

A stylized graphic of a theater sign. The sign is a light beige, rectangular shape with a scalloped top edge, set against a black background. The text 'THE SHADOW THEATRE' is written in a bold, black, serif font, arranged in three lines: 'THE' on the top line, 'SHADOW' on the middle line, and 'THEATRE' on the bottom line. The sign is supported by thin black lines that converge towards the top, suggesting a structure. At the bottom of the sign, there are five small, dark circular shapes representing lights. The entire graphic is framed by a red border.

THE  
SHADOW  
THEATRE

24 JULY - 10 AUGUST 2008

**BROWN COUNCIL** Kelly Doley (b.1984), Kate Blackmore (b.1982), Frances Barrett (b.1983), Diana Smith (b.1981) created Brown Council at the COFA in 2004, collaborating on hybrid performance works that appropriate, imitate and remix elements from popular culture, cinema, video clips and television in order to investigate how it is they should 'perform'. Recent activities include completing a mentorship program with Martin Del Amo in conjunction with Performance Space (2006), creating and curating new performance works for *Crack* at the National Young Writers' Festival, Newcastle (2007), finalists in the *Soya Qantas Visual Art Awards* (2007) and *Six Minute Soul Mate*, a performance about speed dating and intimacy at the Next Wave Festival, Melbourne (2008); also presenting works at Performance Space, Firstdraft, Australian Centre for Photography, Kings ARI, Blacktown Regional Arts Centre and the *2008 Athens Video Festival*.

**PENELOPE CAIN** (b. Adelaide) completed a BA in Visual Arts (Hons) in 2001. Cain posits herself informally as a sort of amateur urban anthropologist, frequently employing the humorous or bizarre to entice a suspension of disbelief in the viewer. Solo exhibitions include *Out of Office Message*, AClO, Taipei, Taiwan (2008), *Bull Market*, Ground Floor Gallery (2007) and *Domestic Interiors*, Firstdraft (2004). Group exhibitions and curated projects include *Sculptura*, Beudersert Regional Art Gallery (2008), *Concrete Cannot Stop Them*, The Big Screen, Liverpool, UK (2007), *Figuratively Speaking*, QUT Art Museum (2007) and *Experimenta: Vanishing Point* (touring Melbourne, Paris, Brisbane, Perth, Hobart (2005-2006). Cain took up an Asialink residency in Taipei in 2007.

**MADELEINE DONOVAN** (b.1976, Canberra) finished a BA (Hons) in photomedia in 2003 and works across photography, collage and performance to examine gender roles, power and entertainment. Solo exhibitions include *Wish you were here*, Helen Maxwell Gallery, Canberra (2006), *When two become one*, Firstdraft (2004). Group exhibitions include *Good Thing*, CCAS (2007), *Range of Motion*, Westspace (2007) *Paper Chase*, Nellie Caston Gallery (2005), *3000: The 2004 CCAS Contemporary Art Award*, Canberra (2004). She has recently returned from a residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris.

**NICHOLAS HOBBS** graduated from the University of Tasmania with a BFA (2000) and B.Teaching (2003). Hobb's practice encompasses drawing, visual arts education and community development. Collaborative and solo projects include *Humanimal*, Firstdraft (2004), *Out and About - Community Mapping Project*, UWS (2007), *Turning the Pages*, Upper Hunter Shire Council (2007), co-curator *32 Life Pieces* NSW Parliament House Gallery (2007) and *ARTside-In!* AGNSW (2007/08).

**JUSTIN MILES** (b. 1980, Bendigo) completed BA (Hons) in 2004 at SCA. Miles works intermittently across sculpture, performance, photography and installation. In 2002, he studied in Berlin at Universität der Kunst in the studio of Rebecca Horn. In 2005 he showed *Don't get too close to my fantasy* with Jonathan Hochman as part the Firstdraft Emerging Artist Residency Program. Group exhibitions include *Long night of the museums*, Post & Communication Museum, Berlin (2003), *Rundgang*, Universität der Kunst, Berlin (2002) *Resistance is Useless* and *How Long is a Piece of String?* Phatspace (2003). He is currently living in Melbourne.

**HOLLY WILLIAMS** (b. 1974, Auckland) completed a MVA at SCA in 2005. Holly's site-specific practice considers uncertainty, anxiety, and other psychological states related to impermanence and aspiration. Solo exhibitions include *Dissolution*, MOP Projects (2007), *Combinatoria*, SCA (2005) and *Looking for the Ground*, Exporuimte MORGEN, Rotterdam, Holland (2001). Group exhibitions include *Vertigo*, PICA, Perth (2007), *Me and my Coma*, Firstdraft (2003) and *Queue Here*, CCAS (2002). Williams has worked on several artist-run initiatives, galleries and projects also recently *The Invisible Art Podcast* and co-curating *Vertigo* (both in 2007).

**SIMON YATES** (b. 1973, Sydney) completed a BVA (Hons) at SCA in 1999. Yates' low-tech works act in homage to invention and defy definitive conclusions. His solo exhibitions include *Universal Cloaking Device*, Artspace (2005), *3D Shadow Machine*, Mori Gallery (2004) and *Super Toys*, Casula Powerhouse (2002). Group exhibitions include *Primavera*, MCA (2006), *Vertigo*, PICA, Perth (2007) *Man. Depicting Contemporary Masculinity*, Penrith Regional Gallery (2008). Yates is represented by Mori Gallery, Sydney.

Holly Williams would like to thank Ron & George Adams, Melissa Cook, Marley Dawson, Christopher Hanrahan and Tanya Peterson for their invaluable assistance in the realization of this exhibition and catalogue.

- Robertson: "Airports, taxis, hotels, they're all the same in the end."  
Locke: "I don't agree. It's us who remain the same. We translate every situation, every experience, into the same old codes. We just condition ourselves."  
Robertson: "We're creatures of habit – is that what you mean?"  
Locke: "Something like that. I mean however hard you try it stays so difficult to get away from your own habits."<sup>i</sup>

In Michelangelo Antonioni's film, *The Passenger* (1975), the character John Locke, attempts to get away from his own habits by adopting the identity of a dead man. The idea is simple. Passport photographs, clothes and appointments are exchanged as Locke assumes the dead man's persona through morphological sleights of hand. Leaving his own identity to pool in the inertia of his neighbour's mortality and memorial tributes, Locke embarks on a new life. Through a series of appropriated gestures and premeditated coincidences, he bases his future on the resuscitated fate of another man's misfortune. The film presents us with the uncertain unity of forensic logic and escapist fantasy, where the difference between certitude and chance are forever changing places.

We can never be sure at which point shadows turn to solid forms. Time-lags between registration and representation have become increasingly unclear, if not obsolete. At U.S. airports, digital technology is used to photograph your face and scan your fingerprints as a post 9/11 security measure. The precaution is based on a rationale that binds objects to images, but it's a politicised narrative of cause and effect that runs in reverse. Like a loose translation of Baudrillard's simulation theory, the virtual image dictates the reality of the body's authenticity, but without the cycling of semiotic indeterminacy. It is like driving down a one-way street only to see a sign that says, "Wrong way, go back", before running headlong into traffic. The definitions here are fixed – the real-time body serves as a proxy to its digital counterpart. These simulated indexes are indifferent to the body's inability to keep pace with their unwavering stasis. In this digital realm, the body "brings time in its wake" like a shadow, anchored to the life force of a terminal's LED glow.<sup>ii</sup> The contours of experience trail behind their corresponding representations.

The lapse of duration within new mediascapes has shaped the effacement of nostalgia through simultaneity. Abridged experiences of time have lent themselves to a new status quo in the context of social agency: post-irony. This is a language of production and consumption where claims of originality draw currency in the egotism of 'now' – like the endless proliferation of reality television programs and daily blogs.

The glitches in this shadow theatre appear in the fault lines of anxiety when things begin to fall together, rather than fall apart. Of course, there are drifters in cyberspace who take advantage of electronic interfacing in the same way Locke shifts identities through physical disguises. The method is the same, but the imperatives have shifted. For example, for those assuming avatars in

mainstream multi-user online games, getting away from your own habits is still predominantly about participating in a post-industrial world, where capitalist codes of conduct dictate the overall rules of play.

It is tempting to describe this as a gravitational pull towards what Marc Augé has called the “non-place” of supermodernity.<sup>iii</sup> Augé describes the non-place as spaces of transit, like airports and hotels, which standardise and govern the body’s behaviour. The ultimate goal is efficiency through conformity. Antonioni might argue that the non-place is in fact not limited to these spaces, but resides everywhere. It is built into the architecture of our identity, and therefore not contingent upon our geographical location in order to be enacted. For the character of Locke, subjectivity is paradoxically affirmed and erased through a lifetime of habits. For him the only way out is to die twice, both times through misrecognition, where the reality of life and death are akin to an out-of-body experience.

i. *The Passenger*, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, produced by Carlo Ponti, MGM, 1975, colour, 119 min.

ii. Michael Wood “Introduction” in Edward Said, *On Late Style*, London: Bloomsbury, 2006, p. xi.

iii. See Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe, London/NY: Verso, 1995.

KELLY DOLEY, DIANA SMITH, KATE BLACKMORE AND FRANCES BARRETT

FALLING, 2008

2 mins 30 seconds, looped, 2 channel video installation

Derived from a live performance, Brown Council's new video work *Falling* intercuts two continuous shots between two lovers to the sound track of Roy Orbison's *Falling*. This work alludes to a narrative of jealousy and rage, suggestive of possible tragedies and passions: is she falling in love or to her death? Brown Council uses derivative characters within a cliché narrative in isolation from their filmic genre. Through the use of filmic conventions and theatrical techniques Brown Council construct their own version of parallel editing through old school trickery.

Brown Council's practice is premised on the appropriation, imitation and repetition of popular culture, cinema, video clips and television. What results is a regurgitated viscous of stolen horror, pilfered heroines and depressed wigs writhing, sweating and bleeding within a black void. We have removed the artisan from our practice, instead unashamedly reclaiming images, sounds and actions from the screen, art history and the theatre. Our work is instant. Impossible. Attacked.



Image: Brown Council, *Falling*, 2 channel video installation, dvd still, 2008. Courtesy the artists

PENELOPE CAIN

**SURVIVAL TECHNIQUE #2, 2008**

3 mins 30 seconds, looped video

A harried office-worker deals with her growing paperwork and overflowing in-tray by using the tray's contents to build a paper igloo-shaped hideaway, into which she retreats, unnoticed by work colleagues. This work is part of a series exploring the placement of ancient instincts and actions in contemporary urban life via a series of hypothetical narratives, revealing stress-based behaviour responses to a common situation, mixing the metaphors between the animal and human kingdom, the real and the imagined.

The open plan office, even to those "born/raised in captivity" in the cubicle farm, is a place from which dreams of escape or displacement percolate through the fabric-coated space dividers or up from the grey nylon carpet underfoot.



Image: Penelope Cain, *Survival Technique #2*, 2008, dvd still. Courtesy the artist

THE ORNAMENTATION OF VIOLENCE, 2008  
Mixed media

I'm interested in the tension between femininity and strength, intimacy and violence. I explore the elaborate constructed rituals that enable physical contact between people in a society obsessed with contained personal space: the 'dressing up' and performative elements to sports and circus, the decorative and packaged 'entertainment' of physical strength and aggression.



Image: Madeleine Donovan, *The Ornamentation of Violence*, 2008 (detail), mixed media. Courtesy the artist

NICHOLAS HOBBS

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ISLAND, 2008

Ink on paper

Scratched from their crib of paper. Quietly protruding from the connecting field of the gallery wall. I see the drawings that form "Island" as being like kernels, concentrations of narrative still to play themselves out. I am searching for visual metaphors, simple and elusive, or momentary. Combining personal experience with a set of interrelated ideas about island life, or anything that is surrounded by something different.



Image: Nicholas Hobbs, *Island*, 2008 (detail), ink on paper. Courtesy the artist

CHILDREN OF OBLIVION, CHANT NOTHING, DISAPPEAR, 2008  
Mixed media

This work deals with the will to disappear.  
Fads pass through yo-yos, poppers then interdimensional travel.  
The trinity of boys delve into secret special powers of colours and uniform.  
They render the Piper's flute in flesh.  
To this they would obtain their oblivion.



Image: Justin Miles, *Children of Oblivion, chant Nothing, disappear*, 2008, digital print. Courtesy the artist

HOLLY WILLIAMS

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UNTITLED (LEFT OR RIGHT ALICE?) 2000/08

Blown glass, recycled timber, wood, paint, wire, springs

The floor gives way underfoot. It moves and creaks like a platform, some old floating pontoon or a construction site. This work might talk about certainties and uncertainties, or it might not.



Image: Holly Williams, *Untitled*, 2000, mixed media. Courtesy the artist

3D SHADOW MACHINE, 2004/08  
Mixed media installation

Standing in front of a green and red light creates a shadow that becomes 3D when viewed through red and green 3D glasses. When it's my own shadow that I am viewing it reminds me of the idea that self awareness is the ability to picture myself, even as I am picturing myself.



Image: Simon Yates, *3D Shadow*, 2008, paper collage. Courtesy the artist & Mori Gallery, Sydney

BROWN COUNCIL

PENELOPE CAIN

MADELEINE DONOVAN

NICHOLAS HOBBS

JUSTIN MILES

HOLLY WILLIAMS

SIMON YATES

CURATED BY HOLLY WILLIAMS

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