

Isabelle: On a recent trip to Tasmania, some friends and I were cornered by a charismatic cab driver on our way to MONA. For something that at the time proved to be a confronting thirty-seven minutes, the story has since gained entertaining momentum and so we retold it over dinner last week. One of the listeners is a builder by day and responded by telling us about a suspicion he is regularly forced to grapple with while on the job. He said that every time he and his boss have to remove a mirror from a soon to be demolished bathroom they engage in a light-hearted though resolutely serious debate over who should be the one to take the mirror down. Centered around an evaluation of their circumstances, the two continuously attempt to determine who is more likely to survive the seven years had luck less scathed should the mirror smash - a possibility that he assured us was inevitable. The story was interesting to me in light of the rationalization that occurred, one which at the time seemed too logical to be true (especially considering the nature of the fear or question). Yet it was the same rationalization that I recently engaged in when the charoyant told me I was at a crossroads, one that would eventually result in the birth of my three children. But further still, it made me think of you and your install work, and us and our art work and the eternal grapple with capability and intention. It made me wonder if there are any installers out there in the world, angling over who of the two is hanging. Richard's mirror works, or having Andie's tiles, a fragility and self-doubt that couldn't be more in connection with the brute of that kind of minimalism.

Simon: I'm sure there are people out there who would feel the presence of fate more than others and would read into those ideas through known symbols like the smashed mirror - art installers or not. Considering the circumstances though, the psychological impact on an art handler would be on the financial and cultural value of the artwork, more so than the superstitious legacy in some of the materials. If a Richard mirror were to be damaged or broken, my feelings would be toward the cost of the work and to the now tenuous job position of the installer. In those circumstances, sometimes it's good to think that you're giving someone a decent income by mismanaging or damaging work - conservation loves a clumsy art handler. That is a glass half full perspective of course. That said, those beliefs or superstitions tend to sound left of field but contain some level of embedded truth. Read between the lines I gather. The mirror one seems to be more abstract compared to say the unluck of walking under a ladder, where the embedded message is really just that you could potentially injure yourself. Perhaps an OJ&S genius came up with that one! It's seven years had luck for breaking a mirror, a considerable sentence or a worldly deterrent to keep reflections intact. Just reading them - in early Greek culture the soul is connected to the reflection of the self, and when a mirror is broken so is the bond between the body and the soul. Seven-years bad luck comes from the Romans belief that it takes seven years to regenerate or rebuild. Which is perhaps the legacy of that great myth that explains that every cell in the body changes over every seven years. This myth supposes that we have shed ourselves of our previous physical self to become new people. Maybe the skew rationalization, the banter between your friend and his employer, is trepidation towards change?

E: When I was thinking that I wanted to talk to you about this anecdote I hadn't really established why or whether there was even a vague connection between it and this project. While I was grasping an incredibly long bow, perhaps this emphasis on change is something that is pertinent. I mean, it could be trepidation toward change, but also something else sticks out at me in this scenario involving the mirror. The act of breaking the mirror kind of relies on the seven-year superstition to undercut the fact that you've actually just smashed something that was otherwise useful. It's almost like a double negative whereby the breaking and its accompanying bad luck together dilute the catastrophic of the shattered image. But moreover, in relation to your seven-year theory, maybe the superstition is actually more metaphorical than we think - that the inability to see our reflection in the shattered glass forms this kind of subconscious reflexivity, a seven year evolution. When we started talking about this project, change was something that we embedded in the structure of this publication from the outset; a structure that is conceivably about reflection.

S: Change can be pertinent but I think it just happens. For me, this structure that we have adopted is to work in equal part with change. We can set the parameters as much as they set us - we shape the tools and the tools shape us. There's a finaster called Alan Toffler who wrote his book called Future Shock, which extends the idea of culture shock into the realm of time and change. He connected the idea that we are not properly equip to handle continual and exponential change, and sighted that our education curriculum should take on science fiction as a means to sharpened the mind toward insistent and inevitable change. Linking back to the project, do you see this structure as being an adaptive model to change? And further still, do you see this point of reflection you speak of as an integral part for assessing and pre-empting the change that happens? Is this going to be a place where we are going to be consistently trying to understand what is happening with the content or with the structure? Perhaps both. Editorials just act as an entry point, I guess that could take any shape too. Can we get a science fiction writer to do the next editorial?

E: An adaptive model toward change? Sure. But perhaps not so much the latter. I mean, we are in a strange position where we both puppeteer contributions through our selections, but also hand them over to unfold along with the person contributing them. I oscillate between thinking introversion is the most important, to then feeling that we are interested in a kind of expansion. I guess the mirror as an object always requires you to look in, something that is commonly believed to be the preface for being outward. Ha, maybe a science fiction writer. Or an historian? During the French revolution church bells were stolen and changed into money. *Bells melting into money*, a friend of mine recently wrote. Four issues, four images, twelve texts, sixteen contributors: surely that's enough history worthy of reflection?

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info@buffetpublication.com  
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EDITORIAL

Isabelle Sully and Simon McGlenn

CONTRIBUTIONS

- 1 Kim Brockett: Your Way or the NPEAn Highway<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Bella Walker: Application to the Classification Board *My Best Thing*
- 3 Richard Frater: *Ambassador*, graph paper, string, dust, medium format positive transferred to C-type print mounted on aluminium, 39.5 x 55.2cm
- 4 Janet Burchill: I ARCHIVE UNBORN CURATORS

CONTRIBUTORS

- 1 Kim Brockett is a Melbourne based independant curator and fundraiser
- 2 Bella Walker is a film and media graduate and has been working for the 2015 Melbourne International Film Festival
- 3 Richard Frater is a New Zealand artist who lives and works in Berlin
- 4 Janet Burchill is a visual artist based in Melbourne

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# I ARCHIVE UNBORN CURATORS

3/4 Metronome 60bpm continuous

Ukulele  
Tenor Ukulele  
Baritone Ukulele

7  
14  
23  
32

Repeat x 3



The relationship between art and money is a rich affair. So much has been said, and will continue to be said, about the two. Equally great amounts of art have been made as a result of money, in spite of money and for money. Money is elusive; money is everywhere; money, money, money.

In my role as an arts fundraiser I think about money all the time. I look at donor honour rolls, sponsor logo placement, and annual reports even when I'm not getting paid to do so—it's a professional preoccupation. Over time you notice the same names – Kantor, Besen, Gandel, Milgrom – as you do the same corporates – Aesop, Qantas, Sofitel – and patterns emerge. It wasn't always this way, and truthfully it began very innocuously. One minute I was naively emailing a request for support from a local label for an exhibition I was curating; three years later and I am Googling questions like 'how to calculate return on investment', laughing at every rich person's joke and constantly going over my monthly LinkedIn search limit.<sup>2</sup>

Fundraising must be one of the hardest jobs in the arts right now. In addition to public funding, most organisations seek support from a combination of donors, sponsorship and private foundations. Of the three, sponsorship is arguably the most scrutinised—the 2014 Biennale of Sydney debacle made sure of that. Keeping things unanimously clean and ethical is difficult when different institutions have varying lines drawn in the sand. One institution may have a blanket 'no mining corporations' rule, while another may welcome Rio Tinto with open arms. As it is with almost any large corporation: dig deep enough, and eventually you'll hit dirt.

Shortly after the announced cuts and subsequent establishment of the National Program for Excellence in the Arts, Sydney-based philanthropists Neil Balnaves and Luca Belgiorno-Nettis called out Attorney-General George Brandis on his actions, calling it foolhardy if (their) private giving is expected to save the day. Their comment stood out as I, along with presumably everyone else, had assumed philanthropy would be the knight in shining armour. While major philanthropists such as Balnaves and Belgiorno-Nettis may choose to maintain their support of larger arts organisations, their comment definitively squashes any hope that their support could possibly ever directly extend to smaller galleries or individual artists. Brandis' decision will soon enough result in casualties amongst these small-to-medium organisations and independent practitioners. This is not a pre-emptive obituary for their imminent demise, but rather questions the future of a creative environment that will soon be reliant on private funding, and one that so far has underdeveloped skills to fully service this need.

Locally, crowdfunding is the favourite amongst individuals (but obviously not galleries and institutions—too vulgar!) In 2010 the launch of Australian crowdfunding platform Pozible changed the landscape of fundraising—suddenly anything was possible. Though a divisive means of fundraising, it can be effective. Suddenly, projects that fall outside of public funding bureaucracies are given a second, Faustian chance. It's not an easy task, and pitching your project to your network is exhausting, guilt-inducing work. It requires relentless self-promotion, and even with this success is not guaranteed.<sup>3</sup> Five years later, in 2015 the crowdfunding requests have not slowed down, and artists, designers and curators continue to look to their network to fund their next exhibition, film, public program, publication—the list is endless and draining. Clever twists to the crowdfunding model such as government-matched donations scratch the surface of converting reward-picking supporters into benevolent donors. It's a good start, but not every gift has the opportunity to be doubled. Peer support is arguably the motivating factor here as offering tax deductibility to someone earning less than the average Australian salary hardly sweetens the deal.<sup>4</sup>

There are artists who do not engage with funding, public or private, and who question the rationale behind it. In 2009 Matthew Griffin was included in NEW exhibition, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art's annual group exhibition that commissions new work by promising artists. For his work he interviewed respected philosopher Peter Singer about the moral conundrum of giving money to the arts when there were so many in need. Matt then chose to donate his catalogue writer's fee to Oxfam. In 2014 Matt was part of Bus Projects' fundraiser exhibition. Based in New York, he sent the following instructions: using a piece of scrap paper, make a rough screen print of Rupert Murdoch's portrait. Cover the back of the paper with forged Matt Griffin signatures to be signed by all available Bus Projects' staff and Board members. Each person was to then spit on the back of the work, let it dry, with the work framed signature/spit side up. Both examples involved Matt asking uncomfortable questions and setting awkward scenarios, but ultimately creating charitable outcomes.

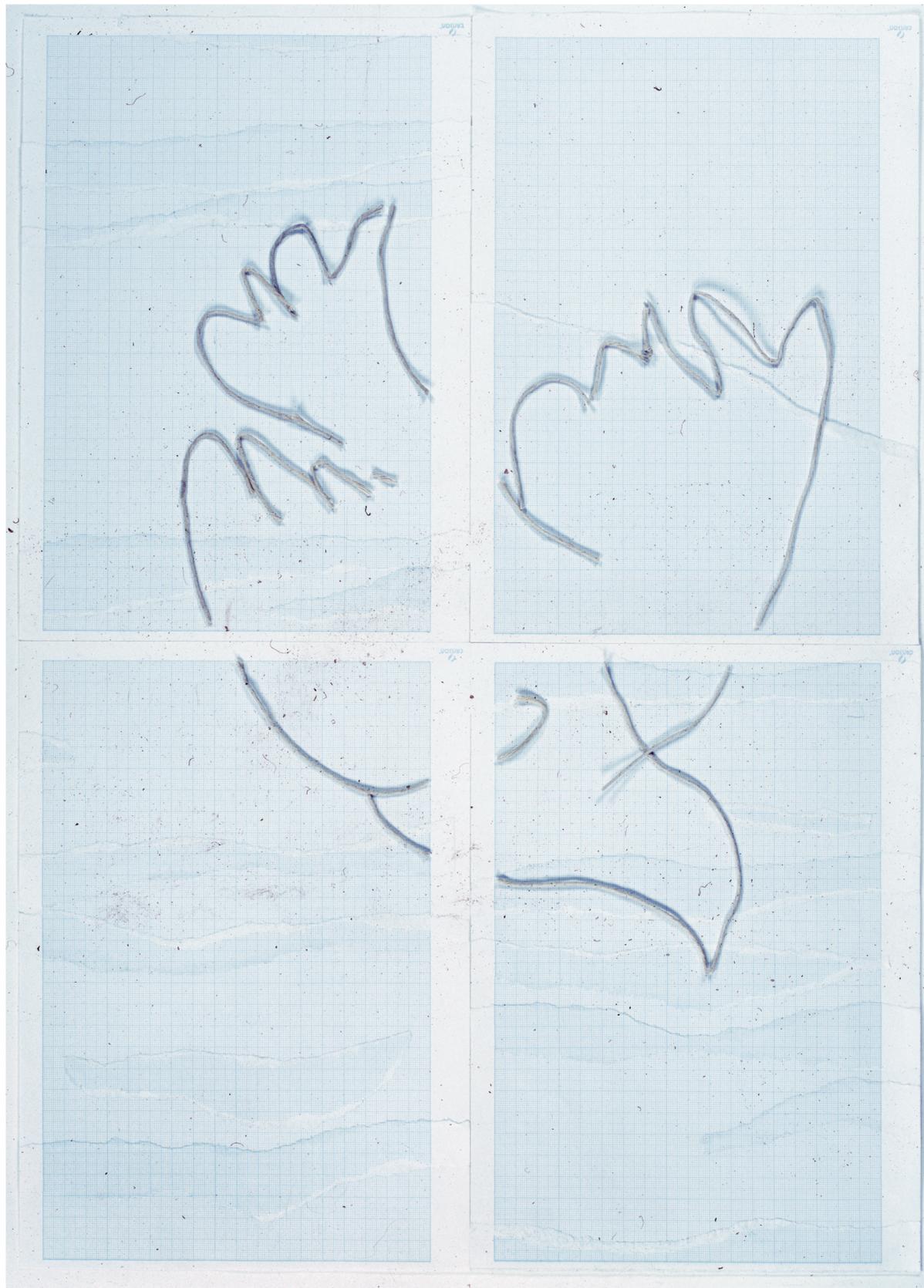
To return to the wider effect these cuts will have, smaller arts organisations without charitable status or fundraising support will be scrambling to fill looming budgetary gaps in creative ways that go beyond an annual fundraiser. What if these smaller galleries do run out of money and is funding really that vital? Will our ambitions shrink? Will non-profit galleries become semi-commercial? Will artists create faster using less? Perhaps these changes will mean the sad end for a number of organisations, and make way for the next chapter. Perhaps in time we'll write about these new organisations, much like how Blinky the three-eyed fish in *The Simpsons* was argued as an evolved species, not a mutant.

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to RM for the title.

<sup>2</sup> To calculate return on investment, or ROI, divide the benefit (return) by the investment (cost). Use the resulting percentage to decide the value of the opportunity, or whether you can afford to implement it.

<sup>3</sup> In 2013 Kings ARI launched a Pozible campaign for its ten-year anniversary publication, raising \$970 of its \$10,000 goal.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the average individual wage in Australia in November 2013 was \$57,980 before tax. The average full-time wage is \$74,724 before tax.



There are three essential principles that inform the board's classification decisions:

1. The six classifiable elements of drug use, language, nudity, themes, sex and violence
2. Assessing the impact
3. The importance of context

<b>Film</b>	<b>My Best Thing: Episode 1</b>
<b>Artist</b>	<b>Frances Stark</b>
<b>Duration</b>	<b>8 min</b>

Transcribed dialogue between the artist and an online chat partner are represented and "re-enacted" by a male and female cartoon avatar. The avatars are visually Lego-like, with single leaves covering breasts and genitalia. Their voices are electronically reproduced in machine monotone and are accompanied by stunted body movements and fixed facial expressions. In *Episode 1* the audience are voyeurs to an intimate interaction of sexual foreplay, arousal and eventually climax, as the two avatars – Stark represented by an Americanised accent and the anonymous male with an Italian accent and poor English – verbally reconstruct a real-life virtual sex scene. The male avatar reveals his "Best Thing" to be his penis: the dialogue implying that the man shows it to Stark over web video chat.

The two also discuss their physical insecurities, such as age and appearance, and watch a Jamaican Dancehall music video together, before briefly mentioning the Venice Biennale, where Stark was to be invited to attend as an Artist, and where *My Best Thing* was eventually first presented. The interaction ends when Stark's mobile rings and she must go.

Generally, the combination of the sterility of the avatars, who are set against a bright lime-green screen, gives the film an air of comical irony.

#### Classifiable elements:

**Themes:** Sex, virtual sex.

**Drug Use:** Low-impact drug references.

- The female avatar states that she is jealous of the males' "joint", and that "pot" makes her "crazy horny". The two then discuss smoking pot together if he were to travel to LA to be with her.

**Language:** Frequent high-impact coarse language.

- Crude descriptive language is used repeatedly during the "sex scene", including "tits", "pussy", "clerk", "ass", "cum" and "fuck". All dialogue is uttered in machine monotone.  
**Nudity:** No visual nudity as the avatars' private parts are covered by Adam-and-Eve-like leaves, however, the chat dialogue implies explicit real-life nudity and sexual acts. The completely innocuous appearance of the avatars directly contradicts this, in the same way that the depicted "intimate" relationship between Stark and the man is contradicted by the anonymity and un-reality of the Internet.

**Sex:** Frequent high-impact sexual references\*

- Generally, the hypersexualised transcript implies that Stark and the man undress and masturbate in an erotic display for the other via webcam. This is not visually represented at all.

- During foreplay, the male avatar utters both, "I would lick your tits" and "pussy".

- In a response to the implied real-life reveal of the man's penis, the female avatar states that she would like to "take it out and put it in her mouth".

- The female avatar is asked to find a dildo or similar, which she then uses for the man's viewing pleasure. The two climax together in a feigned, sexless depiction.

\*Whilst the avatars do not visually enact the gestures that are uttered, their dialogue is transcribed from real-life webcam chats between the artist and various men, thus the reality of the interaction can be imagined and must be considered. Visually, the avatars remain standing relatively still, not touching, and acting and sounding completely impersonalised.

**Violence:** No violence.

#### Additional comments:

The content is strong in impact primarily because of the *context* of the "performed" dialogue, and this must be assessed in order to assign the film an appropriate rating. To do so we must weigh the forces of actuality versus implication, and in instances where viewers are privy to the reality of the dialogue, the piece becomes much more explicit and potentially affecting.

Yet it is also important to consider the likely demographic of the audience and *their* interaction with these filmic elements. As an art video, presentations of the piece will presumably take place in a setting where viewers might be more likely to critically interpret the artist's conceptual intentions, and not simply consume it the piece as a depiction of virtual sex. In some cases this may be in relation to knowledge of Stark's entire body of work, which often pivots around the sterile intimacy of Internet relationships. Alternatively, in a public exhibition of the film the aesthetic of the imagery may attract an age inappropriate audience, and this may result in distressed responses from both younger viewers and their guardians.

Finally, the comical nature of the visuals and the deliverance of the dialogue should be considered. *My Best Thing's* most effective characteristic in curtailing it's highly explicit content and context, thus a restricted rating.

**Recommended Rating:** MA15+

MA 15+ classified material contains strong content and is legally restricted to persons 15 years and over. It may contain classifiable elements such as sex scenes and drug use that are strong in impact.

