10–12 SEPT 2015

CIVIC ACTIONS

ARTISTS' PRACTICES

BEYOND THE MUSEUM

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Does a socially engaged practice inhibit artistic excellence? What is the curatorial role in front-end community consultation? What is the role of artists in urban and social planning processes?

This conference focusses critical and public attention on a key aspect of contemporary art in public space – the intersection of social and public strategies. These dual trajectories have been employed in a number of recent substantial projects across Australia, including IASKA (Western Australia since 1998), *Iteration: Again* (Tasmania, 2011), and *Temporary Democracies* (Campbelltown, NSW, 2013–14). The Museum of Contemporary Art Australia's (MCA) C3West program has produced a dozen major projects in Western Sydney in less than a decade. Despite this activity nationally, there have been few significant opportunities for artists, curators, commentators, business and public sector partners to meet, analyse and reflect upon their work as well as share and develop ideas for the future.

Civic Actions: artists' practices beyond the museum examines the role of artists in urban and social planning processes, questions the relevance of the monument model to contemporary art practice in the public domain and examines the role of the artist as a public thinker within the curatorial practices of agencies such as Creative Time (USA), Situations (UK) and C3West. Socially engaged and participatory models are now commonplace in contemporary visual art practice, however, whilst these models can appear ethical and inclusive, the forms of engagement they employ may be no more utopian than any other. The symposium addresses this issue, as well as the question of what constitutes the public domain. Garret Hardin's prescient 1968 essay 'The Tragedy of the Commons' could be interpreted as a death knell for true public space; today, capitalism and political conservatism conspire to extinguish true freedom of expression in the public domain while artists subversively and endlessly find new ways to ensure these freedoms are maintained.

Additionally, the symposium scrutinises commissioning models. While an invitation to submit a commission for the likes of ArtAngel and Park Avenue Armory provides an open opportunity for an artist to extend their existing artistic practice, is it reasonable or even desirable to engage artists to strategically address specified issues perhaps more pertinent or urgent to others? Grass roots collectives such as Jakarta's Ruangrupa and Mexico's Torolab work in this way, as does the C3West program.

Conventional sponsorship is essential to cultural institutions, but C3West has developed a new patronage model in which businesses collaborate with cultural institutions on the scoping of artists' projects. Furthermore, the C3West business partners are highly valued sources of knowledge of participating communities. In the twenty first century, is process more important than product?

CONFERENCE TIMETABLE

Thursday
10 September

6–8pm	**Introduction Blair French (Director, Curatorial and Digital, MCA) Lloyd Rees Lecture: Culture is the language of the commons Nato Thompson (Chief Curator, Creative Time, New York)**

The event will include a question and answer session as well as the opportunity to purchase signed copies of Thompson's new book, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century.*

Friday
11 September

9.00	**Registration and coffee**
9.50	**Welcome to Country**
10.00	**Opening Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE (Director, MCA)**
10.15	**Introduction: What is the agora?** Anne Loxley (Senior Curator, C3West, MCA)
10.30	**Introduction Yaël Filipovic (Public Engagement Manager, MCA) Keynote: Unsettling place: the unfolding and undoing of place through new forms of public art Claire Doherty (Director, Situations, Bristol. Screen presentation) Q&A David Cross (artist, writer, curator and Professor of Visual Art, Deakin University, Melbourne)**
11:40	**Morning tea**
12.00	**Panel: What does ethical socially engaged practice look like? Does it inhibit artistic excellence? Chair: Jenny Bisset (Director, Blacktown Arts Centre), Ash Keating (artist, Melbourne), Marco Marcon (Director, spaced, Perth), Lara Thoms (artist, Melbourne), Michel Tuffery (artist, Aotearoa New Zealand)**

1.00	**Lunch**
2.00	**Introduction Michael Dagostino (Director, Campbelltown Arts Centre) Keynote: Material inconsistency Héctor Zamora (artist, Mexico and Brazil)**
3.10	**Afternoon tea**
3.30	**Panel: What is the role of artists in urban and social planning processes? What kind of a job for an artist is place making? What do artists contribute to social planning? Chair: Kiersten Fishburn (Director, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre), Zanny Begg (artist, curator and Lecturer, University of New South Wales Art and Design, Sydney), Janet Laurence (artist, Sydney), Bridget Smyth (Design Director, City of Sydney), Esther Anatolitis (Director, Regional Arts, Victoria)**
4.30	**Closing remarks David Cross (artist, writer, curator and Professor of Visual Art, Deakin University, Melbourne)**
4.50	**Close, day one**

CONFERENCE TIMETABLE

Saturday
12 September

9.00	Registration and coffee
9.30	Welcome to Country
10.00	Introduction John Kirkman (Director, Information and Cultural Exchange, Parramatta)
10.05	Introduction Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE (Director, MCA) Keynote: Eora Journey: the people's journey Hetti Perkins (curator and writer, Sydney. Screen presentation) Keynote: Breaking ground Tony Albert (artist, Sydney. Screen presentation) Q&A Keith Munro (Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs, MCA)
10.55	Morning tea
11.15	Introduction Lee-Anne Hall (Director, Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest) PARALLEL WORKSHOPS 1 – Attended baggage: unpacking working with dysfunction, chaos and community John Kirkman (Director, Information and Cultural Exchange, Parramatta) 2 – Intermediation as Practice: brokering partnerships, designing projects, creating points of difference Jock McQueenie (Co-founder, 3C Projects)
	3 – Process over product: an artist's approach to working with community Michel Tuffery (artist, Aotearoa New Zealand)
12.25	Lunch
1.30	Introduction Blair French (Director, Curatorial and Digital, MCA) Keynote: Refusing to feel powerless: on identity politics, artists and institutions in the public domain Jun Yang (artist, Austria, Taiwan and Japan)
2.50	Afternoon tea
3.05	Panel: What models can we imagine for artists working beyond the museum? Chair: Anne Loxley (Senior Curator, C3West, MCA), Brook Andrew (artist, Melbourne), John Kirkman (Director, Information and Cultural Exchange, Parramatta), Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE (Director, MCA), Nato Thompson (Chief Curator, Creative Time, New York)
4.10	Reflections Blair French (Director, Curatorial and Digital, MCA)
5.00	After Party Parramatta Artists Studios (Level 2, 68 Macquarie Street, Parramatta)
7.00	Close, day two

KEYNOTE PRESENTERS, PANELISTS & WORKSHOP LEADERS

Tony Albert (artist, Sydney)

Born in Townsville, Queensland, Tony Albert's art practice interrogates contemporary legacies of colonialism in a way that prompts the audience to contemplate elemental aspects of the human condition. Mining imagery and source material from across the globe and drawing upon personal and collective histories, Albert questions how we understand, imagine and construct difference. His new commission commemorating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service men and women was installed in Hyde Park in April 2015.

Esther Anatolitis (writer and curator, Melbourne)

Writer and curator Esther Anatolitis is Director of Regional Arts Victoria and an advocate for the arts. The long-term focus of her practice is on the ways in which art creates public space – urban and regional, conventional and experimental, offline and on. She is Curatorial Associate for the 2017 Éditions Vercorin in Switzerland, presented Small Town Transformations across Victoria in 2013–2014, and co-curated Architecture+Philosophy from 2004–2014. More at estheranatolitis.net.

Brook Andrew
(artist, Melbourne)

Brook Andrew is known for his investigation of dominant Western narratives, specifically relating to colonialism, placing Australia at the centre of a global inquisition. He travels internationally to work with communities, private and public collections to create new work relating to historical object display and perception. In 2012, Andrew organised the exhibition *TABOO* at the MCA; in 2014 Andrew worked closely with the collections of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía for the exhibition *Really Useful Knowledge*; in 2016 he will work with the collections of the Musée du quai Branly, Paris.

Photograph: Dianna Snape

Zanny Begg
(artist, curator and Lecturer, University of New South Wales Art & Design, Sydney)

Zanny Begg is a Sydney based artist whose work focuses on political activism and community. Her work uses humour, understated drawings and found cultural artifacts to explore ways in which we can live and be in the world differently. Her work is often collaborative, inviting engagement with key themes such as resilience, financial disobedience and unthinking borders. Begg has an experimental and research driven practice that works across film, performance, installation, activism and drawing.

David Cross
(artist, writer, curator and Professor of Visual Art, Deakin University, Melbourne)

Working as an artist, curator and writer, Cross' practice extends across performance, installation, sculpture, public art and video. Known for his examination of risk, pleasure and participation, David often utilises inflatable structures to negotiate inter-personal exchange. As a curator he developed with Claire Doherty the *One Day Sculpture* project across New Zealand featuring 30 international artists including Thomas Hirschhorn, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Paula Pivi. More recently he developed *Iteration: Again 13 Public Art Projects Across Tasmania* with Contemporary Art Tasmania. He has edited internationally published books and writes regularly on contemporary art.

Claire Doherty
(Director, Situations, Bristol)

Claire Doherty is Director of Situations, which she initiated in 2003 following a ten-year period investigating new curatorial models beyond conventional exhibition-making. She has worked with a diversity of artists including Katie Paterson, Theaster Gates, Alex Hartley, and Ivan and Heather Morison. In 2008–09, she directed *One Day Sculpture* with David Cross across New Zealand. She lectures, consults and publishes internationally, and in 2009 was awarded a prestigious Paul Hamlyn Breakthrough Award as an outstanding cultural entrepreneur.

Ash Keating
(artist, Melbourne)

Melbourne artist Ash Keating has maintained an interdisciplinary contemporary art practice since 2004, working within Australia and internationally. In 2009 Keating delivered an ambitious public art project as part of the MCA's C3West program, in partnership with SITA, Penrith Performing & Visual Arts, Westfield and Penrith City Council. *Activate 2750* comprised a sculptural mountain of commercial and industrial waste, as well as live performances and actions throughout Penrith by young artists and performers from Western Sydney.

John Kirkman
(Director, Information & Cultural Exchange, Parramatta)

John Kirkman has been a cultural leader for over two decades. Previously he was CEO, Penrith Performing & Visual Arts, Director, Penrith Regional Gallery, Curator/Manager of djamu Gallery Australian Museum at Customs House and inaugural Director, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. John has also worked as Project Coordinator for the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, curated public art projects, and curated and managed a range of international exhibition, residency and performance programs with particular focus on Japan, India and the Pacific.

Janet Laurence
(artist, Sydney)

Janet Laurence's practice examines the interconnection of life forms and ecologies and observes the impact that humans have on the threatened, natural world. She has been a recipient of Rockefeller, Churchill and Australia Council Fellowships, and the Alumni Award for Arts, UNSW. Laurence was a Trustee of the Art Gallery of NSW and is currently a Visiting Fellow UNSW Art & Design. Her work is included in many museum, university and corporate collections as well as within architectural and landscaped public places.

Marco Marcon
(Director, spaced, Perth)

Marco Marcon is the Artistic Director of International Art Space, an organisation which he co-founded in 1998. His previous jobs include magazine editor, university lecturer and creative producer. Marcon has an extensive publication record, has curated several national touring exhibitions and in 2012 was awarded the prestigious Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship. In 2009 he created spaced, an international event of context-responsive art involving the participation of regional and rural communities throughout Western Australia.

Jock McQueenie (Co-founder, 3C Projects)

Since the mid-1990s Jock McQueenie has specialised as an intermediary, brokering creative partnerships and strategic projects. His 3Cs – Community, Culture, Commerce, methodology was instrumental in the development of the MCA's C3West and many other successful projects throughout Australia and New Zealand. 3C Projects contribute to social inclusion, encourage creativity in corporate social investment and provide revenue and professional development for artists.

Hetti Perkins (curator and writer, Sydney)

Hetti Perkins is a member of the Eastern Arrernte and Kalkadoon Aboriginal peoples. She was the Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales until 2011. She has curated major survey exhibitions of Indigenous art, including Australia's representation at the Venice Biennale in 1997, and the Australian Indigenous Art Commission at the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. The second season of her show *Art + Soul* aired on ABC television in 2014.

Bridget Smyth (Design Director, City of Sydney)

For the past 24 years, Bridget Smyth has pursued a career in urban design/architecture on major public domain and infrastructure projects in Australia and the USA. Joining the City of Sydney in 2001, Smyth is the Design Director and manages a range of urban design, strategic and special projects, including the implementation of the Sustainable Sydney 2030 vision. Smyth is the recipient of numerous awards including the 2014 AIA Marion Mahoney Griffin Award.

Lara Thoms (artist, Melbourne)

Australian artist Lara Thoms is currently undertaking a two-year Creative Australia Fellowship from the Australia Council for the Arts to explore socially engaged, site-specific and participatory possibilities of contemporary art. In 2013, Thoms created a large-scale public work *Ultimate Vision – Monuments to Us* with teenagers in the Westfield Hurtsville shopping centre as part of the MCA's C3West program. Thoms has recently developed new work with Indonesian Artist Wok the Rok after a residency in Jogjakarta curated by Gertrude Contemporary.

Nato Thompson (Chief Curator, Creative Time, New York)

Since January 2007, Nato Thompson has organised major projects for Creative Time including the annual Creative Time Summit, Kara Walker's *A Subtlety* (2014), Jeremy Deller's *It Is What It Is* (2009), and Paul Chan's *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans* (2007). Previously, he worked as Curator at MASS MoCA where he completed numerous large-scale exhibitions including *The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere* (2004). His writings have appeared in many publications including *BookForum*, *Frieze*, *Art Journal*, and *Art Forum*.

Michel Tuffery (artist, Aotearoa New Zealand)

Michel Tuffery is a New Zealand-based artist of Samoan, Rarotongan and Tahitian heritage who works and exhibits throughout the Asia-Pacific. His practice is grounded in his Polynesian heritage and his relationship to the Pacific region, its people and the environment. He often works with communities to create sites of engagement around ideas of contested histories and cultural conflict. In 2014, Tuffery led C3West project *Transforma* in the south-western Sydney suburb of Airds.

Jun Yang (artist, Austria, Taiwan and Japan)

Born in China and now living and working in Vienna, Taipei and Yokohama, artist Jun Yang's practice encompasses film, installation, performance and projects in public spaces. Having grown up in various social and cultural contexts, Jun Yang's work often addresses the formation and mediation of identity in urban environments, the influence of media images, and the operation of public spaces. He has exhibited widely in Europe and Asia, with recent solo exhibitions in Taiwan, Japan and China.

Héctor Zamora (artist, Mexico and Brazil)

Héctor Zamora is a Mexican artist based in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He has worked extensively in public space over the past decade, creating architectural and sculptural interventions that enhance or highlight characteristics and patterns of social uses within urban environments. Zamora often draws the local community into the process of both experiencing the artwork and as a part of the creation. He has exhibited internationally with recent solo exhibitions in Brazil, New Zealand and Mexico.

SESSION CHAIRS

Jenny Bisset

Jenny Bisset is Director, Blacktown Arts Centre and Manager Arts and Cultural Development at Blacktown City Council, where she has worked for 10 years. She was Manager of the NSW Government's Western Sydney arts strategy and previously managed artist/community engagement programs including the Art and Working Life program at the Australia Council. Bisset served as Chair of Urban Theatre Projects Board from 2011–2014.

Michael Dagostino

Michael Dagostino is Director, Campbelltown Arts Centre and has curated, managed or worked to produce over 150 exhibitions that blur the boundary between contemporary art, commerce and community engagement. Dagostino has sat on many boards including recently as the Chair of Artspace, Sydney.

Kiersten Fishburn

Kiersten Fishburn is the Director of the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre in the western suburbs of Sydney, prior to which she was the Manager of Culture and Libraries for the City of Sydney.

Blair French

Blair French is Director, Curatorial and Digital at the MCA. In addition to his previous leadership and curatorial roles at Performance Space and Artspace, he was curatorial convenor for the 6th and curator of the 7th SCAPE Public Art Christchurch Biennials – large art in public space projects that worked into and negotiated the complex conditions of the severely earthquake damaged city.

Yaël Filipovic

Yaël Filipovic is Public Engagement Manager at the MCA. She works passionately to create programming that inspires risk taking, experimentation and new ways of thinking. Originally from Canada, her curatorial practice is largely based in the public realm, operating within political, social, staged, and performative situations and related issues.

Lee-Anne Hall

Lee-Anne Hall is Director of Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest where she has built an exhibition program with a focus upon regional audience development and artist / community partnerships. Previous to her current position, she spent many years as an academic, teaching post graduate programs in arts management, leisure, and museum studies.

Anne Loxley

Anne Loxley is Senior Curator, C3West at the MCA. A member of the City of Sydney's Public Art Advisory Panel and a former *Sydney Morning Herald* art critic, she has previously directed Penrith Regional Gallery, the Olympic Co-ordination Authority's Public Art Program and the S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney.

Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE

Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE is Director, MCA. Since 1999, she has consolidated the MCA's position as one of Sydney' best loved institutions by engaging audiences with living artists. Macgregor's contribution to the visual arts has been recognised with an OBE in the Queen's birthday honours list in 2011 and the 2011 Australia Council Visual Arts Medal. In 2014 she was named the Cultural Ambassador for Western Sydney by NSW Premier Mike Baird.

Keith Munro

Keith Munro is Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs at the MCA. He is a descendent of the Kamilaroi (Gomeroi/Gamilaroi/Gamilaraay) people of north-western New South Wales and south-western Queensland. His curatorial projects include *Ripple Effect: Boomalli Founding Members* (2012), Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative, and for the MCA *Being Tiwi*, (2015–2016, co-curated with Senior Curator Natasha Bullock), *Bardayal 'Lofty' Nadjamerrek AO* (2010), and the internationally touring *Ricky Maynard: Portrait of a Distant Land* (2008–2010).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Image Captions
Page 04–05:   Ash Keating, *Activate 2750*, 2009,
              performance documentation, commissioned
              by C3West for SITA Environmental Solutions,
              image courtesy and © the artist.
Page 09:   Angelica Mesiti, *Old Man River* (still,
              detail) 2011, from *The Begin-Again* (2011).
              HD video, sound,4 minutes. A C3West project
              co-commissioned with Hurstville City Council
Page 10–11:   Lara Thoms, *Screen Monument* (still), 2013,
              from *Ultimate Vision – Monuments to Us*
              (2013), HD video, sound, 11:47 minutes.
              A C3West project co-commissioned with
              Hurstville City Council and Westfield
              Hurstville. Image courtesy and © the artist.
Page 22–23:   Local Elder Ivan Wellington conducts
              a smoking ceremony for cars to be extracted
              from the Woolwash, 22 February 2014, Airds
              NSW, as part of: Michel Tuffery, *Transforma*,
              2014, commissioned by C3West on behalf of
              Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in
              collaboration with Campbelltown Arts Centre
              on behalf of Campbelltown City Council,
              image courtesy and © the artist.

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