I have developed notions of the attitudinal gesture mapped at the scale of the body as its recorded trace informed by Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the 'inverted' grotesque body developed in *Rabelais and His World* (1984) and by notions of the figure re-composited through materialist strategies outlined by Benjamin Buchloh in *Residual Resemblance* (1994).

These outcomes of studio and display practice are composites of drawings, cut papers and other studio artefacts assembled as table-based works accessible to the viewer through exhibition. I describe the processes and works; *1st-13th Bodies Politic* and *Dead Iraqis*, which in the context of Ernst Van Alphen in *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thoughts* (2005) are conceived as 'disordering and dispersing' the body. I cite artists such as Arnulf Rainer, Leon Golub and Marcel Broodthaers as precursors who invoke a sense of the 'scatological function' (Gandelman, 1989) as a means to engage political themes in a contemporary art context.

Summarising the discussion of these bodies of works I suggest as findings ways in which we may identify and consider uses of disordered and dispersed bodies in political cartooning itself as an area of new research.

My research suggests that depictions of the disordered body in political cartoons and art link to a concept of extended encounter and spatial narrative structure between viewer and object that is developed in Chapter 5.

Grotesque bodies

...making the body speak through an astonishing repertoire of savage commentaries on the politics of the day - Ray Porter on James Gillray (Porter, 2001: 31).

The *Manifesto Desktop Drawings* and *The Amendments* series suggested a further range of practice-led research: the extension of the cynical and attitudinal gesture into the larger scale realm of the body-as-gesture. This led onto the *Bodies Politic* and the *Dead Iraqis* series of works in which I made extensive use of direct prints from my own body.

One of the things I discovered in the first bodies of work was how often cynical gestures towards the political incorporated aspects of the grotesque - through despoiling grounds, confusing boundaries and a consistent use of fluids and flows. As noted in the introduction, the Protestant Reformation in Germany made extensive use of visual propaganda grafted onto the carnivalesque pictorial tradition of artists like Hieronymous Bosch and Peter Bruegel the Elder. Early didactic pamphlets included many grotesque depictions of people-animal hybrids and bodily functions. French critic and Professor of Literature Claude Gandelman notes that Martin Luther advised the young Lucas Cranach to employ a favourite insult of his: the scatological image of the Pope being born through the arse of the devil (Gandelman, 1989: 3). In doing so such imagery inverts established social and political relations. Gandelman refers to the revolutionary opening out of the interior of the body to the world as the *defecatory process* (Gandelman, 1989), [see figure 4.1i-ii].

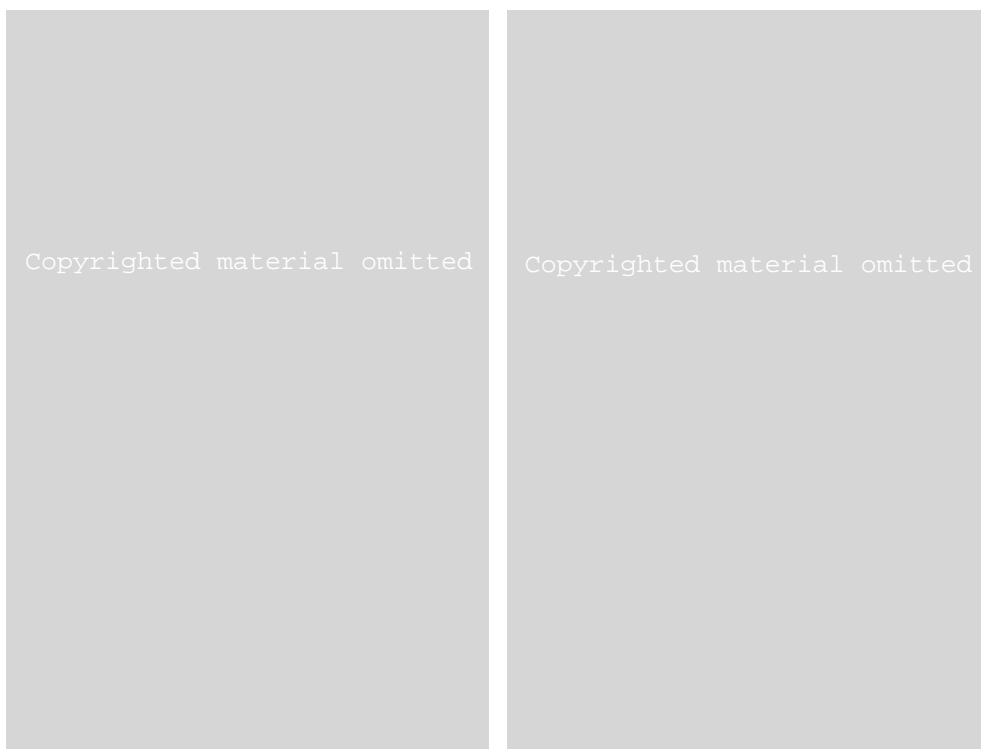


Figure 4.1i-ii.
Lucas Cranach, *Birth and origin of the Pope* (1545), woodcut
Lucas Cranach, *Birth and origin of the Pope* (1545), woodcut, (detail)

Geoffrey Galt Harpham in *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (1982) claims that our understanding of the grotesque derives from confusions between margin and centre or between an art that represents the world as conventionally perceived and the world as imagined in dreams, fantasies or myths. The grotesque is a protean idea that is capable of assuming a multitude of forms. The grotesque inhabits these as an 'element', a 'species of confusion' that structures the concept of art itself as an 'interval of understanding' engaging key processes such as formation, deformation and reformation (Harpham, 1982: xix-xxi).

'Grotesque' as a noun it implies that an object either occupies multiple categories or that it falls between categories - it accommodates the things left over when the categories of language are exhausted (Harpham, 1982: 3).

An important source in this project for ideas of the grotesque body conjoined with the political was one of my favourite historical graphic artists, English satirical print-maker James Gillray (UK 1756-1815). Gillray was perceived as 'a careless sort of cynic, one who neither loved, nor hated society' (Gatrell, 2006: 260). His works were displayed to the public on the windows of his publisher's shop and sold to collectors, 'permitted the image to bear new meanings' and transformed the nature and popular reception of the satirical print (Gatrell, 2006: 274). In the dominant 'high-art' conventions represented in the History Paintings of Sir Joshua Reynolds (UK, 1723-1792) and other Royal Academicians that preceded Gillray and against which he reacted, nightmarish situations were conventionally pictured *prior to* their climax, which meant that depicted protagonists and major figures were painted decorously and in accepted poses whilst violence, degradations or other anticipated horrors remained implied. But in Gillray both cause and effect are displayed along with moral ambiguity, carnivalesque confusion and a grim aftermath of bodily humiliations. Not only is the classical decorous pictorial surface ruptured by speech bubbles and captions but 'euphemism is repudiated and truth fully named' (Gatrell, 2006: 262). Gillray instituted a more 'frankly journalistic relationship between situation and commentary' (Gatrell, 2006: 259). The failings of public figures and political policies are made explicit through their affect upon bodies, depicted as damaged, sickly and decaying.

Vic Gatrell, from whose volume *City of laughter: Sex and satire in the Eighteenth Century London* (2006) informs these observations suggests Gillray, his peers and followers like Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) and George Cruikshank (1792-1878), 'catapult us into a crueller, more freely expressive and aggressively personalised iconographic world' that 'regularly breached the boundaries between the public and private' (Gatrell, 2006: 259). For instance, Gillray's well-known *Un Petit Souper, a la Parisienne; - or - A family of sans-culottes taking refreshment after the fatigues of the day* (1792), depicts a French working class and revolutionary *commune* rehearse the cynical gestures that in Gillray's eyes epitomised the barbaric doings of the revolutionary classes [see figure 4.2].



Figure 4.2. James Gillray, *Un Petit Souper, a la Parisienne; - or - A family of sans-culottes taking refreshment after the fatigues of the day*, 1792.

In this print a strange feast takes place in which all bodies are depicted as wounded, decapitated, dismembered, open-mouthed, gorging or retching; all that English critic Roy Porter characterises in his essay on Gillray *Bodies Politic* (2001) as a 'gory rhetoric of the repulsive body' (Porter, 2001: 25). Cynical gestures are present as arse-to-face affronts, bloody bastings and slit throats. Attitudinal gestures are depicted in montages of figures in space and scribbled on walls similar to cartoons within cartoons and in the play of captions and texts which invest Gillray's images with a type of personal commentary [see figure 4.3i-iv].

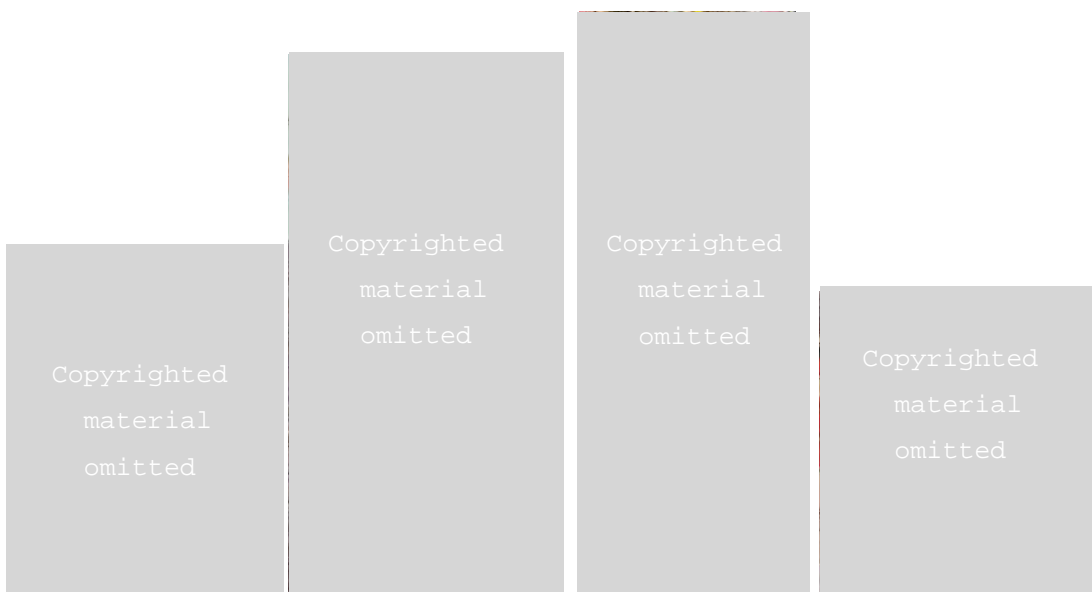


Figure 4.3i-iv James Gillray, *Un Petit Souper, a la Parisienne; - or - A family of sans-culottes taking refreshment after the fatigues of the day*, 1792, (details).

Gillray prefigures many contemporary artists whose works manifest 'obscenely explicit images coolly transgressed against all artistic norms' (Gatrell, 2006:262). We see this exemplified in the aggressively confronting paintings of contemporary Chilean-Australian artist Juan Davila whose *Nothing If Not Abnormal* (1991) for instance pictures Australian politicians Paul Keating and Bob Hawke performing various scatologically suggestive affronts in a range of 'cartoon' styles with added texts and various graphic and material gestures like applied fabric, scrapped background, washes and scumbled marks [see figure 4.4].



Fig 4.4. Juan Davila, *Nothing If Not Abnormal*, 1991, oil on canvas, found materials, approx. 190 x 190cm

I want to return here briefly to Haydon Manning & Robert Phiddian and their essay *Where are the Clowns?* (2000) introduced in Chapter 3 because they offer an example of how grotesque attitudes are manifested in contemporary Australian political cartooning (linking them to cynical attitudes). They highlight a cartoon by Australian Financial Review cartoonist David Rowe in which then Australian Labor Party and Opposition Leader Kim Beasley is 'drawn as a grotesque and shifty character, [which] shows a depth of cynicism about Labor's economic promises sufficient enough to overcome general approval of a leader' (Manning & Phiddian, 2000: 56), [see figure 4.5].

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 4.5. David Rowe. *Australian Financial Review*. 30 September 1998.

Manning and Phiddian re-iterate insights from the domain of visual rhetoric and metaphor which dominate research into graphic satire generally (El Refaie, 2009; Goggin, 2004; Medhurst, 1981; Mio, 1991; J. Morris, 1993). At that iconological level²³ the presence of the grotesque is established through the representation of Kim Beasley as a shady, cross-gendered fortune-teller “Madame Kim” redolent with historical and cultural skepticisms.²⁴ The lumpen-Beasley figure, contrasted by an everyman figure, enacts an absurd bodily theatre, flipping cards that deal a contrived and jaundiced viewpoint. Beasley’s authority is aligned with such dubious stereotypes and the mocking proceeds from there. Not noted by Manning and Phiddian however is what I observe: shit like stains, the use of dark pools of wash that envelop the figures invading their bodies and uncertain shadows, the excess line-work of Beasley’s caricatures face that joins his overweight torso, bulging from his ill-fitting garb with the striated tablecloth and the general undercurrent of incompleteness and hybridity that disturbs any stable knowledge of Kim Beasley-the-politician.²⁵

²³ *Iconology* is the study of visual imagery and its symbolism especially in social or political terms (“New Oxford American Dictionary,” 2010) as distinct from the iconographical, which are those images or symbols associated with a particular thematic.

²⁴ Umberto Eco places representations of charlatans and Gypsies within the context of an ‘anti-female tradition’ of witchcraft wherein such figures are diabolical beings... ‘emaciated, deformed, ashen... whose looks reveal their melancholic and ill natures’ (Eco, 2007: 208)

²⁵ Compare this with the student drawing of Robert Menzies in Chapter 1. As noted there, Ronald Paulson writing of the graphic commentaries of William Hogarth (UK 1697-1764), suggests that ‘The bursting out of clothes is related to - is a diurnal version of - the sort of resurrection Mikhail Bakhtin has described as central to popular imagery of the “grotesque body”.’ ‘Contrary to the classic images of the finished, completed man’, he writes, ‘the grotesque body is always unfinished’ (Paulson, 1996: 116).

Beasley's exceeding of his *normal* boundaries has implications for us the viewer. In his catalogue essay for *The Fifth International SITE Santa Fe Biennale of 2004, Disparities & deformations: our grotesque* art critic and curator Robert Storr includes cartoons in the category of *popular grotesques* that 'generally responded to the need among subjugated communities to let off steam by mocking elites' (Storr, 2004: 27). He implies recognition of the grotesque is a recognition of the grotesque within ourselves. He writes:

'To be grotesque something must be in conflict with something else yet indivisible from it... that conflict must in some fashion already exist within the mind of the beholder such that the confusion stems not only from the anomaly to which we bear witness in the world, but the anomaly that is revealed with us' (Storr, 2004: 16).

The grotesque then, in political cartoons is associated with key attitudes like the non ideal, the opened-out, the combinatory and the ill-natured and it can be traced through depictions of the body and bodily functions. I kept in mind this insight as I continued my examination of contemporary political cartoons from daily newspapers. As noted in Chapter 1, the grotesque employed by cartoonists as caricature is a dominant area of research in the literature on cartooning (Goldman, 1978; Hannoosh, 1992; Hoffman, 1957; Kelley, 2003). I identified a broad sample of depictions and expressions of the grotesque body associated with politicians, or political institutions before moving on to a response through my studio practice [see figures 4.6 to 4.18].

NON IDEAL & NON PROTOCOL

The undressed, the burlesque, of not being proper and transgression



Figure 4.6. John Spooner, *The Age*, 15 May 2010



Figure 4.7. David Rowe, The Australian Financial Review, 24 July 2007



Figure 4.8. David Rowe, The Financial Review, 9 April, 2009

UNFINISHED and INCOMPLETE

Of fragments and parts released from the whole and disturbed



Figure 4.9. Michael Leunig, *The Age*, 15 September 2007



Figure 4.10. Ward O'Neill, *Australian Financial Review*, 22 February 2011

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 4.11. John Spooner, The Age, 1 November 2007

HYBRIDS & TRANSMUTATION

Of the combinatory, deformities, ugliness and exceeding boundaries

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 4.12. Alan Moir, Sydney Morning Herald, 18 August 2010

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 4.13. Andrew Weldon, *The Sunday Age*, 21 October 2007

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 4.14. Matt Golding, *The Age*, 11 April 2010



Figure 4.15. Peter Nicholson, *The Australian*, 19 May 2007

ORIFICES, OPENINGS & SCATOLOGIES

Of the body open and invaded by the world - wounds, ruptures, and excretions



Figure 4.16. John Spooner, *The Age*, 26 May 2007



Figure 4.17. David Rowe, The Australian Financial Review, 23 July 2007



Figure 4.18. John Spooner, The Age, 15 December 2010

Studio Actions

I wanted to begin with a fundamental expression of my whole body-as-gesture and as originating trace. I chose to produce a series of body prints of my own naked body. Peter Sloterdijk tells us that in political and social contexts the 'emperor' is unclothed, made naked by the laughing, hissing crowd (Sloterdijk, 1987: 245). This is the both the mechanism and meaning of Larry Pickering's cartoon in Chapter 1 [see figure 1.3i-ii], Spooner's front-bench-as-fickle-body cartoon [figure 4.6] and most depictions of politician's unclothed flesh illustrated here.

The use of the performative body is comprehensively addressed in a range of recent anthologies of writings on the body (Fraser, 2005) and its historical medical contexts (Stafford, 1991) as well as specific themes; the body staged as performance (de Zegher, 2003); the body image fragmented (Nochlin, 1994); the artist's use of their own body (Warr, 2000). Following Spooner, Rowe, Davila and Sloterdijk and these critical writings I continued my research into ways ways in which artist's critique and my 'savage indignation' might be manifested by employing the naked body as a cathartic action that cycles the *proper* protocols of the body into the grotesque.

1st-13th Bodies Politic

The *Manifesto Desktop Drawings* suggested and led onto the second series of embodied works on paper, the *Bodies Politic* series. From the notion of cynical and attitudinal gestures within the scale of the body (the employed hands, wrists, feet, strikes, scratches, mops, sweeps and drips) I sought to focus upon gestures at the larger scale of the whole body captured as a body-map, which were then also worked through stages of amendments like cuts, sectionings, collages and edits as a recursive cycle of making rather than a linear two-staged process (of prints that are then amended). I fluidly made and remade prints and incorporated their parts into composites. The drawings began as paper sheets laid on the floor in a domestic house - as single sheets or long rolls. I inked my body initially with black medium (plus white) and later an admixture of acrylic cobalt, cerulean and phthalo blues derived from the earlier drawings. I walked and sat and pressed myself on the sheets in various silly attitudes of lying, stretching, sitting, rolling, arching, lifting, pushing, etc. In the resulting mono-prints (which incidentally emphasise the horizontal ground and extend the pours and mops of the *Manifesto Desktop Drawings*) there is no 'up' as in a conventional portraiture / body orientation.²⁶ Their affect for me spoke of the base, the messy, the fluid and an awkward lack of protocol. It is as if the mark escapes from within the body itself [see figures 4.19i-v].

²⁶ Rosalind Krauss notes that a key character of the *informé* is its orientation through 90°, see (Bois, 1997).



Figure 4.19i-v. Greg Creek, *Bodies Politic*, (studio views).

The process of generating the drawings produced a complex range of possibilities that offered a fresh beginning - these quasi images were both of the body but escaped from a drafted authorship. What qualities did they share? Firstly, each elided the face for a fragmentary experience; a sense of disjointed, incomplete parts (with vague suggestions of sides, hips, chest, back, arse, cock and thigh).²⁷ Secondly, unnameable forms and strange pictorial shapes were produced like deformities, growths or mutations. Thirdly, these interacted with areas of blank paper that became orifices, wounds and ruptures. Finally, a surfeit of associated accidental and incidental drips, footprints and grubby marks were present.

The body prints and blue pigment suggest the female model body-prints of Yves Klein (France, 1928-1962).²⁸ Klein's *Anthropométries* (1960) had a political agenda of sorts, one directed, as a forerunner to Minimalism, away from the commodification of art and towards its dematerialisation rather than at everyday politics per se (Horowitz, 2010). For Klein the resultant 'paintings' (on canvas) were 'spiritual marks of captured moments' (Goldberg, 1988: 147). Interestingly, though the performance themselves of naked woman inked may have contained something of the excessive or abject for Klein. The first of the *Anthropometries* occurred in a private apartment after a meal and the sexual overtones apparently proved too much for him.²⁹ Similarly, whilst the hair-mopping performances of contemporary artist Janine Antoni, *Loving Care* (1993) manifest a ritual around the politics of gendered agency, they also suggest being in danger and being defiant. Documentations of Antoni's performance fail to show her actions that were designed to herd spectators from the space of display.³⁰ Neither Klein nor Antoni directed pictorial amendments or additions to their gestured bodies-as-print. I was therefore interested in the series of amended self-photos of Arnulf Rainer's *Face Farce* (1971). Rainer directs gestures against the depicted body (taking the form of spoutings, and effusions from orifices of the head), resulting in a far more immediate sense of the ruptured, transformed and grotesque. Austrian Art Historian Werner Hofmann writing in *Body Language* (1981) the catalogue to the 1981 Venice Biennale, relates these to cycles of decay, death and rebirth, 'Rainer needs the wounds that he wants to heal. Whenever he covers one up, he tears another open' (Hofmann, 1981), [see figure 4.20).

²⁷ Deleuze says of Francis Bacon 'The figure being a body, is not a face and does not even have a face' (Deleuze, 1981: 19)

²⁸ Contemporary artist Mike Kelley notes it is difficult to use such colours without having it seen as a quotation (Welchman, 2003: 206)

²⁹ 'The event took on an aura of folly and lascivious entertainment, much to Klein's displeasure' (Watts, 2013: 72)

³⁰ See Robert Enright & Meeka Walsh's interview with Janine Antoni, *The Beautiful Trap: Janine Antoni's Body Art* (2010).

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Figure 4.20. Arnulf Rainer *Face farces*, 1971

Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986), indicate that such discourses about the body have a privileged role, for transcodings between different levels and sectors of social and psychic reality are effected through *the grid* of the body. 'The grotesque body, may become a primary, highly-charged intersection and mediation of social and political forces, a sort of intensifier and displacer in the making' (Stallybrass, 1986: 25-26). Ultimately however, as with James Gillray and his contemporaries who pre-figure such connections, the *Bodies Politic* drawings I produced engaged the paper support and trace as a pictorial and metaphorical ground of body-as-political entity.³¹ Gillray famously depicts in a hand-coloured copper engraving, *The French Invasion - or - John Bull, Bombarding the Bum-Boats* (1793), a personified map of the UK from whose anus-like Portsmouth harbour, cockroachesque fart-boats splay across the channel at an unhappy *Monsieur Français* [see figure 4.21].

³¹ Such ideas align with the eight 'continents' of classical Comparative Anatomy (the head, neck, thorax, back, upper limb and so on) Incidentally these continents are sub-divided into 'nations'. Since the 16th century analogies have been drawn between the human body and the "body politic" (Cazort, 1996: 15; Stafford, 1991).

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Figure 4.21. James Gillray. *The French Invasion*, 1793. Copper engraving, hand coloured. 24.5 x 34cm

My work, *1st Bodies Politic* included sprouting graphite arcs from concave openings in the drawing, like ejaculations or spurting blood that rounded the body-form and rejoined it at other portals. Later *Bodies Politic* amendments like those in the *Manifesto Desktop Drawings* included attitudinal gestures such as abrasions, strikes and repetitive drawn lines, cuts and excisions. Other montages in the form of sections pasted from other sheets or responses to the existing inked grounds with incidental doodles, stains and drips and later additions of new cultural images and emblems like politicians names, heads and references or captions, dialogues and textual notations made me imagine this as the background noise from day-to-day mass media and politics [see figures 4.22 to 4.33].



Figure 4.22. Greg Creek, *1st Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 4.23. Greg Creek, *2nd Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 4.24. Greg Creek, *3rd Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 4.25. Greg Creek, *4th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 4.26. Greg Creek, *5th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm 20th



Figure 4.27. Greg Creek, *6th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm 24th



Figure 4.28. Greg Creek, *7th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm 22nd



Figure 4.29. Greg Creek, *8th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm 23rd



Figure 4.30. Greg Creek, *9th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm

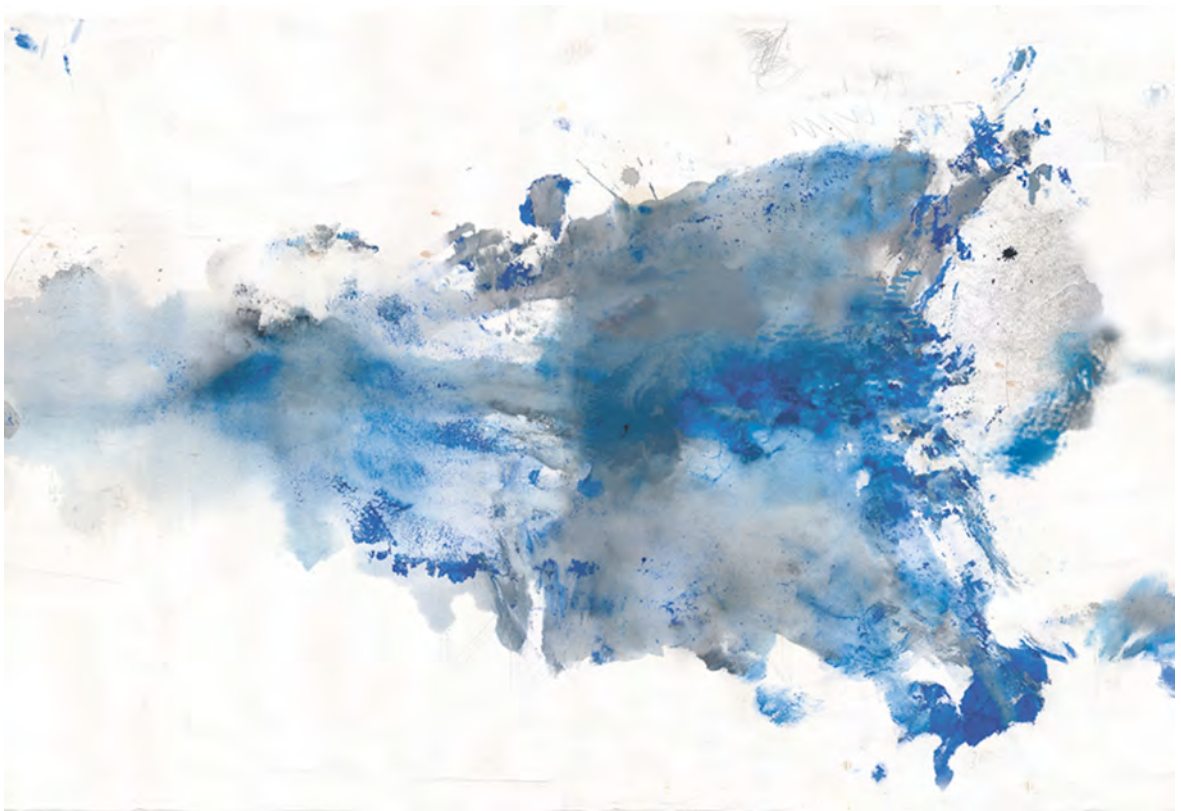


Figure 4.31. Greg Creek, *10th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 4.32. Greg Creek, *11th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm



Figure 4.33. Greg Creek, *12th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm

The *13th Bodies Politic* presented a surfeit, swirling constellation of marks and gestures, suggestive to me of depthless, clustering turmoil; an absurd paradoxical vision akin to a scene of violence. I added (then) Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard's 'decapitated' head plus a scribbled body, enveloped and surrounded and joined by two appropriated internal witnesses from differing vantage points; a Pokemon figure from the realm of popular children's animation and a sketch of the quintessential 19th century observer.³² Conceptually these figures allow the external viewer to enter-into a visual scene but also maintain a certain agency. In very economical ways they activated a sense of the ugliness of politics and its unfolding larger themes; the place of politics in our world view from a pained perspective. This is no more than a simple commentary on how political issues and the politicians who are emblematic of them - in this case the perception of PM Gillard as a particle among numerous vested interests - often appear to the voter as nothing more than a fabricated and staged, spectral political product. As Roy Porter notes of James Gillray 'the metaphor of the 'body politic' sustained the age-old motif of politics as theatre' (Porter, 2001: 25), [see figures 4.34, 4.35].



Figure 4.34. Greg Creek, *13th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm.

³² The 'Rückenfigur' (literally 'back figure') is an internal figure within a painting, photograph or film whose back is turned to the viewer. The most well-know example occurs within the work of German Romantic landscape painter Casper David Frederick, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818).



Figure 4.35. Greg Creek, *13th Bodies Politic*, 2007-2010, (detail), mixed media on paper, 73.5 x 107cm.

I feel it was telling how in the studio I felt surrounded by a similar panorama of indignant gestures that simultaneously decomposed and restaged incomplete bodies [see figure 4.36].



Figure 4.36. Greg Creek, *Bodies Politic*, (Studio view, Northcote).

Mariam Fraser in her anthology *The Body, A Reader* (2005) notes in relation to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of grotesque realism; that the grotesque body, unlike the classical body, is unfinished, ambiguous, without clear demarcation between self and other, self and society.

The grotesque body is a body whose boundaries are uncertain and always changeable, since its most conspicuous features are its apertures and the flows they allow. The grotesque body is thus open, protruding, bulging, extending and secreting; it is wet, bloody, sweaty and odorous. Above all, it is connected to the world, and to other bodies, in such a way that it is difficult to consider it as an individual (Fraser, 2005: 70).

To an extent the *Bodies Politic* drawings are less important as individual pictorial statements and more important as an attitudinal cluster. My sense was that the spectator (within the studio I become my own rückenfigur) is the true subject of the drawings whose presence, literally within the openings between the dispersed bodies, animates what political self-consciousness exists in the drawings.

Grotesque bodies 'dispersed'

In addition to their primary grotesque elements I wanted the *Bodies Politic* to examine how a viewer might encounter these works beyond just *looking* at them and how might they animate them. As introduced in Chapter 3, Kendell Walton suggests, the *phenomenal character* of perception 'is inseparable from the imagining which takes it as an object...the seeing and the imagining are inseparably bound together - a complex phenomenological whole' (Walton, 1993: 295). Maynard refers to this as a 'vivifying function' for our imaginings (Maynard, 2005: 92). I felt that there was the possibility to insert the body of the spectator into the material, horizontal field of these drawings to amplify his or her 'imagining' as a politically contextualised body.

Derived from the conditions of making drawings on the flat of desks or floors, and sensitive to the operations of Janine Antoni and other contemporary artists' work, such as Mike Parr's commentaries on the politics of militarism in *Bronze Liars* (1996) and *Cartesian Corpse* (2008),³³ I completed an installation test within a studio space, with an array of tables that reference the 'dissection' tables in anatomy labs. The viewing subject (the 'spectator' in his or her body) is incorporated into the cluster of works, free to choose to move within and around the tables, looking, reading and experiencing the spread of images, captions, forms and texts referencing everyday politics. As noted the viewer then echoes my own posture in regard to the works and simultaneously links the body politic of party politics to the personal. In this experience the viewer is complicit in the construction of political references rather than a passive consumer of spin [see figure 4.37].

³³ See Anthony Bond, *Cartesian Corpse. Mike Parr, The Tilted Stage*, (2008). Parr's works affirm 'the centrality of the body to lived experience and by extension to the tilted stage of politics' (Bond, 2008: 195). In these works respectively Parr uses his hands to hollow out from 16 blocks of clay, unseen representations of the inside of his head (which are later cast in bronze and presented in an array) and a disembodied head presented on a titled stage adorned with a military hat.



Figure 4.37. Greg Creek, *Bodies Politic*, Installation view (Catherine Manuell Studio Space, Melbourne).

As Hal Foster has noted, in response to the textualist model of the 1970s artists have ejected an aesthetic of cynical reason in two directions: firstly challenging its indifference, its cynicism with transgressive values (the abject, the grotesque and so on); and secondly, confronting cynicism through engagement with a type of *field-work*. Such tendencies mark an 'emphatic turn to the bodily and the social, to the abject and the site-specific' (Foster, 1996: 124). I felt the extension of the *Bodies Politic* drawings into an array of tables exemplified aspects of this tendency. As Rosalind Krauss notes in *the Optical Unconscious* (1993), 'it is not (only) the perceptual content of the (a) figure that counts so much as it is the way it structures the field' (Krauss, 1993: 87).

A number of artists whose works are aligned with a political progression from full body to a grotesque spatial dispersal of bodies include Paul McCarthy's process-oriented assemblages like *Pig Island*, (2003 - 2010) in which President George W. Bush's visage is grafted onto a a jumble of swine bodies amid a sty of refuse, Paul Thek's (USA, 1933-1988) *Technological Reliquaries* (1964–67), a series of wax sculptures of human body parts, Mike Kelley's rug-hidden bodies *Lumpenprole* (1991), and Ed Kienholz's 'moral tableaux' installations like the institutional critique of *The State Hospital* (1966), [see figure 4.38].

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Figure 4.38. Ed Kienholz, *The State Hospital*, 1966

Bodies disordered and dispersed

Following the *Bodies Politic* drawings I wanted to examine a specific set of recombinations of the grotesque body and its opening out to the body of the viewer. I also wanted to specifically make a work in response to the Iraq War which dominated politics and the media at the time (2007-2008).

News about Iraq continually appeared in the popular media, saturating my perceptions with gruesome broadcast images, public political spin and private moral questions. My personal views of the Iraq war and Australia's involvement were a contrast of cynical *real-politik* (we have responsibilities to strategic alliances with the USA, the *Press* is just doing its job) and indignation arising from a general political frustration mixed with alarm about correspondences between images of violence and terror appearing on TV and my 11 year old son's captivation with the Japanese anime Pokemon cartoon figures and the Yu Gi Oh military card-game.³⁴ In response to these anxieties (and as an one of many 'cathartic' tangents of my research) I produced a group of drawings based upon the Pokemon and Yu Gi Oh figures. I also assembled a sketchbook of transformed prints based on disturbing photographs of bodies maimed from violence taking place in Iraq. Both of these parallel tangents seemed to me essentially linked to my grotesque body prints in thematic, pictorial and emotional ways (the body 'rendered' as fragmented, disordered and dispersed) and might be incorporated with them as counterpoint [see figures 4.39 to 4.41i-ii].

³⁴ For Pokemon see; Silvestri, Chris, *Pokemon: Ultimate Handbook* (2008) and West, Tracey, *How to Draw Pokemon* (2002). For Yu Gi Oh see; Gill, Bill "Pojo", *Total Yu-Gi-Oh* (2003).

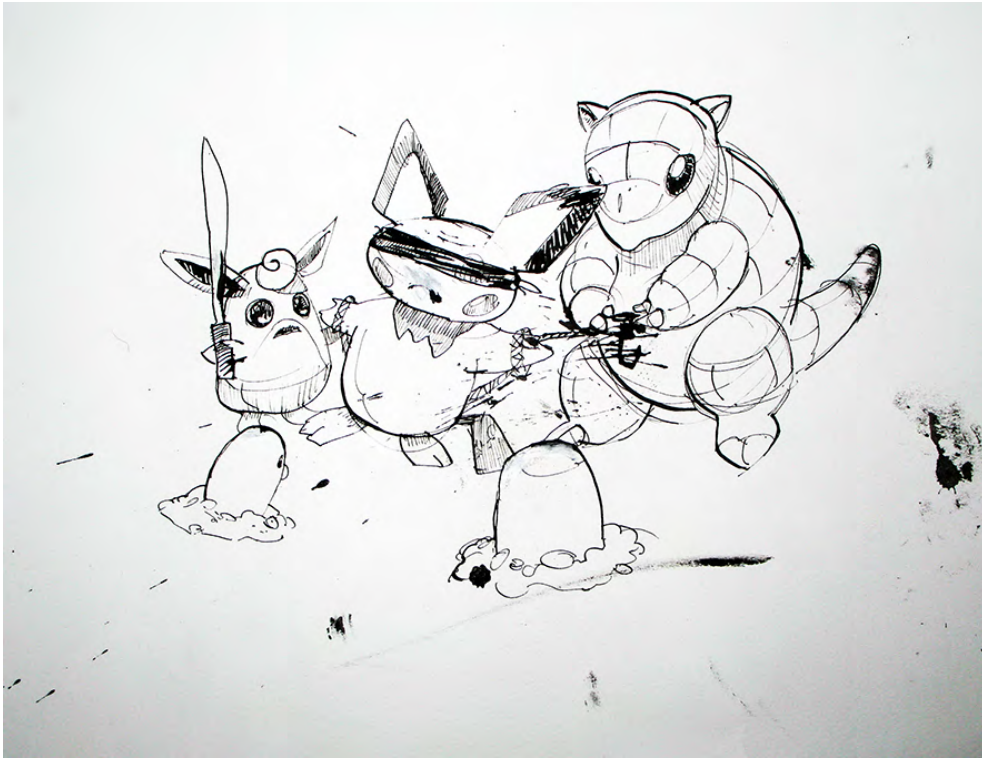


Figure 4.39. Greg Creek, *Pokemon rendition*, 2007, ink on paper, 26 x 20cm



Figure 4.40. Greg Creek, *Yu-Gi-Oh Bang! Bang!*, 2007, ink on paper, 15 x 16cm

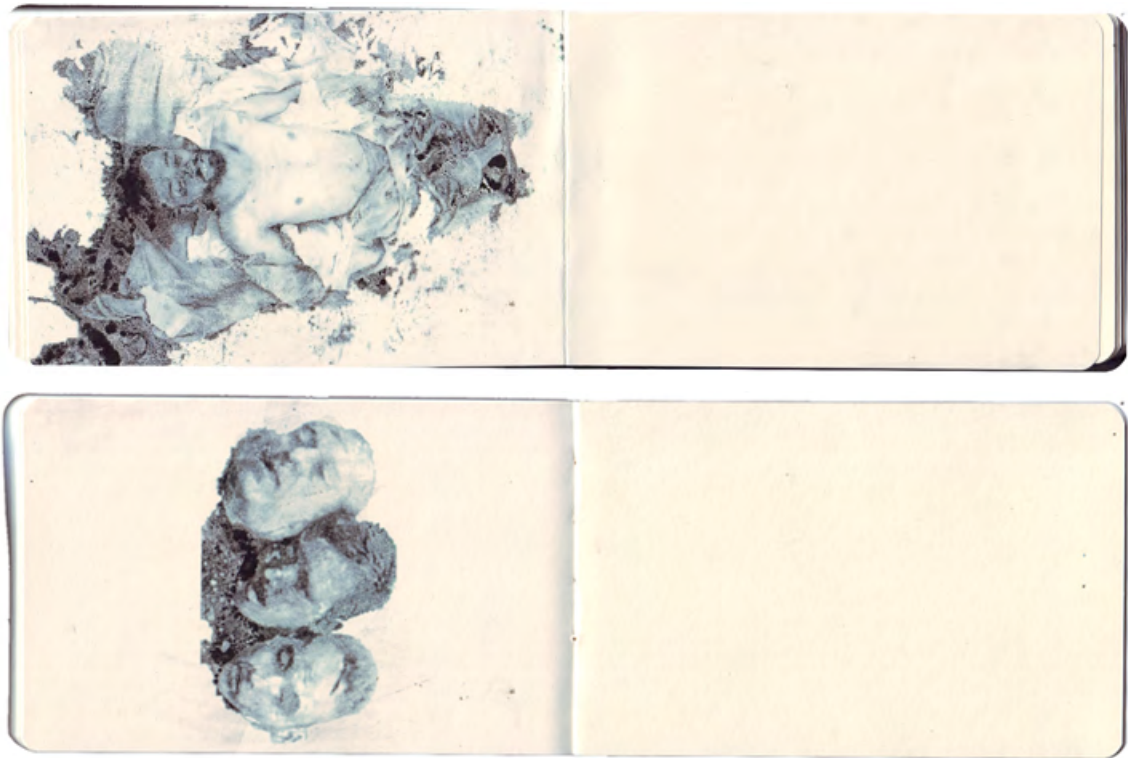


Figure 4.41i-ii. Greg Creek, *Dead iraqis Sketchbook*, August 2007-February 2008, 9 x14cm

The opening-up of the body and its fragmentation have been central to ideas of the grotesque and its typically ambivalent status as both documentation of and commentary upon war and violence. Linda Nochlin in her seminal essay *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (1994) states, 'the imagery - and the enactments - of destruction, dismemberment and fragmentation remained powerful elements of revolutionary ideology' (Nochlin, 1994: 10). A visual lineage from Goya³⁵ via Ernst Frederich (Germany, 1894-1967), *Krieg dem Kreig* (1924)³⁶ and the post World War 1 Weimar Republic artists like Otto Dix³⁷ and Hannah Höch³⁸ and then onto to political cartoonists working in Australian during the Vietnam War like Ron Cobb (USA, 1937)³⁹ and contemporary UK cartoonist for the Guardian Steve Bell underlines the critical currency that depictions of the grotesque body disordered have maintained over time as a response to political violence and war [see figures 4.42i-iii to 4.45].

³⁵ 'Because Goya was the first artist to reveal the gross face of war stripped of all chivalry, romance and idealism, because he captured something quintessential about modern war, all succeeding generations of artists have seen war through his eyes: they have recognised in the *Disasters of War* a template for their own nightmares' (Jones, 2003: par. 15).

³⁶ Ernst Friedrich, founder of the Berlin Peace Museum, anarchist and pacifist, was the author of *War Against War* first published in 1924, which used photographs of mutilated victims of the First World War. Friedrich "printed a unique collection of previously unpublished photographs exposing the horrors of war, and interspersed them with complacent and bombastic utterances by military leaders and imperial politicians' (Midgley, 2009: 131). See Ernst Friedrich, *War aganist War!* New York: Real Cornet Press (1987).

³⁷ 'Otto Dix's bodies are made monstrous, jumbling categories, confusing orifices and wounds, creating their own horrific kind of non-sense' (Connelly, 2003: 4).

³⁸ For Hannah Höch, see Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (1993).

³⁹ For Cobb's cartoons see Ron Cobb, *The Cobb Book*. Sydney: Wild and Woolley (1975). I bought this book when I was 15.

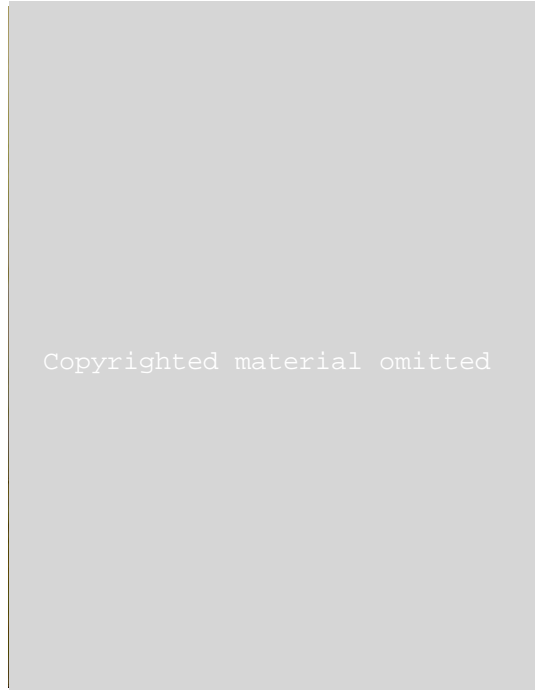


Figure 4.42i-ii.

Photographer unknown, from Ernst Friedrich, *War against War!* New York: Real Comet Press. (1987)
Otto Dix, *Wounded Veteran*, 1922, watercolor and pencil, 49 x 37cm



Figure 4.43

Ron Cobb, *Bang! Bang! You're Dead*, 1975.

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Figure 4.44 Hannah Höch, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany* (1919-1920), photomontage and collage with watercolor, 114 x 90 cm

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Figure 4.45. Steve Bell, *The Guardian*, 26 March 2003

So to these historical precursors I have added contemporary Australian cartooning pictorial ideas of the incomplete and fragmentary. From art I was interested in artists whose works reconfigure commentary on media and War and an encounter with the viewer; for instance Hans Haacke (Germany, 1936), *News* (1968-2008), which collapses the ephemeral nature of live news feeds into a disfigured, inscrutable pile; the *Vietnam paintings* (1972-73) of Leon Golub (USA, 1922-2004) and installation works of French artist Christian Boltanski (France, 1944) such as *The Clothes of François C.*, 1972, [see figs 4.46-4.48].



Figure 4.46. Hans Haacke, *News*, 1969/2008, New Museum, RSS newsfeed, paper and printer, dimensions variable.



Figure 4.47. Leon Golub, *Vietnam 1*, 1972, acrylic on linen, 305 x 835.5cm

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Figure 4.48. Christian Boltanski, Top: *The Clothes of François C.*, 1972, black-and-white photographs, tin frames, glass, each photograph 22.5 x 30.5cm. Bottom: *Vitrine of references*, 1971.

Golub is one of my favourite artists. His early large scale, figurative tableaux sourced from magazine clippings, pornography and newspaper photos depict unnamed atrocities from the Vietnam War, marked by impastoed paint-as-scab, depicted violent gestures and warped silhouettes on raw, un-stretched canvas. Golub cut sections of canvas out his paintings during this time, 'likening the canvas to skin, a move he deemed an "irrational" gesture ... he draws viewers ever further into a charred landscape brimming with impotent rage and bankrupt ideologies' (Scott, 2002: 1). Later works like *WorldWide* (1991) and *Sanguinary* (1996) include large images and details of violence from his paintings printed on hung vinyl screens. In *Echoes of the Real* (2000), published for the retrospective of Golub's work held at the Brooklyn Museum, Professor of Art and Critical Theory Jon Bird states 'viewers were positioned within a shifting montage of narrative moments in which they themselves become players' (Bird, 2000: 147). In Golub's later works:

although dispersed, representational space is never incoherent, and the body's trace, however rudimentary, retains the impression of narrative interaction – not of a 'before and after' where the viewer interprets the image as a moment extracted from a world of social conflict, but as a situation in which conflict (or dissonance) is the very language of pictorial representation (Bird, 2000: 144).

French sculptor, photographer, painter and film maker, Christian Boltanski's practice incorporates series of 'Inventories', re-photographed 'found' objects or photographs: often referring to people

who, one might presume have perhaps died violently. *The Clothes of François C* presents an array of tin-framed black and white photographs of neatly assembled children's clothing, evoking a sense that these are the collected and stored belongings of internees from death and concentration camps. Visual art theorist and Professor of Literary Studies at Leiden University Ernst Van Alphen refers to this as Boltanski's 'holocaust effect' (Van Alphen, 2005: 38). In his collection of essays *Caught by History* (1997) he frames the concept as representational practices that do not represent the Holocaust in mediated or *disciplinizing* forms but that reenact it (Van Alphen, 1997: 13).

*The Holocaust effect undercuts two elements of the standard view of the portrait... .
There is an absence of a referent outside the image, as well as absence of presence
in the image* (Van Alphen, 2005: 38).

For Boltanski the break down of referentiality in such depictions produces 'cadavers' because the *depictions* of the subjects themselves are 'dead' and absent figures; exchangeable and anonymous (Van Alphen, 2005: 38). This idea is closely related to the highly ambivalent position of Roland Barthes, who in *Camera Lucida* (1982) suggests that an image can both create or mortify. For Barthes we, as subjects, have only transient bodily experience and partial views of our own body. To transform these fragmented experiences and views into a whole, we need an image of ourself. That very image however constructs us in terms of the stereotype, into the terms of the *doxa*, the platitudes of public opinion (Van Alphen, 2005: 31). This brings us back into the sphere of the public's communal projection of political identity (and orthodoxy).

These combined references for what was to become the *Dead Iraqis* installation(s) mapped out an area in which a kind of destructive and savagely indignant political response might be researched, ranging across the figure grotesquely reenacted yet somehow absent and the scatologies of bodily forms cut open inside out, reassembled and restaged. Crucial to this is a more complex use of referentiality than that evident in those depictions of grotesque bodies in local political cartoons outlined earlier. What I have described as the grotesque body in political cartooning is theorised by Van Alphen in contemporary art terms, as the *disordered* body and *dispersed* body. In *The Clothes of François C* Van Alphen suggests that Boltanski's inventories refer indexically. That is, he works not by depicting the figure but by reenacting and manifesting it in space (Van Alphen, 2005: 39-40). This notion extends beyond *François C's and her* clothes and its documentations to Boltanski's *attitudinal* gestures in choosing, assembling framing, spatialising, photographing, recomposing and installing its objects and materials.

In a similar context Van Alphen refers (also) to the Holocaust effect in drawing practices of Marlene Dumas (RSA 1953]), especially her group portraits (Van Alphen, 2005: 41). He states they too are a type of *dispersal*, recalling in their non-singularity, Boltanski's seriality (Van Alphen, 2005: 44). For instance, each time Dumas' work, *Rejects* (1994-) has been exhibited it comprises a changing number of drawings, which do not have a fixed place. New drawings constantly appear, while

others disappear. The “rejects” (his emphasis) are edited and distorted, treated as raw material on which work has been done. Van Alphen speculates their very composition is governed by disorder, which ‘is not just a lack of order but its actual destruction ... a willful dis-ordering that [is] particularly meaningful in the context of the grotesque’ (Van Alphen, 2005: 145).

To quote Van Alphen at length:

The difference between the grotesque and the ideal can be explained as a difference in the perspective from which the body is experienced... grotesque realism is emblematic of the body's knowledge of itself. This is a knowledge of pieces and parts, of disassociated limbs and an absent center... the experience of our own body and the sight of the body of someone else can never be reconciled. In fact, this tension is already present in the body as such because the body is at once a container and that which it contains. This paradox explains our fascination for the boundaries of our body, the cuts and gaps on the body's surface as Lacan has called them. These cuts or gaps are, for example, the slit formed by the eyelids, the lips, the anus, the tip of the penis, the vagina... All those places are (again) ambiguous because they are the places where the interior of the body is turned inside out. Boundaries have disappeared (Van Alphen, 2005: 147).⁴⁰

The body disordered and dispersed supplies a broad scope for making within the studio but also when extended into the language of display where there is potential to engage the viewer as re-animating the absent body through engagement with artefacts of the fragmented body and the artist-as-maker. Haacke's paper rolls and scrolls open up to rich associations of intestine and volume as do Golub's elisions that suggest in seeing through paintings to the wall behind we willfully only see part of the truth politics presents us with.

Dead Iraqis

At the beginning of 2008 I was invited to exhibit in a group show curated by Melbourne artist Meredith Turnbull at the old Carlton Hotel in Bourke Street, Melbourne, the 4th floor of which had been converted to a series of artist's studios and exhibition spaces. The premise and title of the show was ‘World's End’, a reference to the last allegorical work of 18th Century graphic artist William Hogarth (UK 1697-1764) entitled *Tailpiece; or The Bathos* (1764). In Hogarth's bleak print an exhausted naked, winged figure exhales his last breath ‘finis’ inscribed in a diaphanous speech bubble amid the rubble of a collapsed Inn called *World's End* and a wrecked landscape. Among its many topical references Professor of English Ronald Paulson (in a review that examines the 18th Century funerary monument) suggests that his title may be construed as a statement by Hogarth about art and politics in the 1760s in England (Paulson, 1996: 119). It struck a deeply melancholic

⁴⁰ Van Alphen is plainly referring here to Bakhtin's term *grotesque realism*' yet shifts it to a mode of the body's knowledge of itself.

and cynical note for me - one which I was much drawn to and which echoed the negative energy coalescing around the *Dead Iraqis* research. I was able to inspect the Carlton Hotel and chose a specific room at the end of a corridor in which to work; a bare square, with single hand-basin, peeling walls and plain window. The room felt like a torture chamber.

In the studio I employed table top workspaces to gather together assemblages of material framed by the categories suggested by political cartoons. This comprised both the ongoing paper sheets of fragmented body images from the black *Bodies Politic* prints and their remnant, un-named residues as well as mopped paper rolls (the obverse side being the gesture and the reverse seeped stains), the sheets of Yu Gi Oh and Pokemon drawings, other excess/surplus rolls of unused paper; print transfers of images of Iraqi War victims sourced from the internet (versions of those collected into the sketchbooks) and at-hand tests from various studiowork including off cuts and waste from cynical gestures in the earlier *Manifesto Desktop Drawings*.

My initial intent following the display test for the blue *Bodies Politic* drawings [see figure 4.36] was to assemble-organise-disorganise this material as a montaged display of body maps; a flat, single hybrid layer. But the studio amendment processes opened up other methods and attitudinal connotations.

In one the manner in which the unfixed piles of paper I was working with produced massing but also continual collapses, falls, overflows and topples from the tables indicated here was an inherent instability of boundaries of the figure, of what constitutes drawing and of relations between table and floor.

In another the stacking of paper into three-dimensions opened up cavities, volumes and elisions providing a opportunity to peer into interior spaces and a concomitant material potential for insertions of drawings in between rolls and slits of paper and growths beyond normal boundaries.

And lastly, I noted as I regularly moved from one table of paper resources to another assembling the drawings I became an apparatus of linkage between these dispersed bodies of material; between bodies (what one gives up the other takes in).

Consequently I constructed in the studio four tables the size and proportion of anatomy lab dissection tables across which I worked and these became both a structure for display and the space of reenacting the absent-fragmented body.⁴¹ Each of the tables comprised six or seven strata of paper. Generally the lowest was a roll of blank paper that spilled off the table to almost touch the floor. In table 2 for instance, this layer was covered by a long mopped scroll separated from a first body map by a tight horizontal tube and a vertical standing paper roll. From one end a

⁴¹ Sourced from the stainless steel lab tables measured at The Anatomy and Cell Biology School of Anatomy at RMIT's Bundoora campus.

stained cartoon-pig's head protruded. Another vertical tube opened up a concave space covered by a 2nd full body print that supported a paper coil beneath a shroud of stained paper. I intentionally eschewed the use of any adhesives or tapes - the composite form relied on a tenuous (friction) balance to maintain stability.⁴² Around these I inserted and placed the Yu Gi Oh drawings and stencilled captions on thin paper strips.⁴³ Taken together these levels built a transition from flat depiction and montage to sculptural volume and relief; an undulating mass like a topography of the chest and abdominal cavities anatomised. Applied over several tables I began to wonder whether these were four single figures or a dispersal of the one? [see figure 4.49i-ii, 4.50i-vii].

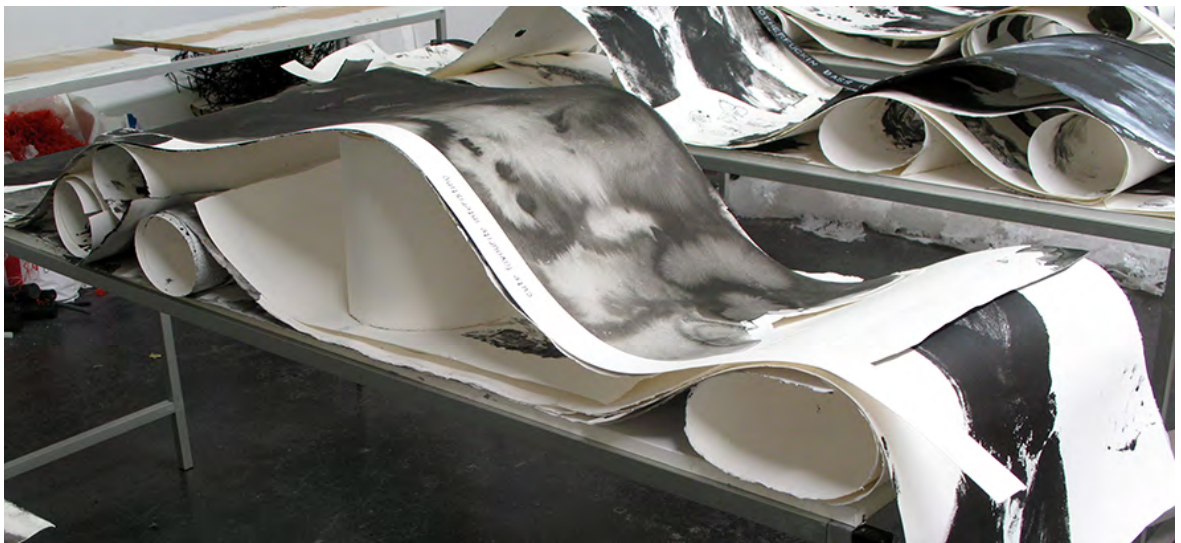


Figure 4.49i-ii. Greg Creek, *Dead Iraqis* (studio details)

⁴² *Dead Iraqis* was exhibited again at the Bendigo Art Gallery in a different configuration. Invigilators were concerned that people might steal bits of the drawings - but I explained I could easily replace pieces that fall away or go missing.

⁴³ Various phrases, neologisms, numbers and phrases like 'this thus this', i saw this, i sola fide, i downloaded this. As well obscenities came from from song lyrics: 'a motherfukin bass in you're motherfukin face' is based on the lyric by German Rap artist, D J Rush *Motherfucking Bass* (2001).

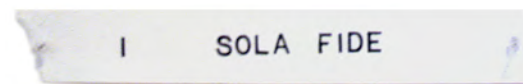
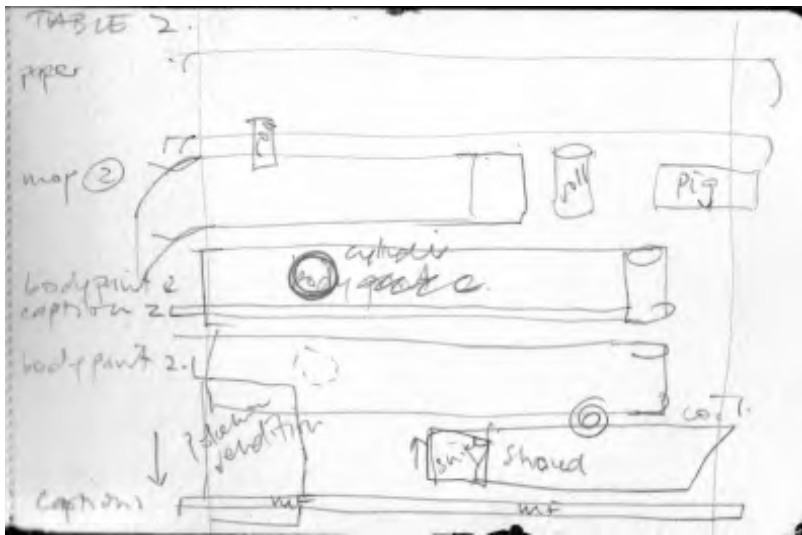


Figure 4.50i-vii. Greg Creek, *Dead Iraqis*, 2007-2008, (studio diagrams, details, stenciled texts on paper)

Gandelman proposes that behind any political philosophy or any political action, the image of a huge human body appears as a sort of watermark. The pictorial and verbal productions of propaganda (and even of historical-political discourse) seem to be superimposed over the image of this huge human body or over the images of some of its organs amplified and 'hypostasized', which he compares to a grotesque and distorted 'revolutionary homunculus. This 'body vision', which 'obtains' from the corpus of the scatologic caricatures is a grotesque figure' (Gandelman, 1989: 28). One might say that the political unconscious in which ideologies originate, contains its own *homunculus* or body-image.

The *Dead Iraqis* came into being as a body extended across a field of which I was the emotional agent. To my surprise these expressive qualities of the work were even prefigured before exhibition when I wrapped the work for transport to the gallery - a strikingly concrete image of death and loss [see figures 4.51 to 4.55].



Figure 4.51. Greg Creek, *Dead Iraqis wrapped*, 2008, (studio detail)



Figure 4.52. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: Dead Iraqis* (detail table 1)



Figure 4.53. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: Dead Iraqis* (detail table 2)



Figure 4.54. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: Dead Iraqis* (detail table 3)



Figure 4.55. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: Dead Iraqis* (detail table 4)

The *Dead Iraqis* was installed in its room at the Carlton Hotel and lit with an existing single light in the ceiling. The tables were placed as a simple array. The installed work was visceral and immediate, bleak and unsettling, both cause and effect were displayed along with moral ambiguity. Metaphorically it was a death house tableaux, a morgue. Materially, I was unsure whether it was a drawing at all or more a site of operation so palpable was the sense of mutability. There was enactment of the absent body - the work was about myself and my response to absent Iraqi victims and in my absence about the viewer's presence. In the disordering on each table of parts, in disordering the body through vision, the viewer becomes an agent and witness of the dispersal of the work and its subjects in space and site. It is the viewer who is implicated as the subject of the work.

As noted my intention was to direct a reaction to the range of conflicting images that had dominated our local media since the the USA alliance entry into Ba'athist Iraq in March 2003. My artworks were a cathartic act against frustrations of experiencing the nightly exposition of violence in Iraq (in the name of our country) contrasted with my family's domestic routines. We are stained by the deeds of others done in our name. Or to put it another way - It may not be our children's bodies which are maimed but nonetheless less we are in danger of their being maimed [see figure 4.56].



Figure 4.56 Greg Creek, *Dead Iraqis*, 2007-2008
4 table drawings; ink, acrylic, water-colour on paper, paper, bubble-jet prints, pins, aluminium, timber
Carlton Hotel & Studios, Melbourne, 2008 (installation view)

The body disordered and dispersed in political cartoons

My research through the *Bodies Politic* and the *Dead Iraqi* works has suggested ways in which we may identify and consider uses of the body (cynically) disordered and dispersed in political cartooning itself as an area of new knowledge.

I may define certain uses of the *disordered and dispersed* body in political cartoons as the extension of a singular political figure through manipulated digital imagery and a concern with the composite, faciality and doubling. The viewer creates an exchange between these disparate parts across the media field.

This differs from the traditions of depicting political figures through political caricature for instance, which remains underwritten by an essentialist paradigm of unified identity.⁴⁴ Proliferation of digitally processed pictorial elements potentially activates Gandelman's 'excremental functions' of linkage between the ideal body and the grotesque part (Gandelman, 1989: 3). It also evokes Ernst Van Alphen's ideas of the contemporary portrait as a 'signifying model based on structural difference'; that is one which gives rise to a new conception of subjectivity whereby authenticity is not automatically bestowed (Van Alphen, 2005: 27).

In this there are similarities with art historian and critical theorist John C. Welchman's expression of modern political identity discussed in his essay *Face(t)s: Notes on Faciality* (1988), as an ambivalent arena of *facture*, an 'exemplary architecture among architectures', one which substitutes presence with the 'multiple viewpoint and the invasion of context,' describing this as a 'deeply insinuated disorder' (Welchman, 1988: 135-36). The focus of his seminal essay culminates in a discussion of the 'political effects' photography and cinema have had upon the faces of power. Separated from the incomplete body *faciality* becomes 'the point of return - of social action; that is, it serves as a kind of vessel for the inrush of material culture and political conflict' (Welchman, 1988: 136-37).

When I formulated these insights through making the *Dead Iraqis* installations I revisited my collection of contemporary political cartoons from daily newspapers and identified examples of such uses of the digitally dispersed political body. In the following examples the cartoonist's uses of photo technologies alongside graphic media invites the viewer into a renewal of the political homunculus [see figures 4.57i-ii to 4.61i-iii].

⁴⁴ As Ernst Gombrich notes; the caricaturist has an analogous intent to the portrait painter, 'he does not seek the perfect form but the perfect deformity' (E. E. K. Gombrich, 1938: 320). On the history of 'physiognomic essences' in political cartooning see Richard Twine, *Physiognomy, Phrenology and the Temporality of the Body* (2002). Richard Brilliant in *Portraits: A recurrent Genre in World Art* (1990) notes, "the desire for the lasting depiction of subjects took the possibilities for physiognomic truth as a natural given. Sitters subjectivity is fused in a continuous network of phenomenological interdependence between pictorial surface and virtual space and mimetic residue' (Brilliant, 1990: 53).

COMPOSITES

Of digital hybridity, media as field, political cartoon as political advertising



Figure 4.57i-ii. Unknown. *Liberal Party Advertisement*, The Australian (on-line edition), 22 June 2010.

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure. 4.58. David Rowe, *Financial Review*, 2 November 2007

FACIALITY

Of image-as-label, the photographic effigy, non-essentialist caricature, ideal and non-ideal identity

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure. 4.59. Reg Lynch, *Abbott Warming*, *Sun-Herald*, 6 December 2009

DOUBLING

Of reproductions, the always same, narrative extension, hypocrisy and two-facedness



Figure 4.60i-iii Michael Leunig, *The Age*, 4 April 2007, (inc. details)

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 4.61i-iii Rob Duong and Ears McEvoy, *Greens and gold*, Sydney Morning Herald, 28 August 2010 (inc. details)

Summary findings

In this chapter I have outlined how I have researched across two bodies of work correspondences between art and political cartooning that enact the grotesque body as a cynical reflection upon everyday political institutions, figures or discourses. Each offers means by which studio-based art practice leading to exhibition practice can enact critical responses to politics.

The first has been effected through the mapping of the grotesque body as a fragmented print-depiction and through processes of amendments to those works within the studio. These are the *1st - 13th Bodies Politic* series. The image of the grotesque body and its amendments evince a sense of self-enacted savage indignation and a conflictual catharsis which calls for a recognition of political conflict that *in some fashion already exist within the mind of the beholder*.

Grotesque bodies in this research project are forms of depictions and body maps that disrupt authorship, encompass fragmentary and incomplete parts, confuse pictorial form and ground and produce a surfeit of incidental details.

The second works have examined the idea of disordered and dispersed bodies as a spatialised re-animation the of the grotesque absent body realised fully within the context of contemporary art. This is the *Dead Iraqis* work. This work expresses a set of mutable material and installation processes that engage the viewer-as-subject in the construction of new meaning through a scatological function of linkage between images, forms and space.

Disordered and dispersed bodies in this research project are processes in contemporary art that extend an encounter through installation with the politicised body-image into a comparative construction of public and personal moral values.

Further, I have indicated how creative practice can produce insights into related domains of knowledge.

I have identified the presence of a range of images of grotesque bodies that appear in political cartoons and which contribute to their critical functioning under the rubric of a non-ideal counter to classically decorous depiction. *Grotesque bodies* in political cartoons invoke the non-ideal, the incomplete, hybridity and scatologies which invert normal political relations.

I also want to suggest how conclusions derived from art practice as research may contribute to the field of political cartoon study. I indicate that there is an area of further research into political cartoons that may be pursued; that is a use of the *body disordered and dispersed* within political cartooning that involves the viewer in an exchange and linkage between disparate grotesque parts of a political homunculus.

The *Bodies Politic* and the *Dead Iraqi* works suggested a further range of practice-led research: the extended-encounter of the *grotesque body disordered and dispersed* into the social realm of installation practice. This lead onto the *Party Machine* series of works, which are contextualised in the following Chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE - EXTENDED ENCOUNTERS MANIFESTED

In this chapter I discuss my research into modes of *Manifesto Drawing* expressed beyond the scale of the body to the scale of architecture that reflect critically upon everyday political institutions, figures or discourses. At the scale of architecture the cynical gesture suggests the experience of extended encounter.

In the two previous chapters my exegetical method has mapped my initial identification of the uses of depictions of cynical gestures and the grotesque body in political cartoons before I outlined my ensuing studio-based practice-led research. Here, I will not identify a range of local and contemporary cartoon precursors. I will instead discuss the research momentum derived directly from my studio research fully realised within the context of contemporary art.

I outline how, through installation practice as exhibition and issues of materiality, scale and surface incident, I have researched the viewer's experience of art co-opted as a gesture itself and (narratively) structured in architectural space and time. This research is informed by Robert Morris' ideas of the specific object and monumental sculpture in *Notes on Sculpture, Part 2* (1966) and Elisabeth Bronfen's concepts of spatially framed and edited identity in *Chryptopias: Secret Sites/Transmissible Traces. Gregor Schneider: Totes Haus Ur* (2001).

My outcomes of exhibition and installation practice are spatial constructions of printed and stained papers, photographs, objects and drawing installed as real-time experiences. I describe in detail the processes and works; *1st-4th Party Machines*, which in the context of Cornelia Butler & Catherine de Zegher, *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century* (2010) are framed as staging 'extended encounters' with the viewer. Artists such as Hans Haacke, Dan Perjovschi and Nancy Spero (USA, 1926-2009) are cited as precursors. Space and time are conceived of as dimensions of the political and of change (Massey, 1992). Through extended encounters in installation the body is directly involved in a political field, linking it to the broader history of power relations (Foucault, 1970).

Summarising the discussion of these works I suggest as findings ways in which we may identify and consider uses of extended encounter, that is the use of structured narrative duration in the publication of political cartoons as an area of new research.

Extended Encounters

Where difference of interest is removed, whimsical and unaccountable factions often arise, from personal favour or enmity. Perhaps, rust may grow to the springs of the most accurate political machine, and disorder its motions - David Hume, *Political Discourses* (1777: 529).

My studio-based research and its outcomes suggested a further range of practice-led research: the extension of the *cynical-attitudinal gesture* and the *grotesque body disordered and dispersed* into an encounter with the viewer within the realm of installation practice.

From the *1st-17th Manifesto Desktop Drawings*, and the *1-12th Amendments*, I developed how I might co-opt the embodied experience of the viewer as an *attitudinal gesture* and from the *1st–13th Bodies Politic* and the *Dead Iraqis* work I began to consider the dispersal (absence) of the grotesque body into the fabric of architectural space itself.

For this research I was interested in specific artworks that combine these methods both playfully and critically, using materiality, site and psychological presence. English artist and theorist Victor Burgin in his essay *Situational Aesthetics* (1969) identifies three key concepts of installation practice: material- and site-specificity, the notion of place and the notion of presence. Burgin underlines the contextualised meaning inherent in what he coined as 'situational' practices, comprising 'aesthetic objects that are located partly in real space and partly in psychological space' (Burgin, 1969: 118). Pertinent examples of this are artists such as Leon Golub, Hans Haacke and Marcel Broodthaers cited in Chapter 4 but other precursors lie in Marcel Duchamp's (France, 1887-1968) Dadaist spatial gesture *Sixteen Miles of String* (1942) and even (or especially) the early *political machine* drawings of cartoonist Bruce Petty.⁴⁵ Duchamp and Petty particularly exemplify a complex understanding of the way the human subject is inculcated in the machinations and dynamics of social and political systems [see figures 5.1i-ii - 5.2].

⁴⁵ Cited in this project for his contemporary cartooning in *The Age* newspaper. Strictly speaking this is not a sited work but Petty has also made three dimensional works often using small domestic objects or hardware and and short film animations featuring found footage and made-up dialogue of local and global politicians that express time and gesture through materiality and process, most recently *Global Haywire* (2008). See *Petty's Parallel Worlds* (2008).

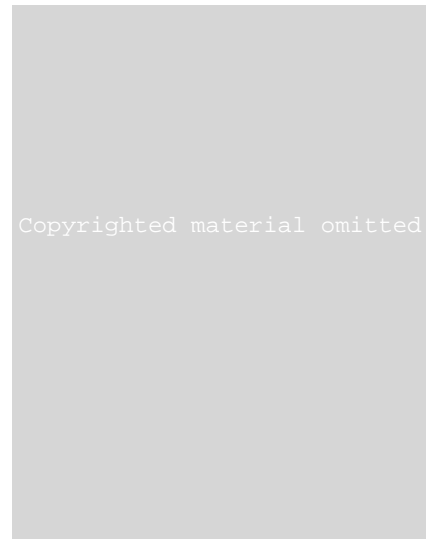


Figure 5.1-i-ii John Schiff, *Installation View of Exhibition 'First Papers of Surrealism'*, 1942, gelatin silver print.
John Schiff, *Marcel Duchamp, Sixteen Miles of String*, 1942, gelatin silver print.



Figure 5.2. Bruce Petty, *International Affairs*, 1967, Petty's Australia Fair, Melbourne, F. W. Cheshire

In 1942 Marcel Duchamp was asked by exhibition curator Andre Breton to design the installation of an exhibition *First Papers of Surrealism* (1942)⁴⁶ held at the Whitelaw Reid Mansion in midtown Manhattan. The show was initiated by the Coordinating Council of French Relief Societies in aid of war prisoners and at that time was the largest showing of Surrealist work in the United States. Duchamp's offering was his *sixteen miles* of tangled twine networked across, about and between

⁴⁶ The title is a reference to the application forms for US citizenship required by European émigré artists.

the other works hanging in the show.⁴⁷ In this example there is an attitudinal gesture delineating a web of potential tensions throughout the exhibition, employed against a field of existing signs.⁴⁸ Critic and author Benjamin Buchloh situates Duchamp's 'allegorical' readymade practice along an epistemological axis in which objects employed within an installation context are given meaning in terms of both their spatial and sign status (Buchloh, 2007: 367). One might have seen the twine as a connector forcing passages between works but also as a commodity reference to the wrapping and binding of purchases. Of more concern for this generative stage of my research project was Duchamp's everyday use of common materials and his self-conscious attempt at blurring boundaries between the viewer and art.⁴⁹

Bruce Petty is one of my favourite Australian political satirists. Particularly his early drawings and objects from the late 1960s and 1970s, like *International Affairs* use graphic gestures that alternate between representation and manifestation; connoting half-formed object-like buildings, spiraling processes-come-wheels, exaggeration marks, scratchy, deformed institutional forces and connections between ideas. Broadcaster Phillip Adams calls Petty's drawings 'data filled doodles' that retain 'social purpose' (Adams, 1976: 4). Encompassing as well attitudinal gestures like hand-written words, cut and paste collage signs, obliterating swathes of black wash and containing misshapen inked boundaries, there is something of the haptic about them, even in reproduction. They evoke for me James Elkin's observation that the grotesque must illicit a bodily grotesque in the viewer, an 'empathic discomfort' (Elkins, 1999: 251) as if a caricature makes your face itch, or a tangle of lines makes you anxious.... With Petty, I have always felt that the nervous unease of his graphic mark-making is as much a political commentary as it is a visual metaphor. Tony Wright, political journalist for *The Bulletin* has said 'Politics is really a Bruce Petty cartoon. You know, it's -- an explosion of confusion at all times' (ABC, 2002).

Encountered Space (and time)

With both Duchamp and Petty, there is a sense of agency, gameplay and performance. We might paraphrase a description from Dutch cultural theorist and academic Murat Aydemir's writings on *Performative Narratology* (the area of critical research which examines the 'ambivalence between doing and role-play that triggers an event, which can only take place with the full participation of the viewer, listener, reader, or scholar' (Aydemir, 2005). Aydemir believes performativity indicates the type of utterance it describes, or, more broadly it employs a semiotic gesture that produces what it names (Aydemir, 2005). In this light can we understand the viewer's movements or ambulations

⁴⁷ Apparently he only used several hundred feet, see (Ambrose, 2012: par. 3)

⁴⁸ For Duchamp's aesthetic 'attitudes' see Thierry De Duve (1996: 179)

⁴⁹ During the opening, the children of collectors Harriet and Sidney Janis ran through the rooms playing (extend ref = above). The work metaphorically 'symbolized literally the difficulties to be circumvented by the uninitiate in order to see, to perceive and understand (Janis, 1945: 18).

within installation as producing a discourse around space, time and self.⁵⁰ As contemporary British social scientist and geographer, Professor Doreen Massey writes time and space are intrinsically related to the political (Massey, 1992). She states, 'space is the dimension which poses the question of the social, and thus of the political' (Massey, 2005: 99). It is equated with *extension*, and through that with the material. Whereas temporality is the dimension of change (Massey, 2005: 117).

I wanted to continue to use *drawing* and *paper* as an ambivalent base process and ground for the project as I had but also as elements in space and as expression of duration. And I wanted to employ them as cynically as I could. Paper should remain open to drawing as cutting, staining, penetration and distortion as it had throughout all my research.⁵¹ According to Claude Gandelman (1989) the most cynical and grotesque of all gestures is that which connects the arse:face (see the colon). We have seen how both Luther and Gillray used 'stecorous language made visible' (Gandelman, 1989: 16). Toilet paper was an appropriate if rather (intentionally) puerile choice. It carried connotations of the sardonically, common, cheap and perishable.

I sought to elicit a response in the viewer that imaginatively sympathises with disordering-attitudinal operations as an insertion of the personal into a larger narrative and which, through the agency of the dispersal-absence of the grotesque body calls for a transformation of politico-social tension that *in some fashion already exist within the mind of the beholder*, see Chapter 4 (Storr, 2004: 16).

1st & 2nd Party Machines

The *1st Party Machine*⁵² was a 3-dimensional construction installed throughout a temporary series of 2nd floor display and office spaces off a laneway in the central CBD of Melbourne. It was open to viewing for an periods during its creation and to the public over a series of weekends and by invitation. The space was used both as the site of display and making. I began by laying down sheets of plastic and unfurling long rolls of everyday toilet paper on which I spilled stains, splatters and squirted gestures with acrylic pigment emptied and poured from tubes and sprays. The choice of the cereleun/cobalt/windsor blue palette derived directly from the *Bodies Politic* series of body maps. After some days the toilet papers eventually dried and were left with a flakey, unpleasant

⁵⁰ Compare this with Janine Antoni herding the audience in *Loving Care* (1993), see Chapter 4.

⁵¹ As Pamela Lee says, drawing 'volatizes other matter', like the paper that serves as drawing's ground (Lee, 1999: 32)

⁵² The explicit reference in the title refers to the 'backroom' operations of political organisations and the balance of tensions between commanding administrators and a corps of members. Australian historian John Burrow in *A History of Histories* (2007) discusses the development of the 'Nation State' under the rubric of a machine model in tension with historical 'individuality' but also as an expression of the individual's 'highest' self (Burrow, 2007: 458-59). Here is one of many Australian media references to (for instance) the Australian Labor Party 'machine' in New South Wales; 'NSW Labor is not just a political organisation. It's a bigger machine than the ALP and elected parliamentarians. It is a complex web of interconnecting, personal relationships...' Ken Phillips, *Machine Culture Rotten to the Core* (2008), The Australian 21.11.2008. <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24682201-7583,00.html> Accessed 21.11.2008. Such use of the term 'machine' in the context of an editorial discussing the corruption of NSW politics suggest to me that the term 'Party Machines' is already operating as a cynicism. On the idea of the machine and notions of the grotesque, see (Cazort, 1996; Petherbridge, 2010).

surface. They could then be twisted, tied and knotted to produce rope-like spans and networks. I fixed these to the walls, windows and the ceiling using commercially available, removable, 'magic putty' plastic wall fixings. All the while the papers remained fragile and prone to breaking and tearing. In many ways the *1st Party Machine* was no more than a *hybrid* test - part performed action, part drawing in space, part image, part sculpture. It took much longer to make than later versions as I struggled to find the means to both draw out in space but also construct a viable material idiom that was self-sustaining and which connected to the architecture. The toilet paper ribbons were like gestures in space but ones filled with surface incidents that both defined space and form, supported weight and directed force. As supports were tested and the inherent stresses within the assemblage changed the forms mutated in kind.

Initially I occupied the main display-office space available to me but my realisation was that the growing corpus might permeate the entire space like a growing homunculus, invading 'private' domains like the small office and even looking out towards external windows. The whole process worked towards manifesting a moment of equilibrium as the final shape stabilised [see figures 5.3 to 5.10].



Figure 5.3 Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 1st Party Machine*, 2006, (workspace details, Melbourne)
Acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings.



Figure 5.4i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 1st Party Machine*, 2006, (workspace details, Melbourne)
Acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings.



Figure 5.5i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 1st Party Machine*, 2006, (installation details-interior and exterior, Melbourne), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings. Catherine Manuell Design, Melbourne.



Figure 5.6i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 1st Party Machine*, 2006, (installation details), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings. Catherine Manuell Design, Melbourne.



Figure 5.7i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 1st Party Machine*, 2006, (installation details), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings. Catherine Manuell Design, Melbourne.

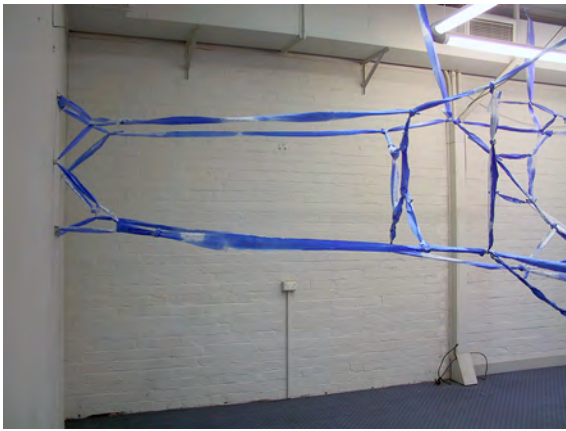


Figure 5.8i-vi. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 1st Party Machine*, 2006, (installation details), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings. Catherine Manuell Design, Melbourne.



Figure 5.9i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 1st Party Machine*, 2006, (installation details), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings. Catherine Manuell Design, Melbourne.



Figure 5.10. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 1st Party Machine*, 2006, (installation details), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings. Catherine Manuell Design, Melbourne.

My aim was that the *Party Machines* would provoke the viewer experientially (as much I had been in the making) marked by a form of kinesis, that is actions and gestures enacted by the viewer. Regarding Louise Bourgeois's (France, 1911-2010) large installation work, *Spider* (1997), which imposes itself web-like in its architectural space and upon the viewer, theorist Mieke Bal's observes,

Viewing is by definition a process. Ever since Marcel Duchamp's Optical Machines from the 1920s, we have known that the rapid glance is a myth, or at least a mistake...[Bourgeois' work foregrounds that] the viewer simply cannot see the entire work in one Augenblick. Many aspects of the work enforce a viewing that takes time, imposing an awareness of that temporality. And when culturally processed, time carries narrative (Bal, 2001: 27).

The *1st Party Machine* was entirely disconnected from the floor - it floated in space and insinuated itself through the series of office spaces like a connective tissue. It was fragile and contingent; when breaks or tears occurred during the exhibition they were re-knotted and mended. Viewers walking around and through the work stuck their heads into voids and openings of paper, peered in close-up at surface marks and patterns, tracked trails of stains and emissions through doorways, ducked down, peered up, looked through and watched other people being seen as being inside the work, being led into it and forming a connection between competing forces. These gestures created relations between parts and whole. The *1st Party Machine* sought to express in real space a palpable sense of agonistic force and identity, of contending actions and objects. Like Bruce Petty's political cartoons a sense of the turbulent whole assembled from labyrinthine self-interested parts was integral. At the end of the period of display the drawing installation was destroyed.

The *2nd Party Machine* was installed soon after the *1st Party Machine* at the Bendigo Latrobe University exhibition space in Bendigo, regional Victoria (2006). I had a brief residency at the gallery and made the work on site using part of the week-long install period to produce the stained, dripped and dyed toilet paper; laying out rolls in the corridors at night and removing them before the building opened in the mornings - like a ghoulish caretaker. Before I began work I envisioned the space with a sort of colour ambience embedded with large scale form. The choice of a violet pigment was that of a more disembodied hue - one that would activate the high ceilings ethereally.



Figure 5.11i-iii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 2nd Party Machine*, 2006, (installation views), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings. Latrobe University Visual Art Space, Bendigo.

The methods of the *1st Party Machine* underlined the importance of the interaction with available architectural forms, eschewing installation *in the space* for an interruption of the building itself. I treated the galley and adjacent architecture like a disordered body, blurring boundaries between internal and external spaces, opening up both organic and geometric forms, making attachments, additions and extrusions, down to the floor and into other public areas. This included flowing over wall tops, the piercing of high openings and vaulting of lintel beams. Wherever that purple trail of soiled paper created a track a body had been - my body climbing over the building at night on high ladders - creating the dispersed spaces of an absent or phantom body (see figs 5.12i-ii, 5.13i-iii).



Figure 5.12i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 2nd Party Machine*, 2006, (installation views), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings. Latrobe University Visual Art Space, Bendigo.



Figure 5.13i-iii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 2nd Party Machine*, 2006, (installation views), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings. Latrobe University Visual Art Space, Bendigo.

The *2nd Party Machine* has a number of correspondences with works like that of Polish artist Monika Sosnowska (Poland, 1972), whose *1:1* (2007) occupied that country's pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale. Latin American curator, Marcia E. Vetrocq reviewed Sosnowska's project for *Art in America*:

Into the little Polish pavilion she has inserted a steel armature that replicates the building's real structure but sags and bows in a state of rubbery-looking ruin. As you stoop and twist to wander through the limp cage, the piece becomes an effective symbol of the collapse of institutions, Communist or otherwise (Vetrocq, 2007: 143).

Sosnowska's work instills a brooding and monstrous presence - in the terms outlined by this project, a product of its bulk and deforming metal monumentality yet it also expresses some of the ambivalent (phantasmagorical) carnivalesque of the *1st & 2nd Party Machines* [see figs 5.14i-ii].

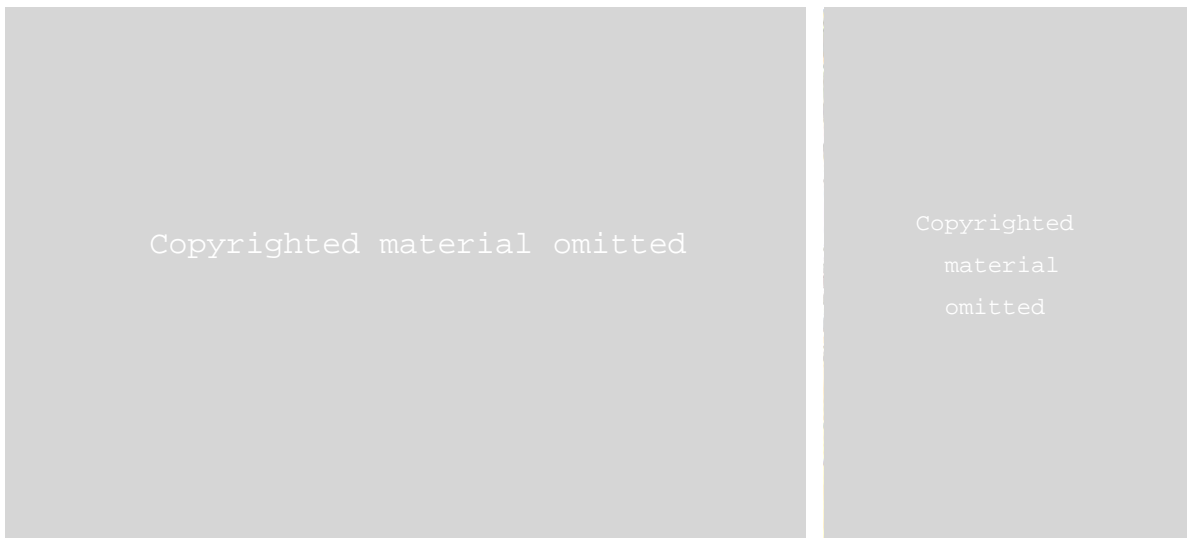


Figure 5.14i-ii. Monika Sosnowska, *1:1*, 2007-08, steel construction, Schaulager, Basel

The writings on Minimalism and process art of American sculptor, conceptual artist and theorist Robert Morris (USA, 1931), particularly *Sculpture part 2* (1966) prefigure much of the dynamic of extended spatial gestures. Morris argues that art experience encapsulates each of the 'object', the space of display and the viewer (as distinct from only the 'symbolic' iconography of sculpture). He emphasises how the body of the viewer of large or monumental objects enters into 'a total continuum' of scale and space, of near and far, privateness and publicness engaging both elements of surface incident and structural divisions. The viewer, whose 'experience of the work necessarily exists in time' establishes the relationships of the work in an 'extended situation' (Morris, 1966: 236-39).⁵³ The attendant psychology of the manipulation of space and the

⁵³ Morris's construction of the viewer-as-subject in installation is taken up most notably by Rosalind Krauss in her essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979). As noted in my introduction Chapter One the term *expanded field* has been widely appropriated in relation to contemporary post-minimal drawing practices. I have intentionally avoided the use of 'expanded' field and used the idea of the *extension* of drawing and its *encounter*.

viewer in such installation practices has been expanded upon by Elisabeth Bronfen in *Chryptopias: Secret Sites/Transmissible Traces*, Gregor Schneider: *Totes Haus Ur*, (2001) and addressed in recent curatorial projects by Ralph Rughoff *Psycho Buildings* (2008) at the Hayward Gallery, London. In her analysis of German artist Gregor Schneider's (Germany, 1969) art practice – which she describes as a fractured rebuilding of his living space – Bronfen appropriates the metaphor of a 'phantom' architecture as an extension of the Freudian image of the unconscious-as-crypt.⁵⁴ She suggests that the trope is used counter-analytically by artists and filmmakers, who shape a language of edited and reframed interior architectures, creating a space into which the spectator imaginatively displaces. These,

phantasmagoric sites thrive off the performance suggestibility such that they allow the spectator to sense the resonance of the invisible, to experience what cannot directly be seen, to comprehend the intangible, precisely because it is so markedly absent (Bronfen, 2001: 42).

During its exhibition the viewer encountered in the *2nd Party Machine* a large-scale, fantastical structure. For me, it had a certain sort of beauty associated with an amended, arabesque complexity and its opposite; a growing infestation of an atavistic presence; a sort of haunted institution. My intent was a reflection upon the necessarily distorted ambitions of political systems; idealistic at the scale of individual political vision but dystopian at the large scale of organisational will-to-power. The viewer does not so much as observe this as reinvest it experientially through kinesis.

Extended Time

In response to the developments in the *1st* and *2nd Party Machines* around notions of space as the dimension of politics and the viewer as an attitudinal-phantom body in architectural space I wanted to extend the encounter with the works in relation to a structured sense of installation time as the dimension of change linking local experience with historical frameworks.

In 1982, at *Dokumenta 7* in Kassel, German artist Hans Haacke exhibited *Painting in oil, Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers* (1982) a work that included a 19th century-style oil portrait of then US President Ronald Reagan in an installation criticizing the deployment of American missiles in what was then West Germany. On one wall of a long corridor space Haacke's portrait of Reagan hung above an inscribed text panel. From a gold-plated cordon-rope extended a red carpet that connected across the corridor to a large reprinted photographic still of the crowd protesting Reagan's policy. Viewers transited the work by walking across the carpet [see figure 5.15i-ii].

⁵⁴ See Sigmund Freud *The Uncanny* (1993) for links of the 'uncanny' and aesthetics of grotesque. Mike Kelley 'The Uncanny' exhibition restaged at the Tate Liverpool (originally at Gemeentemuseum for Sonsbeek 93, in Arnhem, Holland) links the uncanny and grotesque also, citing examples of artists like Edward Kienholz and Paul McCarthy, see (Kelley, 2004). Connelly (2003:5) suggests other terms attached to the grotesque: arabesque, abject, informé, uncanny, bricolage, carnivalesque, convulsive beauty, dystopia.



Figure 5.15i-ii. Hans Haacke, *Ölgemälde, Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers*, 1982 (details), Documenta7, Kassel.

Haacke typically used a range of material devices and objects to question the viewer's attitude to artworks in their museum settings.⁵⁵ Professor Roy Boyne from Durham University, who has written extensively on the sociology of art cites Haacke as a rare example of an artist who is explicitly critical of the relationship between the museum and social-political power, stating Haacke's 'targeting of distorted communication recognises, as did Foucault's work on prison reform, that other models of subjectivity and subjectification may be possible' (Boyne, 2002: 345). Haacke both delays and restructures the viewer's progress through the museum by re-orientating and impeding the body at crucial junctures: at entrances, in passages and facing walls. In his Broodthaers *painting-in-oil homage* the hand-painted portrait is a cynical-attitudinal gesture that asks us to pause and consider how 'official style' images of politicians and businessmen, much like I.D. photographs activate whole histories of association beyond an empty 'code-sign' when placed in counterpoint to specific, here-and-now events (issues) or protests.⁵⁶ The viewer's forward movement is arrested in a zone between walls bearing the contested authorities of leadership and the common will that loops back and forth along the track of the red carpet. Haacke supplants the idea of a leader existing as a connected head of state to a supportive polity with one where the leader fails to connect with the body of concerned public opposition.⁵⁷ The installed 'red carpet' seems to beckon a stained transplanting of one for the other. Implicitly the viewer is changed by this encounter with a structured, transitional temporality. Only through an act of acknowledgement (be that sympathy, anger, disgust or apathy) can the viewer move on.

Pamela Lee, writing on extended contemporary drawing practices in *Some Kinds of Duration: The Temporality of Drawing as Process Art* (1999) claims they are linked (as noted above) with Robert Morris' writings about the spatial and temporal experience of sculpture installations (R. Morris, 1966: 236-39). Lee re-formulates Morris's 'deeply ambiguous sense of time' as a 'double time of drawing.' She contends two kinds of time are at play in these works of art: the temporality they project in their internal development, and temporality in relation to 'other aspects of human activity', as an externalisation in history (Lee, 1999: 32-33).

In addition to the installation tradition represented by artists like Haacke encompassing attitudinal-gesture, spatial re-orientation of the body through architecture and furnitures, zones of transit and even the use of images of politicians I have identified other contemporary artists like Dan Perjovschi and Kerry James Marshall (USA, 1955) who have used extant architectures in conjunction with a comic graphic idiom to structure political narratives. There are very strong links

⁵⁵ See for instance *Gallery-Goers' Birthplace and Residence Profile* (1969–70) and *Shapolsky et al...* (1971)

⁵⁶ Ernst Gombrich's refers to the photo I.D. as a 'code-sign' (E. H. Gombrich, 1963: 12). For recent discussions on portraiture, caricature and 'faciality' see (Goldman, 1978; Hannoosh, 1992; Kelley, 2003; S. S. H. Nairne, 2006; J. C. Welchman, 1988).

⁵⁷ This is very similar cynical reprographic strategy to that I have observed beginning to appear in contemporary political cartoons indicated as part conclusion in Chapter Four.

between the sort of narrative function that cartoon cells perform in political cartoons and the sequencing of graphic artefacts, spaces and the body in installation [see figures 5.16, 5.17i-ii].⁵⁸



Fig 5.16. Dan Perjovschi, *Projektil Architekti*, 2012, National Technical Library, Prague,

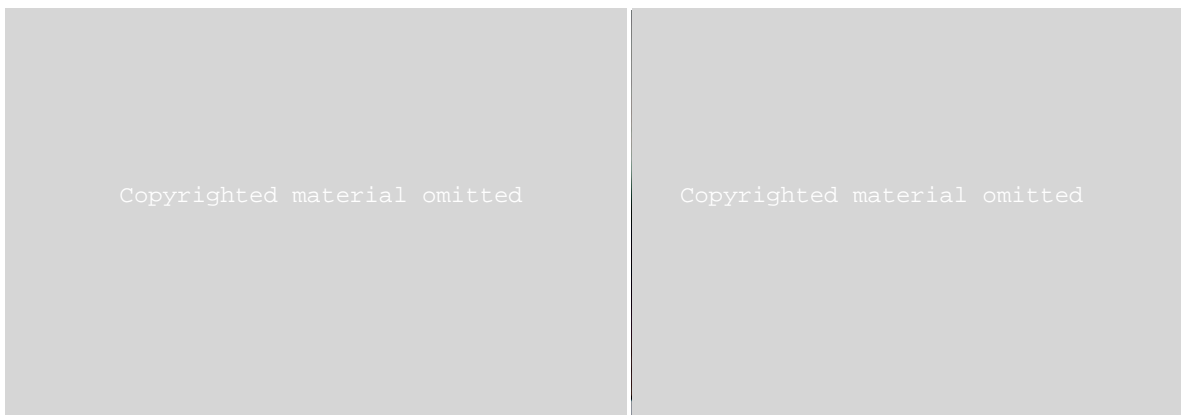


Fig 5.17i-ii Kerry James Marshall *Dallies (Rythm Mastr)*, 2007, (installation view and detail), Documenta12, Kassel.

⁵⁸ Other artists I would include here include photographer Tracey Moffat (Aust., 1960), animator William Kentridge (RSA, 1955), draughtsman David Shrigley and Australian painter Raaf Ishak (Egypt, 1967), see in particular, *Nomination for the presidency of the New Egypt* (2012), Irene Sutton Gallery, Melbourne, as well as many anonymous street artists. The pictorial-semiotic discourse produced in both comic art and political cartoons by elements like spatial sequence, gutter, seriality, pause, speech bubble, caption and so on are rarely analysed in the literature on political cartooning, see (Morris, 1993) as an exception but are well researched as part of the sub-genre of comics see (Eco, 1984; Groensteen, 2000; McCloud, 1994).

I believe there is a complete research project using the template of graphic comic structure as a way to understand installation practice and composition under the aegis of its *narrative* functions (vis-à-vis the spatial, material, psychological concerns of this project). Early on I was tempted to follow this line of research (see Chapter Two, Fig 2.2-4, Studio maps) but ultimately I concluded that while it suggests a fascinating *populist* reading of installation practice, it does not generate new knowledge about political cartoons.

3rd & 4th Party Machines

The *3rd Party Machine (Higgins)* was installed in the smaller gallery at the Artist-run gallery Conical in Melbourne. Visitors to the work entered the exhibition from a side street, up a set of winding stairs into a small sideways entry foyer and a corridor, both of which were incorporated as part of the encounter with successive elements of the installation [see figure 5.18].

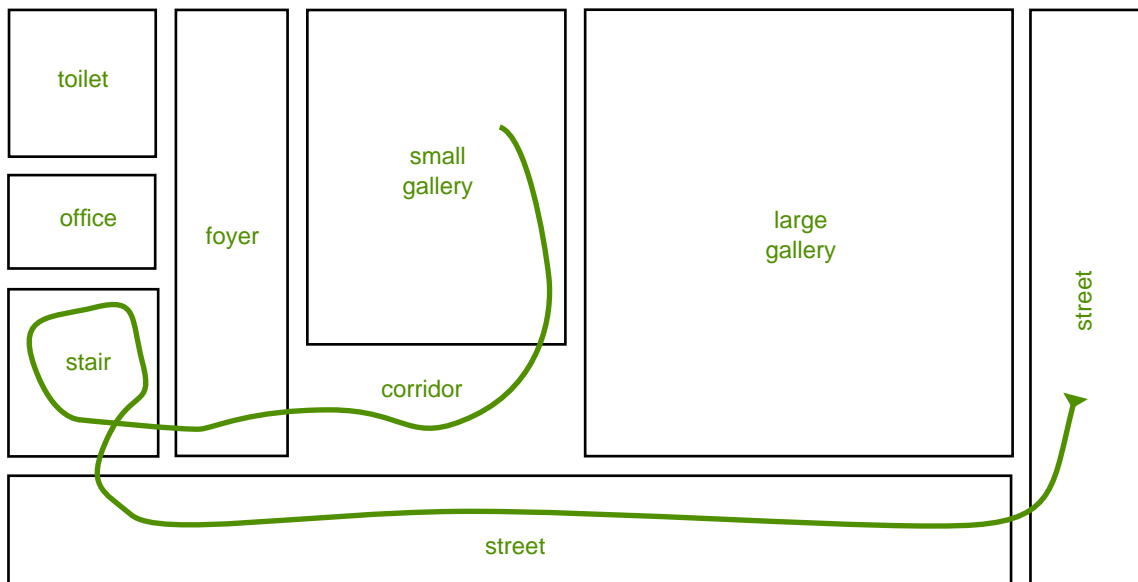


Figure 5.18. Greg Creek, *3rd Party Machine (Higgins)* movement map, 2007

All the material for this show was produced off site - I spent the limited installation period organising the elements in a reasonably improvised manner. For instance, whilst I fabricated specific objects for the foyer area I had only a vague conception of the final form of the toilet paper construction in the small gallery space. I did know that it would have a shit-diarrhoea colour.

In the foyer at Conical (a narrow space that lead through to public toilets and a kitchen) I leaned a white-encaustic encased door-sized heavy rectangle object tethered by two strains of toilet papers stretching over the fulcrum of the opposite wall top-plate. In the succeeding corridor a jumble of material appeared over the adjacent wall and beyond this at the entry-door into the display space proper, hung a black and white A4 publicity photograph of Peter Costello, (then) Deputy Leader of the Australian Liberal Party and Member for the Victorian electorate of *Higgins* (centred on the well-to-do suburb of Malvern in Melbourne). The image was supplied by his office in Malvern, Melbourne. The image is signed, 'Greg Best Wishes Peter Costello'. Inside the small square gallery space a semi-structured, ragged web of stained paper cords defined part of the room and attached to an encaustic cylinder suspended above another waxed vessel partly filled with waste stained paper. Traces of paper rolls lined the opposite wall [see figure 5.19i-iii to 5.21i-iii].

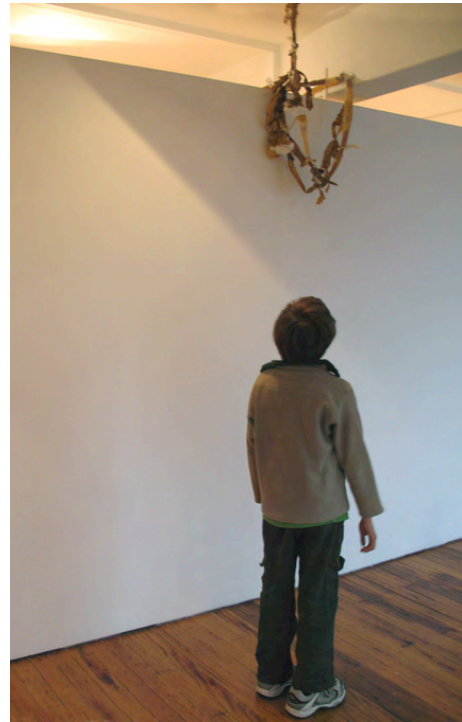


Figure 5.19i-iii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 3rd Party Machine (Higgins)*, 2007, acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings, timber, wax, signed photograph. Installation view and details, Conical Gallery, Melbourne.



Figure 5.20i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 3rd Party Machine (Higgins)*, 2007. acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings, timber, wax, signed photograph. Installation view and details, Conical Gallery, Melbourne.



Figure 5.21i-iii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 3rd Party Machine (Higgins)*, 2007, acrylic pigment, toilet paper, plastic fixings, timber, wax, signed photograph. Installation view and details, Conical Gallery, Melbourne.

The *3rd Party Machine (Higgins)* set up a narrative sequence that re-orientated the viewer's progress and perceptions over time. Narrative duration (Pamela's Lee's experience of the work in real time as distinct from an 'autonomous' internalised time of the art work) produces sequences of experiences or encounters, self-awareness and reflection within the viewer, the potential for change in thinking and contextual change to adjacent experiences. In general terms the sequence of winding access up stairs, obstructed foyer, interrupted fields of vision, suggested activity in a hidden room was contrasted with the shabby and incomplete toilet-grotesqueries of the small room. This build up and release of expectation pivots about a threshold image that imputes a very specific local reference. The nature of the heavy foyer object is altered by its revealed precarious reciprocity to the internal hanging cylinder. After a second view it appears contingent and vulnerable and cause and effect is disrupted. The sense of Peter Costello's signed image is sullied by the knowledge of the stained paper hangs.⁵⁹

Spatial installation practice allows a recursive mapping and reflective duration incorporates the viewer's agency into the construction of meaning. My aim was to imply a hidden other to political process (incomplete and partial) and to mark a politician's ambivalent complicity in the construction of their public identity (agent and victim). What do we know of political processes - what do we project?

The *4th Party Machine (The Internationale)* was installed at the Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne (2008).⁶⁰ It continued similar methods as the previous *Party Machines*: certain elements were fabricated before the exhibition (like the stained toilet paper) and incorporated into an improvised structure during installation. I also made a group of fired porcelain slip cistern-like vessels (derived from the *receivers* from the *1st -12th Amendment* works. From the Federal Australian Labor Party website (www.alp.org.au) I downloaded all the publicity photographs of members of the party room. I chose not to use those who had a high profile leadership role (Leaders Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard for instance) but focused upon lesser known politicians from electorates across Australia. I regard politicians with great ambivalence, I respect their desire to contribute to society but on the other hand I find their anodyne smiles pathetic and imperfect. I transferred digitally manipulated prints of these heads onto the ragged ends of the toilet paper [see figures 5.22i-ii].

⁵⁹ The photograph usually raised a chuckle from viewers. The self importance of the official portrait is brought low by its own caricature (the smile) and proximity to the everyday (my name). Here is signature as (indexical) grotesque gesture.

⁶⁰ The parenthesised title (*The Internationale*) refers to the socialist anthem, which since the late 19th Century has been a rallying emblem of the International Socialist movement. Its lyric, written in 1871 by Frenchman Eugène Pottier, who had been a member of the Paris Commune, has the chorus; 'Then come comrades rally / the last fight let us face / The Internationale / Unites the human race'. (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Internationale), Iconic Australian Labour Party Prime Minister Bob Hawke, was famously able to sing the song when asked at a Press conference in 1982.



Figure 5.22i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 4th Party Machine (the Internationale)*, 2008, (workspace views), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, transfer prints.

In the gallery I constructed a large geometric form from the stained toilet paper (it evolved into a double-ended spindle shape with a smaller and larger head) that intersected the plane of the gallery floor as if it were submerged and emerging from it. To realise the complexity of the form it became necessary to draw a series of schematic plan and elevation sketches to work out the architectural projection of the form and these I did directly on the dark floor of the gallery in white chalk, leaving them in place for the show. The excess ends of the toilet paper ropes with the printed heads dangled loose from the structure. The exhibition space lay at the back of the gallery complex and it was reached through a foyer, via another display space, past a series of columns, partitions and a heavy timber stair-case [see figures 5.23i-ii to 5.27].

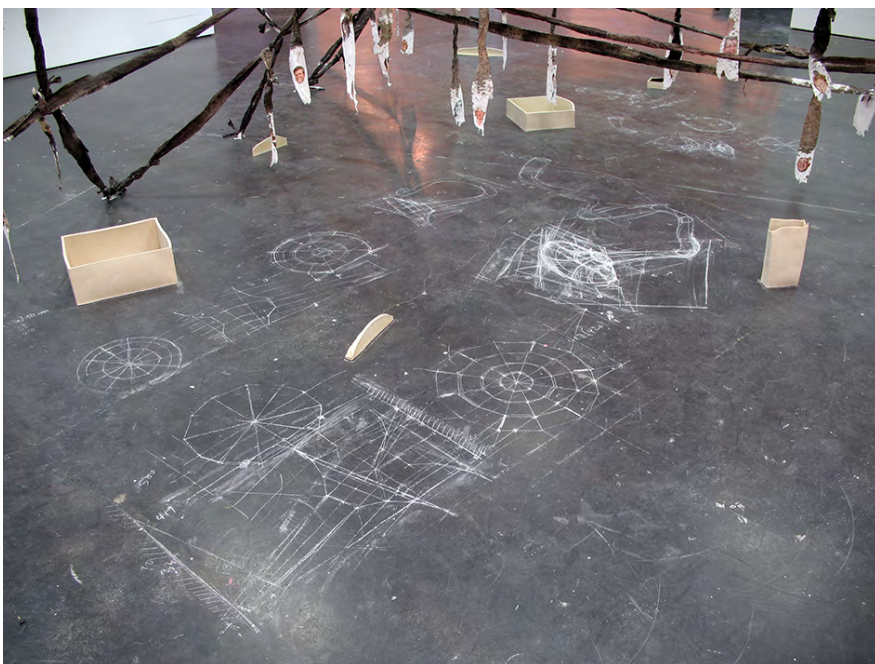


Figure 5.23i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 4th Party Machine (the Internationale)*, 2008, acrylic pigment, toilet paper, transfer prints, plastic fixings, porcelain clay, chalk. Installation view and details, VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne.

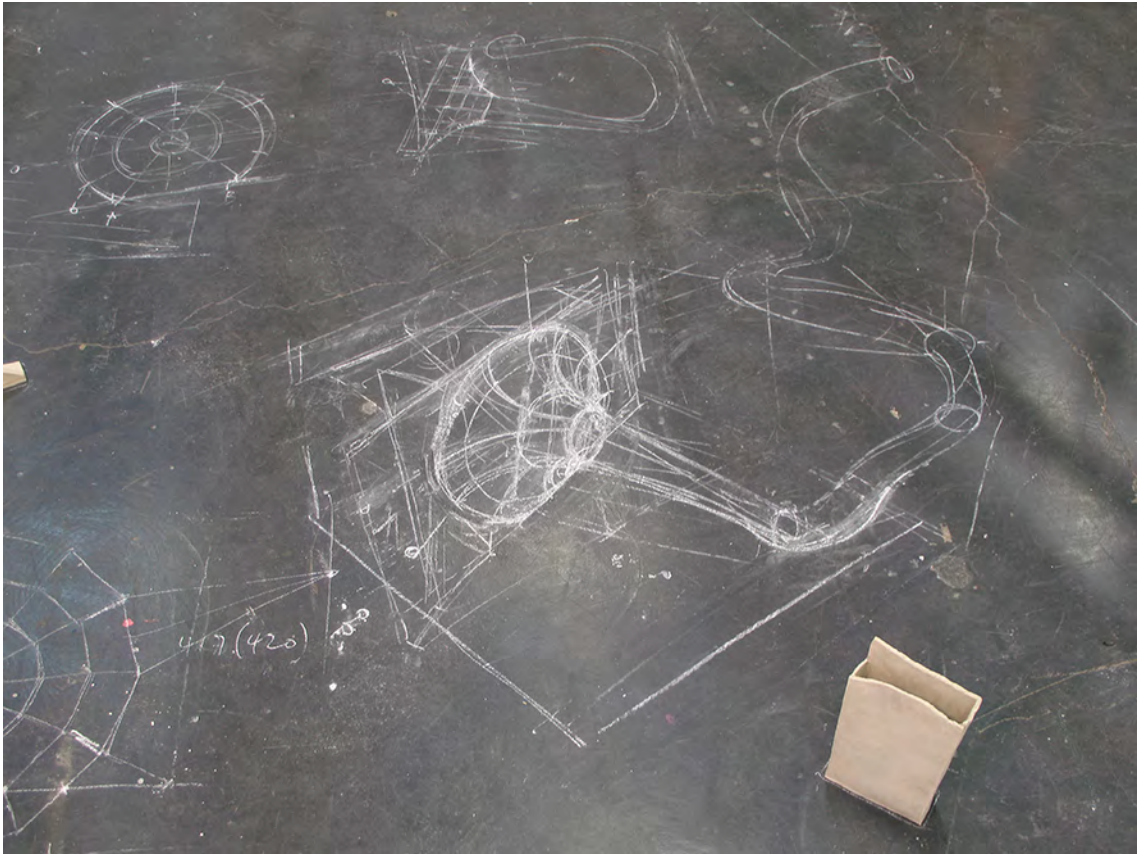


Figure 5.24i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 4th Party Machine (the Internationale)*, 2008, acrylic pigment, toilet paper, transfer prints, plastic fixings, porcelain clay, chalk. Installation view and details, VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne.

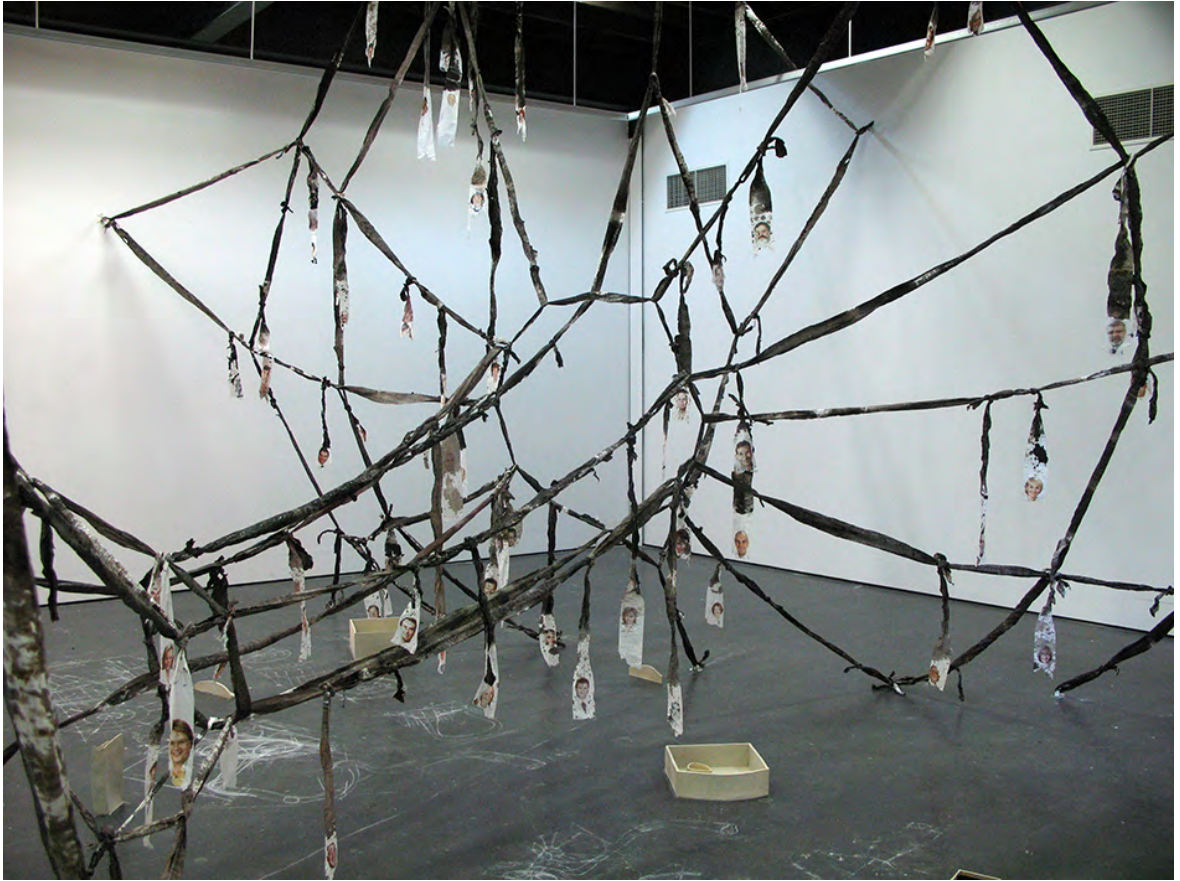


Figure 5.25i-ii. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 4th Party Machine (the Internationale)*, 2008, acrylic pigment, toilet paper, transfer prints, plastic fixings, porcelain clay, chalk. Installation view and details, VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne.



Figure 5.26. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 4th Party Machine (the Internationale)*, 2008, (detail), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, transfer print.



Figure 5.27 Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 4th Party Machine (the Internationale)*, 2008, (detail), acrylic pigment, toilet paper, transfer print.

Although I was not aware of it at the time, the *4th Party Machine* shares some similarities with Nancy Spero's work *Maypole - take no prisoners* (2008),⁶¹ which in its 2011 incarnation at the Spero retrospective at the Serpentine Gallery, London was described by Frieze magazine reviewer Eleanor Nairne as:

a host of victims' heads hangs from steel chains and silk ribbons that speak to the ceremonial pomp of militarism. The installation was originally conceived for the 2007 Venice Biennale (this version was reconfigured the following year for an exhibition at the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid), and in both instances Spero hoped that the faces she had 'cannibalized' from her 1960s responses to the Vietnam War would resonate with the Anglo-American involvement in Iraq (Nairne, 2011: par. 2).

Victim's heads indeed. In both works viewers navigate the gallery space to join with disembodied phantoms entangled in an uncanny machine. In the *4th Party Machine* both the viewer and the poor unknown politician become caught in the web of the party machine and a revealed site of scheming, measuring, planning, and ideals, like an archaeology of power [see figures 5.28, 5.29].



Figure 5.28 Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 4th Party Machine (the Internationale)*, 2008, acrylic pigment, toilet paper, transfer prints, plastic fixings, porcelain clay, chalk. Installation detail, VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne.

⁶¹ This was Spero's final artwork. She died in 2009.

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 5.29. Nancy Spero, *Maypole - take no prisoners*, 2008. Serpentine Gallery, London.

In *The Order of Things* (1970) Michel Foucault emphasises the origin of subjectivity within its political context, ‘... the body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold on it; they mark it, train it, force it to carry out its tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (Foucault, 1970: 25). Later, in *Discipline and Punish* (1986), focusing on those institutions of punishment that supplanted the applications of capital punishments, he ‘formulates the model of a body that finds itself inscribed by its political situation (McAnulty, 1992: 183). One of my aims in the *Party Machine* works was to challenge the status of the individual in relation to our ideas about politicians - what they do, what they stand for - as an encounter with the politician-as-trope. How, from our local perspective do we position ourselves through our elected representatives, in a discourse with historical movements, that are often failed or compromised ideal structures? Australian historian John Burrow observes vernacular histories are not detached but close and intimate in the life of the city (Burrow, 2007: 275) however, when subject to the effects of rapid cutting from individual’s (humble and momentary) particular situations to a cosmic-world view perspectives become full of idiosyncratic power, cacophony and bathos. They are fitful, less rational and ordered (Burrow, 2007: 381).

Large scale political momentums might be said to act out a grotesque gesture upon the immediate bodies of all of us at any one time. In a way this is what political cartoons illustrate every day. The moral and critical aspects of this tension, embodied in cynicism, are what this project has sought to research through art.

A history of the way in which individuals are urged to constitute themselves as subjects of moral conduct would be concerned with the models proposed for setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself'... [ie] a history of the forms of moral subjectiveness and of the practices of the self that are meant to ensure it (Foucault, 1990: 29).



Figure 5.30. Greg Creek, *Manifesto Drawing: 4th Party Machine (the Internationale)*, 2008 (de-installation view), VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne.

Extended encounters in political cartoons

My research through the *Manifesto Desktop Drawings* and the *Amendments* has suggested ways in which we may identify and consider uses of extended encounters in political cartooning itself as an area of new knowledge.

I would define an *extended encounter* in political cartoons as the insinuation of the viewer's accumulated experience over time (in the space of the real world) as a strategy to further engage him or her in political reflection. This differs from conventional cartoon narrative sequence in that at any one time the sequence is incomplete and open-ended, the viewer takes the place of an absent subject (coming into being). Potentially other spaces of dissemination are opened-up and recursive forms of narrative duration are experienced. Taken further this suggests research in other traditions and forms of graphic response to politics like street art and graffiti.

When I formulated these insights through making art I revisited my collection of contemporary political cartoons from daily newspapers in order to identify examples of such extended encounter. In the following examples the cartoonist's extension of the closed tableaux-like cell of newspaper cartoons invites in the viewer a regenerative critique.

STRUCTURED NARRATIVE ACCUMULATION

Of opened-ended installments and sequences in real time

Alan Moir's sequence of cartoons picturing New South Wales State Premier and Labor Party Leader Kristina Keneally (2009-2011) as a simple girl-child effigy forever tied, marionette-like, with strings reaching out of the top of the pictorial cell, sets up a signature caricature that extended across a ten week sequence and over five cartoons.

The visual metaphor of a politician controlled by strings operated by an implied political party machine is a device used to critical and satirical effect when the visual elements are subverted by Moir. Each cartoon comments upon everyday news-cycle and events. In each cell Keneally is a hapless, manipulated and pathetic figure - an innocent hardly aware of the contexts of real-politik power. In some ways she represents the reader as well - certainly Moir's indignant tone suggests we are all victims - with an undercurrent of the need for nurturing.

Through the sequence, which reinforces in the viewer the accumulating bathos of the marionette metaphor, the Keneally-figure is variously a victim of shipwreck, car-crash and patronisation. However, in his final cartoon of the sequence, a full 10 weeks after the first, Moir depicts the Keneally-marionette abruptly cutting the ties that control her. Here the negative connotation of the symbol of control is inverted into one of nascent strength. Independent from the content or target of particular cartoons the narrative sequence over time structures its own meaning that both changes

our view of Keneally the politician and our own sense of political agency. Moir's message is that time is the element of change [see figures 5.31 to 5.35].



Figure. 5.31. Alan Moir, Sydney Morning Herald, 22 September 2010



Figure. 5.32. Alan Moir, Sydney Morning Herald, 10 October 2010

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure. 5.33. Alan Moir, Sydney Morning Herald, 11 November 2010

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure. 5.34. Alan Moir, Sydney Morning Herald, 30 November 2010

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure. 5.35. Alan Moir, Sydney Morning Herald, 1 December 2010

BLOGGING

Of boundaries between private and public and spaces of political reflection

Rocco Fazzari's ongoing blog in the Sydney Morning Herald *Rocco Bloggo* (<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/blog/rocco-bloggo>) archives the history of his cartoon development. The site is a counterpoint to his published cartoons in the mainstream daily newspaper but exists as an independent source of ideas and reflections. Rocco intersperses the development of his images with personal anecdotes about the political institutions, figures or discourses he is thinking about. He also captures and narrates change in his own perceptions and feelings and the development of the drawings and their meanings. Rocco refers to his own complex historical references and memories, in for example his depiction of and note about current Australian Liberal Party Prime Minister John Howard bearing a hagiographic tattoo of former conservative party leader and Prime Minister Robert Menzies as 'Ming'.⁶² Rocco's blog has a sense of cathartic engagement and energy for both him and us as viewers. The site is public and didactic but also intimate and questioning - it is like a conventional political cartoon extended into a conversation. Experiencing it we are drawn into both public and private dialogues with an implicit invitation, like a lot of social media, to contribute our own experiences [see figure 5.36].

Copyrighted material omitted

⁶² Robert Menzies was Australian Prime Minister (1939-41 and 1951-56). His nick-name 'Ming' was a reference to his Scots ancestry but also, cynically in the late 1930s, to 'Ming the Merciless, an unlikeable contemporary character in Flash Gordon comics and serials' (Carroll, 2004: 145). My own memory is of my left-voting parents explaining it derived from the perception Menzies would have ceded, if forced to, the Northern half of Australia to the Japanese in World War II.

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Summary findings

In this chapter I have outlined how across a body of four installations I have researched the encounter with extended drawing practices that offers means by which studio-based art practice leading to exhibition can produce a critical response to politics. These outcomes have developed from correspondences I had researched between art and political cartooning that enact cynical-attitudinal gestures (at a scale smaller than the body) and the disordered-dispersed grotesque body (at scales of the body) as a reflection upon everyday political institutions, figures or discourses.

This firstly has been effected through two installations that examined the (embodied) experience of the viewer as an *attitudinal gesture*, and the dispersal-absence of the grotesque body into the fabric of architectural space itself. These are the *1st* and *2nd Party Machines*, in which space is the dimension of the social. Blurred boundaries of architecture and ambivalent materiality within encountered installation practice co-opt the viewer into a narrative of machineries of political power.

Secondly, two installations have examined a structured sense of time that links local experience with historical frameworks. These are the *3rd* and *4th Party Machines*, in which time is the dimension of change. The reorientation of the viewer, his or her presence/absence as subject, and architecture as a narrative-time-structure within extended installation produce a discourse around the and political and selfhood.

Further, I have indicated how creative practice can produce insights into related domains of knowledge.

I want to suggest how conclusions derived from art practice as research may contribute to the field of political cartoon study. I note there is an area of further research into political cartoons that may be pursued; that is a use of *extended encounter* within political cartooning, occurring outside the conventional narrative sequencing of frames within the cartoon in other spaces of dissemination and utilising other forms of narrative duration.

CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSIONS

Cartoons are propaganda. But remember the root meaning of propaganda is information. The Question is: decoded by whom and for what purposes? - Dean Minix, Political Cartoons: A Research Note (2004: 77).

In my research project I have posed three questions;

1. *How does embodied cynicism correspond in art and political cartooning?* This is a question concerning practice and methodology and what art can learn (use) from political cartooning. I have characterised this as as practice-led research within the studio.

2. *How can critical responses to everyday politics be enacted through an Extended Encounter with drawing?* This is a question concerning art and its exhibition as new knowledge that is created through encounter. I have characterised this as as practice-led research in the context of exhibition.

3. *What new knowledge can art practice provide about cynicism and political cartoons?* This is a question that concerns what new knowledge arises from the above practice-led research about political cartoons. I have characterised this as as practice-based research.

Outcomes

The practice-led outcomes developed through studio research and exhibition practice are autonomous artworks that rehearse embodied cynicism towards everyday political institutions, figures or discourses through drawing practice within an extended field of encounter with the viewer. Artworks are outcomes of creative research that embody the subject they examine.

Over the course of this research project I have produced several bodies of work in series:

1st - 17th Manifesto Desktop Drawings

1st - 12th Amendments

1st - 13th Bodies Politic

Dead Iraqis

1st - 5th Party Machines

The *1st - 17th Manifesto Desktop Drawings* series effected the making of primary cynical gestures and processes of amendments to those works within the studio. Primary gestures capture qualities of directness and graphic presence, including a sense of savage indignation and personal catharsis, while secondary gestures evince a self-referential approach that brings primary cynical gestures into a broader dialogue with other pictorial and social discourse. *Cynical gestures* in this

research project are forms of depictions and graphic artefacts that offer the potential for sardonic and *kynical* critique. They evoke a response in the viewer that imaginatively sympathises with the depicted actions as an insertion of the personal into a larger narrative.

The *1st - 12th Amendments* series of works have examined the idea of 'attitudinal' gestures as a nuanced development of cynical gestures. This series of works emphasis a focused set of formal, material and structural concerns that engage the viewer in the construction of new meaning through the play of existing art, social and political contents. *Attitudinal gestures* in this research project are processes in contemporary art that direct disordering operations as a means to critique various existing content and other categories of content. They engage the viewer in a comparative construction of social meaning.

The *1st - 13th Bodies Politic* operated through the mapping of the grotesque body as a fragmented print-depiction and through processes of amendments to those works within the studio. The image of the grotesque body and its amendments evince a sense of cathartic, self-enacted indignation which calls for a recognition of political conflict that *in some fashion already exist within the mind of the beholder*. *Grotesque bodies* in this research project are forms of depictions and body maps that disrupt authorship, encompass fragmentary and incomplete parts, confuse pictorial form and ground and produce a surfeit of incidental details.

The *Dead Iraqis* works examined the idea of disordered and dispersed bodies as a spatialised re-animation the of the grotesque absent body. This work expresses a set of mutable material and installation processes that engage the viewer-as-subject through a scatological function of linkage between images, forms and space. *Disordered and dispersed bodies* in this research project are processes in contemporary art that extend an encounter through installation with the politicised body-image into a comparative construction of public and personal moral values.

1st - 5th Party Machines expressed the experience of the viewer as an *attitudinal gesture*, the dispersal-absence of the grotesque body into the fabric of architectural space itself and a structured sense of installation time linking local experience with historical frameworks. Space is the dimension of the social. Blurred boundaries of architecture and ambivalent materiality within encountered installation practice co-opt the viewer into a narrative of the self and machineries of political power. Time is the dimension of change. The reorientation of the viewer, indexically linked absences of the subject that cohabit the space through their depiction, and architecture as narrative-time-structure within extended installation produce a discourse around the self and political subjecthood.

Practice-based research findings

From my practice-based research I have identified:

i. The presence of a range of depictions of what I have termed cynical gestures that appear in political cartoons and which contribute to their critical functioning under the rubric of savage indignation. *Cynical gestures* in political cartoons are the depiction of violent acts and cathartic motions by figures or towards figures as a way of attributing corresponding emotional and psychological states to destructively satirise political institutions, figures or discourses.

ii A range of depictions of grotesque bodies that appear in political cartoons and which contribute to their cynical functioning under the rubric of the non-ideal, the incomplete, the hybrid and the scatological. Grotesque bodies take the forms of the burlesque and not proper, the fragmentary and disturbed, the combinatory, the deformed, ruptured, excreted or inserted.

I have further noted that the potential for new knowledge lies in further research into:

iii. The use of *attitudinal* gestures within political cartooning as editorial gestures, splatters, schematics or interventions either employed by the cartoonist him or herself or encouraged within the beholder as a means to further engage the viewer in critical kinesis.

iv Uses of the *body disordered and dispersed* within political cartooning to engage the viewer in reassembling the political figure. This takes the forms of digital composites, anti-caricatures and doubles focused upon issues of faciality.

v Uses of *extended encounter* within political cartooning, occurring outside the conventional narrative boundary frames within the cartoon, utilising open-ended narrative installments and modes of dissemination, blogs and spaces of political reflection situated between the private and public.

5th Party Machine

The *5th Party Machine (augenblick)* (2013),⁶³ was the final exhibition of artwork in this project and addressed its key questions and summary findings. Installed at RMIT School of Art Gallery, RMIT University, Melbourne it continued similar methods as the previous *Party Machines*. Certain elements were fabricated before the exhibition (like the stained toilet paper) and incorporated into an improvised structure during the installation period. The work reiterated a number of the themes addressed in Chapters 3 to 5 including the experience of the viewer as an attitudinal gesture, the dispersed grotesque body and the use of structured, open-ended narrative installments that link local experience with historical frameworks.

On opposing walls of the square exhibition space an array of images of Australian Federal Labor Party, Liberal Party and National Party parliamentarians face each other across a suspended concentric ring structure, made from toilet paper stained with green pigments installed around a central architectural column. The 100 plus images are ink-jet transfer-prints on cut and shaped paper. From each sheet a speech bubble-like form contains handwritten text contributed by viewers of the installation. These sheets are derived from a series of sketchbook studies and sketch diagrams that followed the *4th Party Machine (The Internationale)*. The work also has a number of precursors in Honoré Daumier's satirical print, *The Legislative Belly* (1834) and in my works, such as *Representatives* (2007) with its opposed arrays of drawings and *Allegory of Opposition* (2012), with its collection of depicted political leaders and invented dialogues [see figures 6.1 to 6.5i-ii].

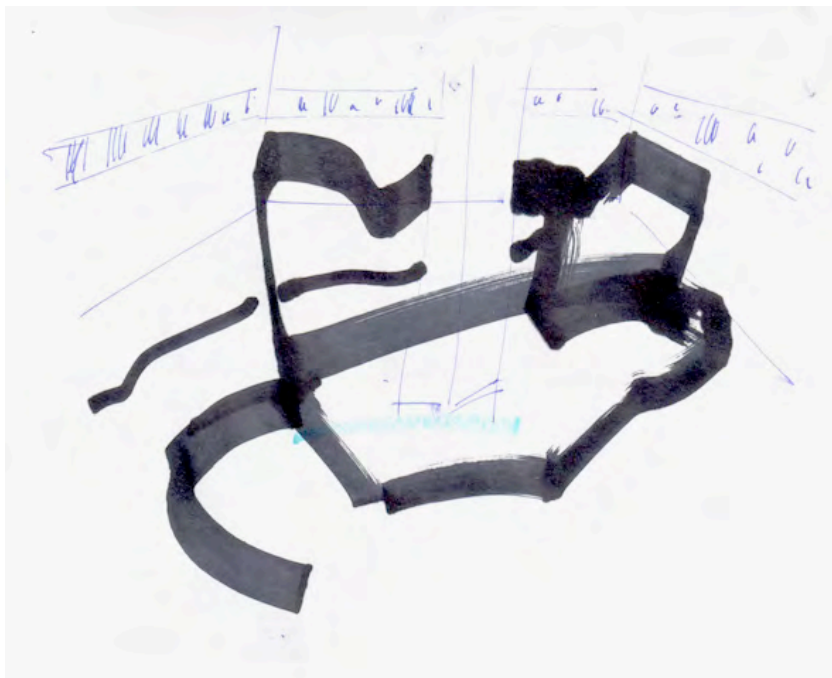


Figure 6.1, Greg Creek, *sketch for 5th Party Machine*, 2010, ink & felt-tip pen on paper

⁶³ *Augenblick* is literally German for 'eye-blink', meaning a very short instant of time, similar to the English *in the blink of an eye* but with overtones of the radically eventful. Murdoch University and Curtin University School of Art academic Koral Ward in *Augenblick: The Concept of the 'decisive Moment' in 19th- and 20th century Western Philosophy* (2008), in citing German philosopher Karl Jaspers, suggests that what humans strive toward 'is an awareness of Being, brought about by encounter with a "boundary situation". What the Augenblick ultimately represents... is the movement from ordinary empirical existence to the transcendent' (Ward, 2008: 70).



Figure 6.2. Greg Creek, *Internationale Sketchbook*, 2010-2011 (details), transfer-print, mixed media on paper pages, 9 x 14cm (9 x 28cm open).

Copyrighted material omitted

Figure 6.3. Honoré Daumier, *The Legislative Belly*, 1834, lithograph, image; (28.2 x 43.5 cm); sheet: (34.8 x 51.3 cm).

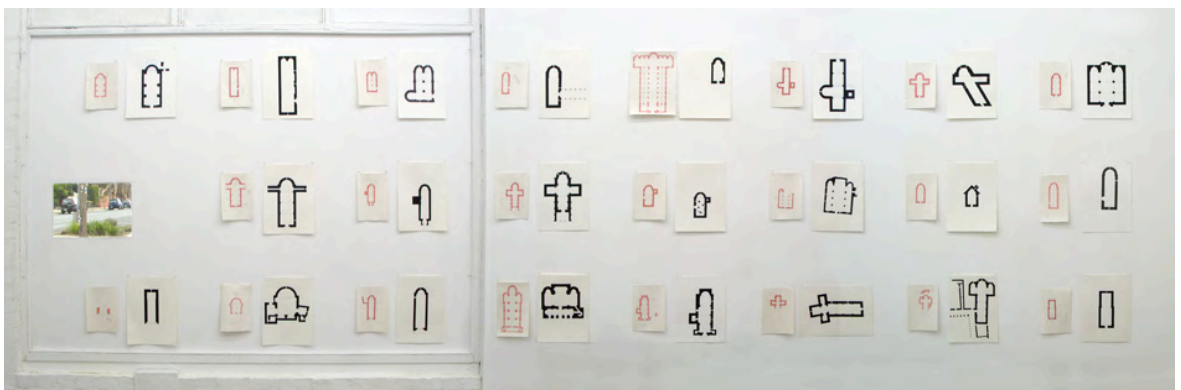
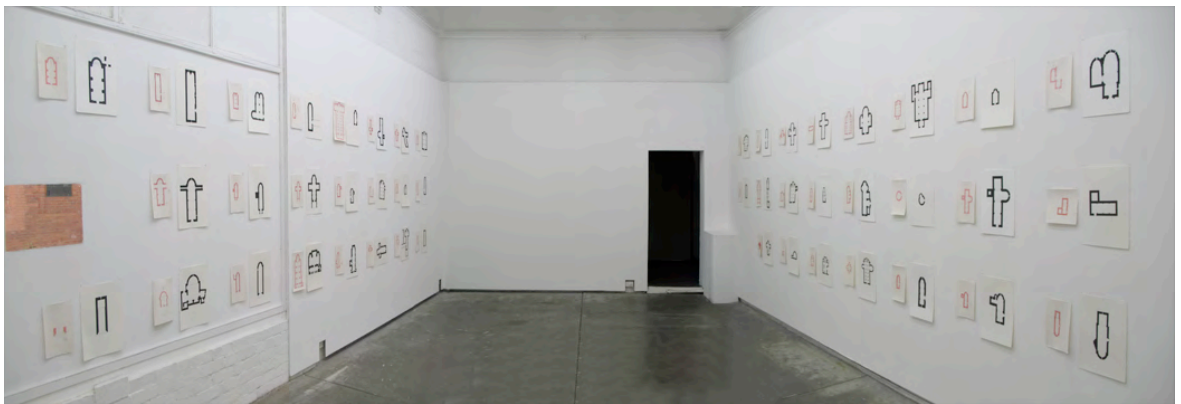


Figure 6.4i-ii. Greg Creek, *Representatives (Left & Right Wings)*, 2007, (installation view and Left Wing detail), 46 composite drawings; graphite, water-colour on hand made paper, ink, gouache on paper. Ocular Lab, Melbourne.



Figure 6.5i-ii. Greg Creek, *Allegory of Opposition*, 2012, (installation view and *Gillard* detail), 4 composite drawings; mixed media, text on cut paper, each approx. 160 x 270cm. Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne University, Melbourne.

The *5th Party Machine* (*augenblick*) structures though space a network of relations between the viewer and depicted political representatives. It employs a number of strategies of manifesto drawing developed during this project, including cynical gesture (smudged eyes), the grotesque figure (paper sheets with speech bubble growths as surrogate body), accumulation over time and instalment, the absent individual subject and a growing homunculus political body. Set against greater political histories and ideals, any individual political reorientation is potentially decisive but also only a mere eye-blink moment [see figures 6.5i-ii].

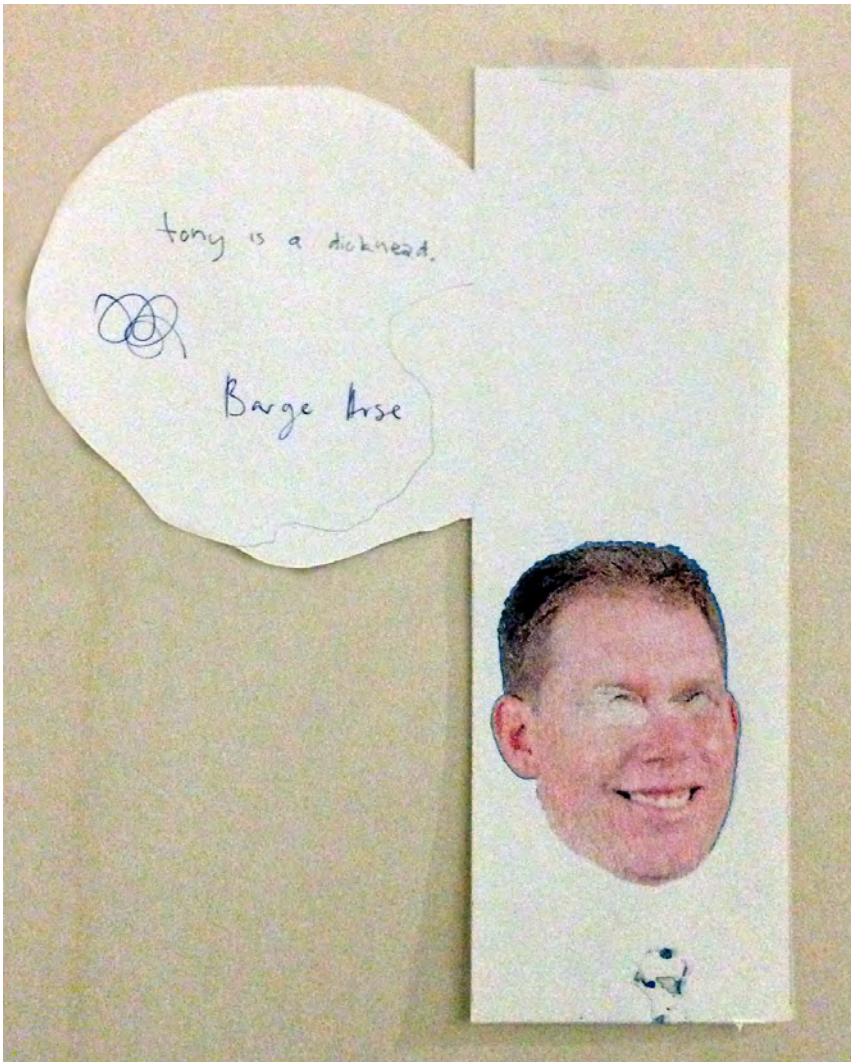


Figure 6.6i-ii, Greg Creek, *5th Party Machine (augenblick)*, 2013 (details), mixed media, print transfer on cut paper, contributed text.

Personal Reflection

My aim has been to examine correspondences between art and the field of political cartoons that embody cynical attitudes through processes of graphic mark and gesture and disordered and grotesque depictions of the body.

These have been researched through my practice in the context of an extended field of drawing that has sought to add ideas about installation, materiality and the construction of the subject in art – as a basis for my own critical and sardonic response to contemporary politics

From such outcomes of the research I have in turn sought to realise new ways of thinking about and understanding political cartoons – particularly around the issues of cynicism – and how both art and political cartoons generate new meanings

When I began my research I imagined that correspondences between art and cartooning resided in style and subject. I felt that by identifying correspondences one might equally reveal variation in approaches that which would become a basis for investigation. This is the approach that I developed as I examined cartoons, made art, engaged contemporary art and researched histories of art and re-looked at cartoons. It is a recursive, intuitive mapping of the complex inter-relation of motif, graphic language and critical attitude, pursued over time; attentive to similarities as well as dissimilarities, The functions of grotesque method have been crucial here because they enabled linkages to be made between the range of satirical responses from the savagely indignant to the reverential, from the cynical to the sublime, from the destructive to the regenerative.

A grotesque method assigns to the negative pole of cynicism, the potential for positive meanings made available through embodiment, open-endedness, play, ambivalence, inversions and the recognition of the scatological basis of eating, drinking, gesticulating, defecating, copulating, birthing, ageing, and decaying. I believe the way we come to works and ideas, the manner of encounter influences our response.

Using that method I have endeavoured to research and express the notions;

That political ideals must be amended and their purity or indeed beauty as concept must be compromised to co-exist in the real world.

That we are stained by the political deeds of others done in our name. It may not be our bodies which are maimed but nonetheless less we are in danger of being significantly reoriented.

That large scale political momentums might be said to act out a grotesque gesture upon the immediate bodies of all of us at any time and in this lies a moral tension.

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