

INTERVIEW WITH BIANCA HESTER BY SANDRA BRIDIE

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Sandra Bridie: The first question is quite an extended one in terms of your answer; give examples of the range of activities you undertake as an artist, what do you see are the components of your practice?

Bianca Hester: When I was reviewing the questions last night I made an itemised list of the kinds of activities that I do and I realised that they were categorisable, is that a word, into main sections. I think those main sections are; material production and material research that involves activities such as exhibition making, publication making, and collaboration or writing. And there are 'discursive activities' which I would break into, again, writing, collaboration or expanded collaboration, organisational activity and Feedback Session development. Then there is 'organisational and curatorial' and that involves a much more socially based set of practices embedded in a locality; particularly working with artist-run spaces such as CLUBSproject and also OSW in the expanded sense, and then there is experimenting with the collaborative form. I don't take collaboration as a universal activity; it is something that I do differently according to different situations or projects. So they are the four main areas, maybe I should then go back into what each of those activities has involved. In a way, when I think of my practice I think of it in terms of the last – even though I have been working since 200, so that's eight years, I think around the last six years of practice and probably marked by the time that CLUBSproject started. That's the defining point of me thinking of my practice as having this idea of a composite of relations. So with 'material production and research' that often involves a much more traditional studio based pursuit, studio based but that always is intersecting with the context or site of its engagement or publication and that would be working across artist-run spaces, museums and galleries, so standard exhibition practice. Then publication making that also comes out of this material production and material research connects to exhibition making.

Does it only connect to exhibition making?

No, no, but it has a connection to it and it's come out of the way that I work and the way I make exhibitions where the proliferating or event based nature of them or the excessive nature of them in terms of the material relationships, the physical sprawl or scope of the projects and often the organisational relations that go into making those projects warrant an

expanded publication to give it a context, so that those layers can be made public and that the work is not given just on face value or based in perception of the immediate experience. So publication hooks into that and has come out of that; for example, thinking of the project that I did at Gertrude Street called, *indexing practices, projects and production*, that was generated through a series of engagements with different people, such as yourself, Terri Bird, Spiros, Lisa and Justin Clemens, inviting them to make a contribution to my work that was mediated through a dialogue with Spiros. The publication was an intimate part of that project and that involved an interview between you and me. So that's an example of how a publication splices into an exhibition, but publication has also grown out of doing a PhD and thinking about how to make public different layers of research that wouldn't normally be something that you would exhibit or make public in a physical sense. So thinking of publication as opening up another portal into different aspects of process, but also publication in terms of writing – critical writing or contextual writing that relates to projects but also relates to peer's works as well. And then there are the 'curated and coordinated projects', I would think about those in terms of more large scale works such as *Multiple Miscellaneous Alliances* where I took on a role to facilitate a project, this project grew from a connection to Lisa Kelly's *Resistance Through Rituals* at West Space and I think she has outlined that in her interview how that grew, so I might not touch upon that now. That grew in response to her project and developed in quite an ad hoc manner, but there was a central concern in how to engage in the question of politicised practice through the form that practice takes, connecting with my interest in working with CLUBSproject and also connecting to the dialogues that Lisa and I had had, *Multiple Miscellaneous Alliances* emerged. That involved, I think up to forty different people, both working individually and also working in their own clusters in terms of different scales of time within the project.

Multiple Miscellaneous Alliances was like a festival of activated and enacted practice played out at Clubs over that time so in a way there was nothing actually exhibited as such, rather what we saw was processual and time-based work.

Both. Well there was an exhibition component in that Terri Bird, Helen Walter, Spiros Panigirakos, and myself worked together to lay down and 'exhibition footprint' or a structure and that involved the building of an archive corner, the building of a section for a forum.

So it was a site for everyone to inhabit.

Yeah, and we saw it as the furnishing which enabled the activity to take place. But of course, because there was so much taking place, each artist needed to negotiate the footprint that we designed, which produced some interesting conversations with artists. I remember having two large-scale meetings before Multiple Miscellaneous Alliances and there was quite some concern about where they were going to go or how they were going to negotiate with another person's project. For some people I think that was a bit of a problem, but for us that was the creative negotiation. Part of the project was asking, how do we stage such a large-scale event and negotiate those tensions in a productive, non-standard and experimental way? So those curated and coordinated projects have been threaded through my practice for a number of years.

Has this been through having Clubs? Having your own site allows you to think in terms of peopling it; inviting people in and I think you do integrate that aspect into a practice when it is available to you.

It also comes from earlier on. I did my honours over two years and half of that time was done in Amsterdam where I attended the Samburg Postgraduate school. I had one year of practice behind me in Honours; I wouldn't even call it 'practice' of very minimalist, interventionist, site-specific work.

Yes, I remember the show you did at Talk Artists Initiative with Louise Weaver, which was exemplary product out of RMIT, a polite intervention into a space a discreet and rarefied piece!

Very discreet, very minimal and very optical.

Very pretty but you needed to sully that.

So when I went to Amsterdam, I went there alone, I had no connection to a community, I had to make that connection in time. In a way, when I was there I was exposed to the first wave of Relational Aesthetics as it was being formed, without knowing it, while I was there. Seeing a few of Rirkrit Tiravanija's projects in Germany and also just the general atmosphere at the time was work that involved archival material. There was a fantastic project at an artist-run space called W139 where an artist invited, over the course of two months, different practitioners to come and run a kitchen and cook for an audience as an event.

Yes, hosting became one of the really big things, I know from seeing stuff in England such as dinners and soup kitchens, what I saw as 'art-school relational aesthetics' – the food aspect was often the thing that was taken from Relational Aesthetics by young artists in the formative stages of their practice.

And I was there in 1999 and I think the book 'Relational Aesthetics' was published in 2000? So I was there without actually knowing that there was a term around these practices. I wasn't aware of that at that point but I was within the atmosphere. Talking about the 'art school relational aesthetics' that's exactly what I ended up doing in terms of thinking, how can I engage my studio as a site of social production as a way to form a community around what was going on there.

And that's a very useful project to set yourself in a foreign place, it's an ideal way of getting to know people and creating a social group around you.

It's a survival technique. So I literally turned my studio into a kitchen for the first month and I did a series of lunches. I was also thinking that the Dutch don't eat properly they just run down the corridor eating -----, which is cheese on bread. So I was thinking, what's a way to contribute something different to this culture? I was relating that to an excess productivity that was symptomatic of the Protestant culture. So I was thinking of slowing that down and producing a site for a different sort of engagement within the art school context. I did a series of these projects, also running picnics in relationship to an art fair that Stephen Bram actually happened to be in that year, in 1999 in Amsterdam. So there were some weird connections. So I would set up a picnic every day that the art fair was open and waited for somebody to ask me 'What are you doing?' and then in that question, open up the project and invite them to eat with me and to discuss the art fair.

Very sweet.

So I came back to Melbourne with that behind me.

So you were one importer of Relational Aesthetics to Melbourne!

I don't know about that. So I think when I came back to Melbourne I thought, OK this is another context entering into the Melbourne art scene and it has changed. I was partaking in a show called 'Fame' at 200 Gertrude Street, organised by one of my peers, Scott Matthews. I was very uncomfortable with the thematic of the show and so I developed a work that, I

guess, was in a critical relation to that and from there I started to do a series of interview projects with people asking them what their relationship to fame was through a series of questions; such as why practice art; talking about art practice intent, difficulties, community, peer group, audience, career, success, failure, fame, integrity and working in Australia. So in a way I can see all of those questions continuing through the practice and particularly through working at Clubs. For me, that was a precursor to an interest in dealing with the expanded conditions of art's production, publication, discourse and reception that are concerns that continue, particularly through CLUBSproject but continue to today but they have been given different form. I am starting to engage with them differently now.

So, then there is 'collaboration'. If I trace that right back to even the more minimal work that I was doing, such as at Talk, there was a collaborative element there, that was not a reflexive collaborative involvement.

Would you now perhaps see that engagement more as a mentoring relationship between Louise as your teacher and you as the student than a functioning collaboration?

Well she invited me to collaborate with her without clear intention, I wasn't sure why and because she was in a power relationship to me I didn't dare ask why. There definitely was a mentoring role going on.

There is the question about collaboration later on, but from having this example of 'collaboration' at that point in your practice, you could use it as a useful model for comparison for future collaborations – look back on that model and see how it worked, for example where the balance of power lay; whether Louise was in the position of accepting or vetoing your suggestions, whether you were looking for her approval of your ideas or not, which would determine the hierarchy in the collaboration or the democracy of it.

I won't go into collaboration now except to say that it has had a very strong presence in my practice from the get go. I see what I do is there is a spectrum of relations to a spectrum of activities and I weave through that and move sometimes towards much more extreme multi-authored openly woven organisational projects and then often from there swing to another more solo, studio-based practice. I think they feed each other. I have always felt a tension between them but the PhD was coming to terms with – even calling them extremes is problematic, but the multiplicity of engagement, the PhD was coming to terms with those multiple positions.

It's balancing and counterbalancing. It is nice to have contemplative space in an individual practice in your studio (or wherever) but too much of that has the tedium of being too known, so it is nice to throw that out the window and engage with other people and then it's nice to retreat again.

Expanding and compressing. So collaboration has taken many forms in terms of working with people in organisational capacities, like in a committee sense and much more recently, or much more presently, working with Open Spatial Workshop (OSW) with Terri Bird and Scott Mitchell where the collaborative group takes on a singular identity, but it's an identity that eclipses each of us and is a place where we can put ideas and practices into the collaboration that don't necessarily have a space within our own practices. It's a tangential practice but in fact it's become its own body, it has its own concerns and that has a momentum now.

It has its own history by now too, so it has become naturalised by now.

Absolutely. And it's a lot of fun, it really feeds me both professionally and personally and individually and collectively. It's basically a place for an extended discussion, when we are not making things we are engaging each other and having dialogue about particular things, reading things together...

But the output always looks fun; it looks like a game or something.

It's a really great place to have a space to work together.

And then there is also 'writing'; I have a multiple relationship to writing. It started through working on interviews as the subject and form of the work that I was doing and then writing took on a relationship to the work where I was writing indexes or expanded title cards, particularly for projects like *expanding, compressing, figures, fields* in 2001, which was a series of nine interviews with people in the exhibition 'Primavera 10' where the work was discussing the nature of making a work for this context, then exhibited as an archive. The title card for that was a really expanded title card that was attempting to put that into context and also develop an excessive relationship to what was being exhibited to talk about its proliferating excessive nature and that expanded title card is something that I continued for quite a long time so that the title card was positioned as something that wasn't outside of the work giving a centralise them or intent to what was going on but was actually given as part of

the work. In the last five years I have been doing writing in terms of reviews of catalogue essays or critical essays on people's work; such as Tom Nicholson, Spiros, Chris Hill and then also writing in terms of the PhD, that's where the bulk of the writing practice has been channelled!

So, no more writing for six months!

No, I really haven't written anything of any substance since then, however, I have been asked by the VCA to write a keynote essay for the book they are publishing at the end of the year through the gallery which is due in two weeks and I haven't started, so we will see what comes of that. But also writing, in terms of the future, I am picking it up again. I met someone in London when I was working there in January and February who was interested in engaging with my work. She is a young Italian curator who is based in London in a space called, Form Content, and she actually read my PhD while I was there, which I was kind of blown away by! She was interested in developing some kind of correspondence, so since I have left we have been emailing each other ideas and unpacking those ideas in email format with the thought of generating a writing project in the future. Collaborative writing is something that I like to do a lot as well and its also something that I have done quite a bit with Lisa Kelly and Terri Bird, writing essays together through email and editing together and expanding ideas through the written format. I am also planning to do a collaborative writing project with Tom Nicholson next year as a part of a project I am developing to try to write a score for actions within the work that I am developing for June. So writing is gaining another presence with the practice after a bit of downtime.

And then there are *Feedback Sessions* as well which is part of the discursive arm of the practice, which is something that came out of CLUBSproject, particularly with Terri Bird and Spiros Panigirakos, which is, as you know, not as regular as it used to be, but it still exists where we attend different exhibitions for two hours to develop a critical dialogue around the work.

Didn't Andrew McQualter also have a role in the Feedback Sessions?

Andrew McQualter had a role in that when we were working at CLUBSproject and he still has a role in that. We wrote a manual together with him, Terri, Andrew and myself. It is published on the CLUBSproject website and is something that Lucas and Lisa picked up and developed their own model.

They used it as their template, yes, but they allowed people to talk about their work during the sessions!

Oh, we allowed people to talk, just at the end!

Who are your mentor figures and what are your influences for your practice?

With mentor figures, Terri Bird is a major mentor figure, given that she was an educator in third year and honours and then from there I started to work with her and the others who were involved with Clubsproject. There was a bridging period from the relationship of Terri being the pedagogue to Terri becoming the peer, which was quite a natural progression and change and a lot of the issues that came up in the educational context, I guess, were dealt with in a different fashion within the context offered by Clubs.

At the beginning with CLUBSproject, Terri seemed like the 'mother hen' with all the little clucking chicks around her.

Not for the others.

Well then, perhaps that was just my observation, at the beginning, there would be a lot of chatter and then Terri would offer a sage-like concluding paragraph. But I am sure that having worked with Terri in CLUBSproject etc over the number of years that you have that the roles have balanced out.

Yeah, definitely, and then from working at CLUBSproject and also working together in Open Spatial Workshop with Scott, so it's, very much, become a peer relationship. There is still obviously a mentoring relationship in terms of fleshing out ideas or getting advice or what-have-you. Another obvious person for me is Peter Cripps, because he was an educator from since I was nineteen til last year in Sculpture. I see him as someone who really emphasised practice-oriented research, he was very good at helping you realise that what you were doing was contributing knowledge and his interest is in material relationships and sculpture, so from him I received a very solid grounding, he was really interested in 'object quality'. So the emphasis on object relations or the emphasis upon the object in sculpture comes primarily from him. And yourself. I don't know if you would call it a mentorship because we haven't necessarily had a conscious mentoring or educational relationship, but in terms of your model of practice, particularly the *Fictional and Actual Artists' Space* in relationship to the interview projects has been a model for me in terms of how I began thinking through the site

of multiple authorship and different modes of engagement, which I then turned, for myself, into collaboration. That was a precursor for me. Terri actually introduced your work to me in Honours, so through that connection that opened up an avenue for thinking through subjectivity and authorship. Through Terri and Peter I was introduced to Buro Berlin and I think of that as an influence upon my work, it is something I wrote about in the PhD in terms of this notion of 'making visible the situational relationships' of practice or of an art work. That idea itself has been very influential upon Terri and it is also something we discussed a lot in terms of our developing the CLUBSproject model.

Could you just briefly talk about Buro Berlin?

Let me consult my notes! Buro Berlin was a project run in West Berlin in the eighties, I think.

They occupied fugitive spaces didn't they?

Yeah, they occupied abandoned spaces, they worked with Tony Cragg, I think, as well, to develop on-site interventions and events, site-based or architecturally-based interventions as well using the materials on-site to develop projects that then displayed the relationships to the architectural site and made them the subject of the work and made that visible within the work. They also ran an office and film nights. There was a particular book in the Sculpture office where I studied on Buro Berlin.

Who were the coordinators of Buro Berlin?

Fritz Ramen, Raymond Kumar and Hermann Pitz and they also wrote extensively so they have a strong relationship to writing as a place for critical formation or critical practice to take place. So with Buro Berlin, the idea of making visible the situational relationships of a work was something that informed our CLUBSproject model. I know that Tom Nicholson and Alex Rizkalla and Julie Davies made a connection to Buro Berlin as well.

Yeah, it is interesting that Ocular Lab and CLUBSproject had Buro Berlin as their model, rather than a local model.

It is; what do you make of that?

I think it obviously had to do with Terri and Alex and Julie's residencies in Europe – Julie and Alex in Berlin. With Ocular Lab, I don't think the model of Buro Berlin was applied to the degree that it was for CLUBSproject in terms of a model we were beholden to in terms of the project's rhetoric. For Ocular Lab it was more of a vague ideal of independent collective

practice perhaps. West Space also used international models as templates for their practice as an artist initiated space, but these were the more institutional type spaces, the bureaucratic spaces. Ocular Lab took the 'buro' idea from Buro Berlin and applied that wherein a group of like-minded, equally experienced artists who had multi-faceted or more broad-based practices – beyond studio-based, exhibition or commercial-based practice, beyond individual, object-based practice. The idea was that we could occupy the space, using time-space akin to an image of the use of the space of office pods in a bureau. Here, we could volunteer to coordinate time-modules of our annual calendar, usually the module of one or two months, without veto from the other members, what we said went in terms of who we invited to show, and how the Lab might be used over that time. My preference for the use of my time-modules over the five years I have been a member of the Lab has been to use that time for hosting residencies, exchanges or site-located projects, with the events consisting of closings, dinners etc. rather than my using the space as an exhibition space or using it to show my own work. The model of the bureau was Alex Rizkalla's premise then for the second incarnation of Ocular Lab, (the first incarnation, Ocular Laboratory 2000-2003) from 2003 onwards.

I think, in response to that, the thing that appeals to me about the Buro Berlin model is that, very much hands-on, DIY relationship to production that isn't about an institutionalised aesthetic or institutionalised forms of professionalism either.

It's not the juggernaut organisation with its board, planning meetings etc.

I find that deathly actually and forms of professionalism that are evident within most artist-run spaces and galleries. They are there for particular reasons but I find them deathly and boring. So something that appealed to me about a relationship to the lived and to the real in relationship to production connects absolutely to Buro Berlin, I guess to a political and cultural climate of their time that is different to Melbourne, obviously, but in terms of the all-hands-on-deck approach where you do what you can with minimal resources and what seemed like endless energy at the time, to make something happen. To me, that was very real and that was about activating different forms of living. For me, that was having a political relationship to your production, by taking on all aspects of practice within the bounds of your ethos, not taking onboard the models that are received or that are given to you.

Designating a new space to occupy.

Opening something. You could critique this idea of looking at a West German model, that you are exoticising something, but actually it is interesting to open up a space within your context that isn't about genealogy or lineage.

It's not a direct modelling, like bringing in a sit-com from America and copying it! You take something that appeals. I think CLUBSproject probably utilised a more spatial template from Buro Berlin, the idea of using what's at hand, the provisional was most apparent in the 'aesthetic' of many of CLUBSproject projects, whereas Ocular Lab used the model of the office or agency, where a group of individuals, functioning like a bunch of separate offices, but in a temporal way. You do your work in your offices, but there is discourse between the spaces. The measured time-module is a useful way to look at the architecture of Ocular Lab whereas there was much more flux at CLUBSproject there was more push and pull in the structure there.

Yeah, and because we were interested exploring different ways to make practice public, in that meaning different forms that events could take, that was more than an exhibition model, they needed different modules of time to occur and that integration came about through the interweaving of those different events with the artists that were coming in to work with us but also in connection to those artists and our relationship to the projects that were happening there.

Yes, you were operating within a kind of 'lived time' rather than 'exhibition time'.

Yeah, yeah, and that was wholly unsustainable!

It required constant dialogue, I imagine, and working as a collective as well, it would have been fatiguing.

And I like that. Amazing, as it is that West Space still exists, I like a project that you give it everything that you've got and then it burns the fuck out, it dies, but it needs to die, I think, to move on. It doesn't become an edifice; we knew that we would have to sacrifice ourselves at the end of the project. Not necessarily all of us had that idea but some of us knew that we would burn out and that would be its death and that was fine, although it was still painful in the moments that it was happening.

Is there anyone else? With Joelle Tuerlinckx, who you mention in your PhD as an influence, did you ever meet her?

No, but I saw a major exhibition of hers in 1999, which absolutely changed me because I had never seen anything like it, it was so post-object, it was so multiple, it was hugely spatial, ephemeral, provisional – all these key words that I use in my PhD and when I am talking about work or teaching. It was so alive and it was very difficult to get a handle on, there was no centre, no centralised subject to the work. Her work is like a machine that makes visible the limits of the exhibition context, which over-articulates all the framing devices, such as title cards, dimensions of the gallery, colour of the walls. The exhibition becomes a place where all the framing mechanisms are flooded into the work and become the work, but it's aestheticised, does that make sense?

Was it all about the exhibition situation; was there anything in the exhibition outside of this extensive notation on the conditions of the exhibition?

It's all about the exhibition in relationship to perception of the visible and her gestures are almost barely visible, but also in their excessiveness they are nothing but visible. What the exhibition was, was – I can't even begin to describe it – books of measurements of the gallery, walks around the gallery, models of the heaters in the corners, strings that had been thrown that had then been marked out by cardboard, a big paper theatre with dots ... It comes from Marcel Broodthaers' model of practice, over-signifying the frameworks which contextualise art, basically, to become the subject. But there is an excess of relationships; it's like a bulk of material.

So that has influenced your practice hugely, it is like that's the site in which you reside.

Totally. It's also very playful, it sounds, to talk about it, incredibly dry but it's incredibly playful and material at the same time. It's crazy; it's megalomaniacal in its scope. So I didn't meet her, but I know people who have worked for her as assistants, and she is apparently crazy in terms of her ego.

That's really interesting, because this thing of mentoring; because often enough in late-modernist/post-modernist education there is no obvious mentoring, no copying from the model and so I am interested in this idea of actually finding an artist to model your work on, not actually meeting the artist and then the student enacts the master's or model figure's practice. I did that with So Le Witt for two years, I got a book out of the library and just worked on the exercises in the book, from the instructions implicit in the titles of the works, as an assistant might do. This was at least a whole year's worth of Sol Le Witt works that were

utterly premised on his instructions in a book. It sounds as if you have apprenticed yourself to her practice in many ways, but especially more recently in your projects for your PhD.

And the book that I made, in the book I said, this is an appropriation of a book of hers, or in terms of employing some of the strategies that I have read about and experienced within her work.

It is useful to have a distanced model as well, rather than Peter Cripps or Terri Bird. You can then project an image onto the work of a distant artist.

And also the distance produces difference, inevitably, and there are two different cultural approaches going on and so it is like, I guess, extracting the main strategies from that practice and then reworking them according to my own locality and context.

It becomes part of your repertoire.

And then, the Masters student that I supervised, Thea Rechner, I introduced Joelle's work to her. Thea's show within the George Paton also appropriated strategies from her, and much more closely in some instances because Thea's interest is in the optical, the visible and the limits of visibility. It's a weird and interesting connection as well. It's fascinating actually; Joelle would have no idea about this. I wonder how many artists there are in the world where people do appropriate strategies of theirs unknown to them. That would be an interesting project.

Yes, a distanced apprehension of their practice. It creates a poetic as well those gaps in the availability of information on the model that we fill in with conjecture and missed apprehension.

Although I collect a lot of Tuerlinckx's publications, I have a small archive of her work and contributed one of her books the *Library Project*, so there is a small knowledge around her practice that is growing. So Joelle Tuerlinckx is the main influence who is apprehended through distance, and then Robert Smithson has been hugely influential in terms of engaging with materiality, but also as a model for expanded practice, those practices from the sixties in fact are exemplary models in terms of running projects, writing, publishing, working between a relay of sites, especially Robert Smithson and Gordon Matta-Clark, in terms of relationship to architecture and intervention. And then Robert Morris's writing and expanded practice, especially in relationship to the ----- of Nance theatre and the relationship to performance and

the relationship between performance and sculpture and the emphasis on the body, that has been a latent interest that has come into the fore a lot more recently. Then through Morris, connecting much more recently to Yvonne Rainer, who I mentioned to you before. Which is nascent and will grow in the next year or two, and then there is Bruce Nauman in relationship to working within the confines of the studio or exploring the artist's relationship to the studio.

And from this, you have integrated that into using the exhibition space as a studio.

Absolutely, and that also connects to Robert Morris's continuous projects, considering the exhibition as the site of production and what that activates socially and materially and temporally as well. And then, I am not hugely influenced by Mike Kelly, much as I like his work, as by one of his statements; if you leave writing up to the powers that be... I don't have the statement here; I would have to look it up but the call upon artists to write their history, that's powerful.

That imperative has been discussed by all of the participants here, to get the information from the source.

And from the time that it is being generated, which is integrated into embodied researcher/embodied practice, rather than coming after the fact according to the needs of different hierarchies.

Rather than the retrospective clarity and history and legend making of external commentary by writers.

Yeah, it's messy and chaotic. Also there is the complexity of Duchamp's work in relationship to writing, *The Green Box* in particular, the notes around *The Large Glass*, that has always stuck in my mind as an interesting model for thinking of the inevitable expansion of any kind of project and the layers of material and residue that generate around something and thinking about how you can activate those or give them different form within projects. And then simple things like Carl Andre, just a simple relationship to the floor or to the ground as the space of the real, that has been a huge influence in terms of physically engaging with space; always installing on the ground, sculpture in relationship to the ground has a relationship to time and movement and the body. So that's the main listing. All of these artists, the thing that they activate, most of them are connected to a minimalist discourse or history in connection to the idea of drawing attention to the conditions of production and

perception and also the context of viewing where the expanded experience of the work becomes the work; the relay of relationships between the object, its site and the mode of engagement is the total work. My practice clearly comes from the legacy of Minimalism, it doesn't come from Expressionism, it doesn't come from Pop, it comes from a minimal, abstract, process oriented base, but with the body connected into those concerns.

Your's is a very particular engagement and it's not narrative or biographical or about the personal, it's confined to the material and spatial.

It's not subject oriented, it's about a field of relations where the body is given within that field of relationships but it is not centred. The thing that is underpinning a lot of my work is an interest in the decentralisation of subjectivity or the multiplication of subjectivity, or the annihilation of the centred subject. That has influenced me profoundly and so what opens there is an interest in the many forces of production that range from material to the social to the perceptual and the political, but not the political in terms of centred subjects or centred authors. It's about the force of many relations given together. I am starting to get very esoteric now!

No, no, it's good to get it down and to define those differences.

What are the central texts, both international and local that your work revolves around?

I was thinking how to answer this, from early on I have always been into philosophy and that has influenced my interest in the decentring of subjectivity or the proliferation of subjectivity over a multiplicity of positions. I am embarrassed to say that I am a child of the Deleuze and Guattari era, I was really into that around 2001 and extended to texts, particularly Elizabeth Grosz in relationship to the notion of forces and relations, which comes from a Nietzschean perspective. So, Deleuze, Guattari, Elizabeth Grosz, Nietzsche in particular, a bit of Bataille. The way I engage with philosophy is, I don't make work about philosophy, I don't illustrate ideas, obviously, but I read a lot and it becomes more of an informing. It's not illustrative, it's not pastiche, it's not appropriative, it informs me at a deep level that then becomes part of my atmosphere and it reorients the ground, for me, it informs my approach and I use it as a series of stratagems towards approaching how I work. So it's not about what I make but about how I produce, so it gives a context for production.

So do you return to these texts regularly or do you hold these texts in mind without rereading them or returning to them, have these texts served as a formative influence that 'infuse' your work rather than used in a more literalised sense as 'reference material' behind the work?

No, I have kind of wormed my way into these texts; I didn't receive these texts from the institution in terms of my institution, RMIT, but more as the institution in a larger sense. They were major texts that were being read and I came to them and I keep returning to them. My interests are now moving towards much more looking into Bataille in relationship to turning things upside down and disorientation, I guess in relationship, again, to subjectivity. Also, Michael Toussig, he is an anthropologist, I heard him talk at the Sydney Biennale and he writes ficto-criticism, which is really fascinating. So I am really interested in him because he goes to the field and there is this whole relationship between observers and observed, the observer becomes the observed. He doesn't write on culture, he writes through culture through experiences, through a fictional criticism, it's about staging the writing in a fictive sense, does that make sense? It's only very new to my sphere of awareness, but it is something I would like to pursue. Rosalind Krauss has been an obvious for her key texts, like *Passages in Modern Sculpture, The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths, Notes on the Index*, she is a major influence in terms of thinking of sculpture in the expanded field, in fact I talk about that in the PhD in terms of what does it mean to consider that question now, thirty years after it has been posed with the idea that I affirm sculpture as the framework through which I practice, even though the practice has been expanded to its nth degree. In writing the PhD I came across a key text that reformed me, which was Alex Potts, *Sculptural Imagination, Figurative, Modernist and Minimalist* and he talks through the history of sculpture in relationship to perception and embodiment, which if you haven't read it, it is a fantastic read, actually. Also Pamela Lee, talking about temporality of drawing and process in relationship to the trace of action and the time that the action occurs as a drawing, as a work, and talking about that in relation to Post Minimalist work. So they are the key texts and the key texts that informed the PhD. Also obviously Miwon Kwon's, *One Place After Another* informed me radically in terms of thinking of my relationship to site-specificity and informing an understanding of what site-specificity was, thinking of it in terms of the situational, where the situational becomes the concept that includes many relationships to site, not just the physical embodied one.

Lisa cites Miwon Kwon as well as Lucas. You mentioned this briefly before, but which artists' spaces have you been involved with and what are the influences and mentor figures in this aspect of your practice?

First off, Grey Area was an artist-run space that was running when I was a student and that was influential in terms of it being one of the first places that I became conscious of. Then, Talk Artists' Initiative was a space that I was aware of and that became an interesting model for me in terms of your relationship to conducting the interviews with people projecting verbally what they were going to do before exhibiting. That became interesting particularly in terms of thinking about the artist-run space or the exhibition venue, not just as a venue in which someone might deposit work but also as an active project in itself. I became aware that it was part of your project and your research; you weren't simply a functionary for the other. I guess that had an influence much later on in terms of working with CLUBSproject and thinking through what it was that you were doing when you were running an artist-run space, it was more than becoming a functionary or a bureaucrat. If you stop thinking about it, in terms of you being the administrator; that you are a practitioner and this is a part of your work, in fact it becomes much more creative and also much more poignant in terms of how you run it because it is part of what you do rather than something that you begrudgingly do. You could take on these roles and then begrudge them in terms of the administrative work, but in fact if you think of it in a bigger sense in terms of it being a project then it takes on a different energy or a different relationship to what you do. Buro Berlin is not an ARI in the Australian branding sense but it is definitely a model that we have already spoken about. And then, *h*, were you involved in that?

No, it was Alex and Julie's and Kim Donaldson, Terri Bird, Chris Ulbricht, Sally Mannall and others. h was run by about ten people, like Ocular Lab and Talk Artist's Initiative.

h was interesting to me in connection to Terri as well. Terri introduced us to *h* in relationship to the publication that they made which, again, emphasised *h* as a project in itself, it had a particular impetus and ethos rather than a place for depositing of preformed art.

Yes, there were distinct parameters to h, it was limited to a twelve month project, it paired local and international artists together to create works shown that were devised through dialogue between these paired artists. The international communications between artists was

a large part of the documentation for the project. These exchanges were the fundamental texts for the project.

And that relates to Ocular Lab in terms of Ocular Lab being a project that is wider than an exhibition space.

At best, yes.

And implicit within that is the relationship to hosting and to hospitality and to the production of communities around projects or around events as well. So they are the main past models and present models. What was the question?

You have sort of answered this, "Which artist's spaces have you been involved with and what are the influences and mentor figures in this aspect of your practice?" But perhaps you could talk about your role with West Space and why you became involved there.

Brett Jones invited me and I think he was interested in me being involved in relationship to my writing, or to my interviews and I think he was interested in me pursuing that. I didn't, I was only there for a year and I was introduced to the bureaucracy of West Space, which enables it to function but I realised that this is not where I am at, this is not what I want to be doing.

So you had a clear model of what you didn't want?

I didn't realise that until being involved and I found that I was the other within a pre-established model and, in a way, you can infiltrate that creatively and I was interested in doing that but then it became apparent to me that, well, why don't I just work elsewhere? West Space was such a force, with such a history already that I felt that it was more interesting to me to generate something different, which was already churning, processes were already put into play in finding a space for CLUBSproject so it was almost running in parallel. So, for me, it was an issue of, where am I going to put my energy? So when I was at West Space I was basically on the selection committee.

But thinking of an ideal scenario for you to engage with space wise?

It was not really like that, it was more like CLUBSproject was in process and it wasn't ideal! But it was something very different, we hadn't existed, so nothing was formed, whereas West Space was formed. It was also West Space in its second incarnation, it was just after they had moved to the site in the city and Brett Jones was still the director and Michael Graeve

had just become Program Manager. So, it was very different to how it is now, it was pre major change. I felt like a functionary, I could have been interchanged with anybody as a committee member.

I think this is often the case. My experience around Store 5 was similar in that by being involved in it, it allowed me to think of another model, an answer to the existing model I was engaged with as a participant but not an instigator of. This was essential for me, and also at the time I was witness to the mythologising that was going on around Store 5 and around John Nixon's Art Projects by contemporary art historians, they were re-investing into that history of John's project at the time and linking Store 5 to it as a current model. This made me realise that it is most important hear the version of the story first hand from the artists, and not through the filter of retrospective certainty that the historians tend to give us. I wanted to hear about how work by artists and their projects is imagined, created and made, how at the point of exhibition the work can fail or create new challenges, how a discourse around the possibilities for a work past, present, and future can be recorded and then what might come out of the work later in terms of redressing issues that arise from it. This was the text I wanted to see created as a history of practice. So for me, and my experience of being at Store 5, I think it is actually wonderful to be given the experience of a model that is wanting, a model to you to set in front of you to vie against.

Yes, I like that idea of an answer to it and in terms of, you just mentioned the word certainty, and there was something far too certain about West Space for me. It has its place and the place that it has made is valuable, but it was too much of an institution.

And West Space was happily an institution, that was in fact the model they subscribed to.

Yes, absolutely, whereas I am interested in something much more difficult, more difficult to see, more difficult to manage, something that is a bit more chaotic, which from an outsider's position might seem like a shaggy mess, but in terms of what we were talking about before it is working on something in terms of lived time, not necessarily setting up structures to smooth things into a system, but in fact trying to work with things in their difference and difficulty.

And administering the program eighteen months to two years ahead, so there is no space to improvise in the program.

That's another good point, you ask yourself, well what kind of space do I want to work in and it's not these spaces that exist. What kind of space can you produce that comes from the way you need to work, the way you need to publish your work, when I say you, I mean the group of people that feel a similar urge to produce a site or a context for presenting the work that doesn't exist.

Yes, to my students that is what I say; you think of what there is, what currently exists and what there needs to be, and create that place that needs to be, not just modelled on a pre-existing space/project, because there is no need to do that, we do not need just another exhibition space.

No we do not, it also disempowers you because you buy into a hierarchy and there are boundaries there that you need to traverse and there are power relationships involved in that. You don't have to be subservient to those; you can make your own ground. That sounds so idealistic, but you actually can.

Oh yeah, that's easy actually, for awhile at least.

And it transforms what you do I think when you realise that you don't need to wait to be validated by given structures, in fact, if you take on the structure relationships, you take on the situation and you remake that, that's an empowered way to generate something that is local and something that is contextual and connecting to your peers.

There are a lot of spaces that seem like career spaces, you know, spaces to move through, interim exhibition space before you get a commercial gig kind of thing, whereas the projects/spaces that stay in mind are those instigated to explore modes of practice, not to move through as mere alternative exhibition venues.

Yeah, because if your end aim is to get a commercial gig then the grounds of your practice won't shift, you are assuming a certain relationship to authorship and to production and that just won't change. So it is about turning your consciousness onto the forms through which you produce and interrogating that as material. As much as producing whatever it is that you do, it's about re-evaluating the processes through which you make that stuff.

Constantly.

Yes! And inevitably you are experimenting with the mode of authorship, that for me, where collaboration has always come into play because it is about constantly playing with what I

assume authorship is and what I am trying to make it become for myself and for others who are willing to work in that fashion.

Which artist's projects outside of the ARIs have you coordinated? You have spoken about Multiple Miscellaneous Alliances.

Well with *Multiple Miscellaneous Alliances*, there were two arms to it, there was the larger organisational event that I initiated and facilitated with assistance from Terri Bird and Spiros Panigirakos and Helen Walter and then there was the arm that was exhibited in West Space within the context of Lisa Kelly's show, *Resistance Through Rituals*. Our contribution was a notice board which contextualised the many projects that were happening at CLUBSproject at the same time that the events were occurring. We thought about that as an exhibition that offered a contextual portal onto a larger project, with the essay that I had written, the timetable of events, but also a diagram of relations between projects that were occurring, as well.

I am confused with this question, where it says 'outside of ARIs', because that's not outside of an ARI.

Well, what I was wanting was you to speak about projects 'outside' of actually running an ARI, so being involved in an ARI is one project, but then there are projects that you may coordinate within that space, such as Multiple Miscellaneous Alliances, or projects that you might hold in other venues.

So, there is that, there is also the *Indexing Practices* project that I ran for the Gertrude Street exhibition. I see that in relation to this question because that was a more extended organisational project that brought a couple of people together within the context of the project and it also more fully fleshed out a collaborative relationship between myself and Spiros outside of working at CLUBSproject. The premise of the project was to think about a field of practices that had had some import upon my procedures and then to ask those people to contribute something to the project as a way of then charting the relationships between my project and theirs and between each others projects. Spiros was an important contributor in particular because I was thinking of the dialogues that we had had at CLUBSproject and also around both of our respective projects and how that had informed my strategies over time. So I then asked him to assist me in developing a way that I would approach the people to invite their contributions. So rather than calling each person and

inviting their contributions, Spiro became my relay or go-between and that was his contribution, so that was moderating or modifying the way I would source the work from people and that produced a layer of resistance. I include that project because of its dense organisational relationships involved, and also because a publication was the result of that. I guess the most recent project is organising the West Brunswick Sculpture Triennale.

Which is post CLUBSproject isn't it, but it seems like it could have come out of, or be a later chapter of CLUBSproject.

Definitely. It comes out of post CLUBSproject and also concerns OSW have had, particularly around the idea of organising an event for different level of participation by producers and audiences. It is taking another extreme step away from exhibition space into domestic space and it has obvious precedents such as Critical Cities project*, there is a project in Ghent that I can't remember the name of, that's another model, and also an answer or critique of the Nextwave Festival* project that recently took place within domestic interiors, called *House Proud*. It is not that it developed in answer to that, but as the Triennial was forming that event occurred and we thought, well, what we are doing is very different to this, it is not about engaging with the domestic realm as simply a display space, but in fact trying to use the domestic realm as a site for different forms of engagement that are both about display but also about discourse, so there is an extended interest in developing a salon in the lounge room, a library and a reading room and a series of events connected to hospitality and hosting in relationship to the backyard.

So you will be using this house as the site for the Triennial and Ocular Lab is going to be used for something as well.

Yes, this is the primary site because the project developed from the fact that we use our domestic realm as a place to often discuss projects and also to make projects and for along time we have wanted to do something within someone else's house and we had never gotten around to it, so this house seemed like a perfect place to start. Also in relation to the decorative nature of the house in terms of the carpet and the ceilings and starting to think about people's practices that could form a connection to that such as Fiona Abicare and Raafat Ishak. So the house became the primary site that inspired the idea in relationship to the way in which we were working anyway. Then it was jestful; we thought why don't we have a sculpture Triennale! Then it was if we were going to expand it then why don't we

expand it into the community that is already in Brunswick, especially Ocular Lab in relationship to it being straight down the road and then also thinking Tom Nicholson's interest in producing more project oriented thing on his land in the future, thinking of a way to integrate into that property or into that site and Tom and Claire are really into it, so we will be using that industrial site for an installation. Then also there is a studio of Nikos Pantisopoulos, who is a friend of ours who lives just off Albion Street. So there are four connected sites for one month, we will be doing projects that are both exhibition based and event based. We are thinking of ways to engage the local community, we haven't quite worked out how, particularly this street, perhaps with Mick Douglas, he will be doing something that might involve people within the area, we are not sure yet. So that is the main project that is being organised at the moment, but it has been something that Terri and Scott and I have been discussing for about a year in terms of Open Spatial Workshop, the way we work is generating research projects with a science model, I guess, and then articulating those projects in different ways. We wanted to do something where we are much more living with the project, facilitating the project through the spaces that we are living in on an everyday basis and then trying to integrate that into the way that an audience might engage in the way that we present the work.

It's a pretty funny title, slightly overblown and humorously grand. I associated it with the Mildura Sculpture Triennials and the Sculpture Triennials that continued after Mildura, but I am also thinking of a project that Lucas Ihlein alerted me to, which is the London Biennale, do you know about that?

Vaguely.

Well, I guess by using these grand titles, which associate the event with the institutionalised international events that are so ubiquitous, the naming of it becomes a satire and a critique of the overblown international events that bring in a particular kind of 'Biennale Art'. The title is both this satire as well as claiming that space of the 'triennale' as a space for an inventiveness on an intimate, localised scale.

Absolutely, and that's why it is tongue in cheek when we say 'Triennale' because we often do exhibition tours together and the last one we went to was the Sydney Biennale and that's one of our critiques of those large scale, corporate festivals where the Biennale set obviously do an international circuit.

And absolutely overlook the local artistic community except for exhibition assistants and technicians, etc.

And you wonder who is benefiting from this, it is a set of curators and administrators who are flown in and put up in glamorous cities and deliver half interesting programs and discussion events. You think, well what about the artist you are shipping in, as well? It would be interesting for them to integrate more within the fabric of the local community and the issues that are being dealt with there for the sustainability of their own practices.

That might allow some notion of 'exchange' to occur.

Yes, because we all know that when you go overseas it is through those kinds of real contacts and dialogue that you generate that then generates future opportunities back to both communities, not just for your own person but for your expanded networks. That then generates a potential self-determined residency program and it produces a global-local network, I guess, which is touching upon what Lucas was talking about in his interview in terms of 'what is your peer network?' and he talks about it in terms of the global network.

But in terms of a regional global network.

Yes, and then Lisa touches upon that as well in talking about seeking artist determined practise, or artist determined projects and I would agree, in terms of how the terms of groupings that I search out and look for are precisely those artist-determined networks. It's because those people are interesting in generating sustainable practices, something that is more than simply producing artefact for exhibition or commercial gain. So that leads me to thinking of another project that was organised outside of the ARI system and that was the *Sustaining Practices Workshop*. That developed from a conversation that a couple of us were having through a dinner at Gertrude Street with one of the Studio 18 residents called Judith Schwartzbrot, did you meet her?

Blackbread?

Yeah, Judith Blackbread! She thought there was a lack of artists writing in this city, and I said, no there are not, there are actually some really engaged people who are writing.

There are almost too many.

People in Melbourne, they are not just writing, they have these composite practices, but anyway we were talking about intergenerational mixes, which is something that I have been

interested in working through for a long time, working across generations, not just positioning myself within an emerging art scene or a youth culture, but thinking about different ideas as they cross and can be re-fertilised across generations. We were talking about an idea of how you might sustain practice on a number of levels and from there the *Sustaining Practices Workshop* was generated, CLUBSproject hosted it, or a subgroup of CLUBSproject, it was part of the *VIA-N Making Space Festival*. It was the suggestion that CLUBSproject had for the VIA-N project, but it wasn't taken up, so we thought, well fuck it, we'll do it ourselves and we used the funding to do it from our perspective. It was a really fantastic event that involved about forty invited people for a two-day workshop at the Meat Market centre and we invited Lucas Ihlein to be the MC of the event.

He would love to be an MC!

Have you seen him in action? He is hilarious, he is so good at it, it is because he is so unselfconscious, he is not scared of awkward situations and it is really exciting to see someone who can be so in the world as he can be. So we loosely organised a structure, the first part of the structure was to send out a series of questions about issues to do with sustainability around notions of finance, discourse, production, and so on, so that people could come to the workshop with responses, so we were trying to reformulate the conference model into a really hands-on workshop and open discussion. We set it up loosely because we wanted to improvise as the day wore on. So the first part of the project was; the people came and we had a series of stations where you could write your questions in relation to the topics we had outlined, then that became the material that the workshop was to be run from so it was like a self generating workshop. It was Lucas's job to tease those out and generate a deeper discussion from which we broke into sub-groups. We were thinking; how do we generate real world propositions to extend these questions. In fact the impetus behind this project or event was the death of Clubs, we announced Clubs is over in this event and the way to end it was to disperse our concerns into a wider group of people, if they are taken up they are taken up, if not, so be it. But this was our way of sacrificing ourselves, we still believe in the ideas that Clubs was generated from and we wanted to open them up into a further dialogue, but it didn't necessarily go anywhere. But that's OK; it's a part of what it was.

These affects that you were looking for, with the continuation of the Clubs ethos in one form or another may not become immediately manifest, but the discussions from the VIA-N session may have generated ideas for other people that can be enacted later. I suspect you won't spawn another little mushroom Clubs out of the event, or even necessarily another project or practice that directly articulates that Clubs was an influence, but your ideas could be carried and reformulated in some new form more indirectly.

Yeah, and from my own perspective I have always been interested in working on a project that is like a studio office, this is something I proposed in the workshop, that is a given site or a series of given sites where a group of people can work in consistently, but not full time, and could generate a number of published outcomes. That might involve making publications or exhibitions of research or film nights; also it could involve commissions and paid work. Sorry, this is very propositional, but I think it relates to the question ...

You are speaking about a potential project?

Yeah, because the potential projects are embedded in the projects you do and the projects you do never fully articulate their potential, so the potential projects always have a life and an existence within those. So, connected to this dream of a studio-site where you might have nine people working and it would be artists, architects, people who write and, depending on projects that might come to the space or to the group, different clusters of people could work on those projects and you could potentially generate a kind of a self-employed situation.

This sounds like British models I know of, like Static in Liverpool. Static is (or was when I was there in 2006) a space set up by an artist and an architect, it is funded by rental from the people using the offices and studios there as well as revenue from selling architect's model making equipment for architectural maquettes, the little trees etc. The exhibition space there was used in various ways, including to host offsite Liverpool Biennial projects which commented on the Biennial, the gallery was able to be reconfigured according to its use at the time, for conferences, publications, forums, performances, residencies, exhibitions etc, the nature of it changed according to need, so it was not a designated as a purely exhibition-based space. Static was able to generate an income, there were people paying rent for these architectural 'agencies' inside and it had a café as well, so it was like a hub, you could get the best coffee in Liverpool there. It was a beautiful space and quite dinky or provisional in the way the interior spaces were built. It was premised on sustaining various types of

Sandra Bridie: *The artist as composite; Recent examples of a hybrid practice*
Interviews: round one: Bianca Hester interviewed by Sandra Bridie

practice within the one venue. Static was where you would look to for the alternative voice for the Liverpool Biennial, many projects commenting on the Biennial were sited there, pirate radio stations, publications etc. A little like Art Space hosts the alternative voice of the Sydney Biennale.

In a way, it's about thinking about – I don't want to start answering the question 'what does art allow you to do?' – but I am going to start touching on it, so to more fully articulate this, I guess it's about the dream of rolling it in together. Having worked for a number of years on the expanded practice and then having teaching as a way to survive, this is a way to roll all of that in together a little bit so that you can start generating an income, not through selling a commodity, because that's not realistic, first and foremost, nor desirable, secondly for myself, but still being realistic about functioning within the world but doing so in an interesting, self-determined way. Also, rolling collaboration in, I guess using the model of a design firm that's always collaborating anyway, but also the strategy of musicians who improvise together and generate something that is of the group, the group energy in the activity. Then also thinking about pedagogy as a love of mine and teaching in relation to this thing I was talking about, working cross-generationally with younger and older people and thinking about ways of activating a teaching practice that goes beyond working with institutions.

Yes, I think alternative models of the art school will soon need to be formulated here.

I think so. Even when we started CLUBSproject we wondered if we should become an educational space.

'It's the new art school' said the Jam!

Even John Nixon tried to do that up in Sydney, it didn't work though.

Yes, I think with his school there was a program of visiting lecturers and an open or sporadic program. There was also 'A Constructed World' with Geoff Lowe and Naomi Cass at the start in the early '90s, they held short art programs etc. That is/was another model for a school. I think it could be possible to set up a school, but you would need a bit of lead up time.

Definitely.

Can I just extend this pedagogical thing?

Yes.

It is also something that Julian, who gave a keynote lecture at our *Sustaining Practices Workshop*, spoke about in terms of flexibility. He never takes on a full contract, he works freelance. He works with landscape architecture and has worked in Brisbane, LA, and it was a really fantastic model, but it requires a lot of flexibility and, I would say, energy, of working as a freelance teacher across institutions and never taking a full-time contract so it doesn't lock you into an institution. You develop teaching modules, which is what you have done, according to your research, so that it's alive and fresh and it's actually an extension of your practice. So this idea for generating a kind of studio/office model in the future with people who are in education or who have interest in pedagogy of developing modules or research clusters, then you could descend upon an institution, like a group of two or three, and be paid for a semester to develop some sort of cross-site project that comes out of your research, which is a lot more fresh and engaged.

With what is in existence now, that is how the Teaching and Learning Initiative funding from University of Melbourne is meant to operate. I would think that most institutions might have satellite project money.

I will have to look into that, it's a good way to supplement your part-time income.

*Yeah, and for me, with the George Paton Gallery and teaching at the VCA, the TLI has funded and allowed me to create two Pedagogical Projects with students with an exhibition outcome, *Tangential Practice* and *Lateral Investigations*, these have been independent projects with students from the VCA. So what I am saying is there are formats already in place that you can play with, so your vision doesn't sound utopian and unlikely to be realised, it sounds highly possible within the given structures that we have.*

Mmm. OK, next question.

Who do you see as your peer group, where do you locate your practice both locally and internationally?

I think my answer resonates with Lisa Kelly's in that I locate my practice in connection to a peer group which is self-determined or artist-determined practice, people who I would say have an expanded practice and who do more than make art work, but who take on the grounds of production as material and as work that is integrated into their practice. So they are the kinds of things that we have been talking about today; writing, education,

coordinating and curating, etc. I see the peer group in terms of Australia, it's fundamentally Spiros Panigirakos, Terri Bird, Scott Mitchell, they are all in Melbourne and then there is Lisa Kelly and Lucas Ihlein in Sydney. There has been a lot of crossover between projects, writing and dialogue and I think we have deeply informed each other over the last five, six or seven years, even.

Are there any other people you would have kinship with?

Tom Nicholson, I have not had a lot of discussion with him but I have had marked discussion over time and I am looking to collaborate with him in the future. Also, Ardi Gunawan, who is a younger artist now who I am starting to develop a potential for collaborative projects with, because we worked together this year in the 20/20 project of Ash Keating's and found a great resonance in terms of the way we were working and the kinds of interests that we were having and an ease of working together. That has lead into a series of discussions, which we are now working on generating a series of urban intervention projects. I see him as having a recent resonance across practices. Elizabeth Boyce is another person who I have studied with and who I have had extensive dialogue with and whose practice has been based having a discursive relationship to the practice of others. They are the main people within what I see is an Australian community. Internationally, in a way, the way I see my practice is being engaged in a local situation, so it requires my presence within the space and context and that's not something that I have had much of outside of Melbourne, except for more recently, where I worked for three months in London and started to develop a peer network there.

So, that was a residency rather than an exchange, wasn't it? How did you get in contact and what was the connection?

The connection was very arbitrary and it involved me living with a woman called Ella Gibbs, she opens a room in her house sporadically when people come through London, when artists come through London and you can stay. It can be a minimal time; it can be an extended period of time. You pay rent to stay there, she runs it as a project, it's called Hotel C'est la vies. It's fantastic actually. There are also a series of satellite rooms in London, which are basically her and her mates opening their houses in terms of a freelance residency.

It sounds like Couch Surfing but for artists.

And it's word of mouth, there isn't a website, so that it remains very intimate. So I was hosted at the headquarters of Hotel C'est la vie and it was just like an instant rapport, we had similarities across projects. She had a project called, *Spare time job centre*, at Chisenhale five years ago where she was working on site with a group of people, it was like a job network centre for people of the area. It had a lot of resonance to Mma in terms of working on site, turning the exhibition space into a studio space, working in an expanded multi-collaborative sense. So we recognised many major points within each other's practice, for me it was like a found community in London. I went to London thinking, I don't want to go to London! It's full of hyper-ironic twats. So it was such a delightful thing to be landed right in the centre of a really local community that were dealing with things in similar ways and ways that I could recognise and have a dialogue about.

You had an exhibition in London too, was that part of Ella's site or did she put you in contact with someone else for that?

No, the exhibition curator put me in contact with her. The exhibition was organised prior to going to London. My only connection to Ella was that Kirsty knew Ella through projects she had run ten years prior on the same street in an artist-run space called Belt, which had a similar ethos to CLUBSproject, very much about the open, the sociable, very much hands-on in a domesticated kind of space.

Great, so you landed at home!

Yeah, also Ella connected me to people she thought would be interested in developing a dialogue, so the project that I did in London became very open. I went there intending to develop collaborative relationships with people, not knowing if that was possible because I was there for a short period of time but it became possible through the connection of Ella. I developed, especially, a working relationship with a writer called Neil Chapman who I invited to write for me – I invited two people to engage with me through writing, but he was the first one. It was so interesting the way he engaged with it, he came to the project a number of times for discussion and then he came when I wasn't there and documented wherever text existed within the work; on labels, on a poster that I had, everywhere, I even had this (PhD publication) presented. He documented with a camera all these bits of text and made an inventory of those texts and then transcribed those texts as a list from which to work to generate writing. And so we are still working on that together. Then there's another woman,

Katerina Riva, who also took up the possibility of writing from the work, having a proliferating relationship to the work and we are still currently working on that. So, in a way, I was lucky where I landed in London and who took up the engagement with my work. It was better than I could have imagined.

Are there any other places where you have met people that you have a similar understanding with that you would see as active peers?

No, I would observe. I am observing in New York, 16 Beaver Street, so I am hoping to make a connection with them through Lucas, Keg and Lucas went there. Also, there is an interesting space in Holland called Back and they run a very discursive program and I also observed that, so there are potential landing sites for future engagements.

What does art allow you to do?

That's too big a question in five minutes!

We have answered; What is the role of writing in your practice and what writing/publication projects have you engaged in?

Yes, I think so, but to supplement that, I would like writing to have a bigger part in my practice but it is like anything, you have to focus on it and engage it physically and it is something that I can easily shelve and then coming back to it is quite difficult. I think I am speaking post writing such a monumental work as the PhD. This script, the kind of writing around it is that much bigger, so I have been traumatised by the effort that took. So, in a way, there has been a lull point with it, so I am looking forward to getting back into that in a much more substantial way, but also maybe developing more writing not so much factually but fictively in relationship to what I do, or it's coming in also in terms of generating scores. I did this in Adelaide, where I generated a score for five people to engage the work in a kind of spirit of Fluxus in a two-hour performance. So I am hoping to integrate writing more into the project rather than outside of the project, which, I guess, returns to the way I was using writing years ago in terms of the title card becoming part of the work.

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What does art allow you to do?

That's a big question. Maybe I should answer that by giving a brief description of what I wrote in the essay 'Enabling Restraints' in the publication *Bureau* by the Margaret Lawrence

Gallery. Because that was the last question that we left off on (in the last interview) that remained very present in my mind and it informed the essay that I wrote and is mentioned in part one of the interview, so seeing as that is written that question, for me, sparked a whole series of related questions or thoughts about what I took for granted in what art allowed me to do. What I took for granted was that I was thinking that art allows you to do something more radical or more experimental than other activities and then I started to critique that idea and I realised it was an idea that I had inherited from avant-gardist thinking.

It's quite a romantic idea.

It's very romantic, but at the same time I am still convinced that art allows me to do something differently or it allows me to open up some kind of space for living / practicing, that produces other kinds of possibilities for being with people in terms of work, living, socialising, that goes beyond models of exchange and consumption. Having said that, the essay was grappling with – basically the position I have taken for the last decade of having an experimental practice – thinking that that practice puts me outside of models of art in relationship to consumerism or consumption or commercialisation. Then I read this amazing article, it's called 'The Critique of Relational Aesthetics', by Stuart Martin – it's worth pursuing – who critiques Relational Aesthetics because it posits the social as the realm that resists commercialisation and he uses Adorno's argument that art is intimately bound up with commercialisation, it is like a diagram of surplus value at its most extreme, the art object. Are you familiar with that?

And it's the first thing to go in a financial crisis such as we are experiencing now, it's like Merino clothing.

Yeah. So, that's very long winded, but I was really trying to think through that relationship of thinking of my practice as experimental and positioning myself in that way has assumptions that allows me to do something differently. So I was critiquing that, but I was writing in the essay that I am still convinced that art opens up the possibilities of something, so I guess that's my answer to the question. And then I came across a quote by Rancière that art isn't a different form of labour from other forms of labour, but that it reconfigures the landscape of what is 'doable, seeable, thinkable and sayable'. And I think that, at the moment, sits very nicely, for me, as a kind of a thought about what art activity is in relationship to other activity.

That normalises it, rather than creates an exotic 'other' for the artist, which is something that many artists choose, to see themselves as a marginal figure at the forefront of creative endeavour, but this, in fact brings them back into roles of labour and culture as labour, as well.

Yes, and in that idea he says that it redistributes the landscape of what we do, and that's implying that – it's not 'other' but it's thinking of the limit of activity and creatively reworking it, so that we might critically reflect upon what it is that we do, which I think is revolutionary thinking.

I think it is useful the idea of experimentation, rather than ideas of radicality and originality, I think experimentation means you don't settle with what you do, your practice is not about repetition, for some people it is, but for you it seems that you are always re-jigging what you do, not settling down with it, you are constantly questioning what you are doing and that's what keeps it active and moving. So, 'experimentation' is not loaded or romantic a notion, it is one mode of practice that you might choose to work in.

That's a really good point, my supervisor Suzie Attiwill and I used to talk about this before when I was studying, rather than take it for granted that what one does is make art, you are an artist that makes art, and that brings a whole carriage of assumptions about how it is exhibited and documented and discussed, that if you take the attitude of experimentation to production then the question of art is kind of irrelevant – or being an artist is irrelevant – it is a particular mode that amplifies risk in process and then what surfaces from that adventure is you form an opinion or you form an identification for that *after* the effect, rather than prior to doing it. So, in a way, it's a double barrelled approach to the question because if you are taking the experimental approach, you are undermining the category 'art' and then it comes out at the end in relationship to your reflection back on what it is that you have done. So art allows you to experiment with the frameworks or limits upon the thing that you are doing; upon art and life, because you are folding that into art. Just as a tangent, the article that I mentioned before, he was talking about how the avant-garde desire to blend art into life or life into art, its logical fruition or its logical outcome is in Relational Aesthetics, because it is the absolute folding in of life into art, but the problematic assumption is that art is beyond the realm of consumerism, whereas he is arguing that art is embedded in consumerist-capitalist exchange value.

I was thinking that the last workshop that you did with CLUBSproject was investigating that question, 'how can art be sustainable?', how can you integrate a way of making a living, probably not creating a surplus of income for yourself, but a way of existing or subsisting in the world with art, so it sounds as if you are invested at present with that question of marrying the two, bringing them together in a practical economic way.

And also in an emotional way, you know, Lisa Kelly is trying to address this really specifically at the moment in her practice and she has just written a really wonderful article on Mikala Dwyer. Its title is something like, 'Mikala is tired' and it talks about Mikala being exhausted and what she has done with that in terms of what she is making at the moment. Lisa is very much trying to find a way to make work that integrates concerns that are central to her living into her practice, you know, simple things like gardening is one of them. So it is about sustaining it, not just in terms of materially, but an emotional space, I guess. So this question is of a concern of a group of people at the moment, I think.

And that's where the idea of 'composite' comes into it as well, so you are not splitting yourself between not being an artist and being an artist in the roles that you take on that have a relationship to your art practice – being a teacher is interrelated to being an artist, rather than being splitting yourself off into fragments.

Maybe this comes back to the question, it's about trying to live and work congruently, where you are addressing a multiplicity of areas in your life and weaving them together with a particular ethos, and they are informing each other and feeding each other and supporting each other. It's really hard to have that balance, I think, and it is really easy to get off that track.

It is a way of de-categorising your thinking, which might sound easy, but in fact for it to work takes quite a bit more time and conscious effort, to see yourself as jumping across stones, that it is a path rather than a broken or segmented way.

So that answers that in a very round about way, but I think it's a really important question. I am just wondering if there was any other element to address with that question. There is, and it's more practical, it's like if I think back through the examples of what art has allowed me to do in my life, it has allowed me to connect to a whole network of people that's intergenerational. If I reflect upon that in relationship to how my younger brother might live and work, which is much more stratified in terms of his friendship group who are all his age

and then when he hangs out with people who are older it is always within a family context. I often feel really grateful for the generational spread of friends that I have, from very early twenties up to seventies that is based in peer dialogue or peer relationship. I feel like there's a real sense of equanimity with people that I probably wouldn't get in other fields, I am not sure, maybe you would, but it seems very specific to art practice and art communities and maybe more in a kind of liberated way in that sense, in terms of the generational sense.

You are saying here, that your brother might be limited in the age spread of his peer group, but in my case there are other limits that are evident in my own circle, for example a friend of my daughter was asking her, "Who of your mother's friends are not artists?" and I found it difficult to mention someone who wasn't, so that's the little ghetto that I/we are inhabiting.

That is very true, actually, and that is really problematic. One of my friends, his position is "I don't date artists."

Is he an artist?

Yeah. He finds it claustrophobic and often partners of artists who aren't artists, I know a few of them, they complain about how absolutely snubbed they are when people find out that they are not artists, they don't pursue questions and so it can be a very insular world, but that is also personality types within the world.

So you have the outsider marginalising the 'other'. I am also thinking that you have just been to New York to do this dancing workshop, was the premise for you going to investigate a new area of art practice outside of what you know? When I answered this question, What does art allow me to do? – I said that it allows me to ask 'what do I want to do?' and not as an artist necessarily. It might be to have a holiday, so then I will create an artwork that allows me to have a holiday, or if I want to travel, so then I configure a project that allows that to happen, that I might not allow myself to do otherwise, because for me to just be a tourist, I couldn't see the point of that, I would be functionless, with art I have that function in a foreign place to take me outside of the role of tourist.

Yeah, I agree to some extent. The trip to New York was not so full of intent in that sense.

Lizzy asked me if I wanted to join her and I was, like, yeah what the hell, I want to go to New York, so then it evolved from there. It was the reason for going to New York, but of course in the planning there were so many other reasons to go to New York that convinced me to go.

But the point that you bring up is a good one, that because of international residencies, for example, and international projects, art allows you to explore a very large proportion of the world, if you choose that path, in a way that other people cannot afford or have no purpose for. So, it really produces projects that you can involve yourself in.

And you can meet up with artistic contacts as well, so you don't have to deal with being the vagrant tourist.

I think I did answer this in a few other questions when I am talking about London, contacts that take you deep into a grouping of people, rather than remaining a consumer within a culture – of course you are consuming culture, that's inevitable, but it's about going into established networks and ideas and lifestyles and practices and things. So yeah, it is very privileged, I think, it's easy to forget that.

If you think about it creatively, it can be your passport in a way.

Art gives you a cultural passport!

And friends everywhere!

Now the next question, I think you have answered, but there may be residues from it still to explore, what is the role of collaboration in your practice? It sounds central to your practice.

It has been discussed at length, but just to reiterate, it is all-pervasive, or ninety percent pervasive and if I am not collaborating, there is always a group that I am working with. If I am not collaborating on something specific there is always some sort of collaborative grouping happening at any given point of time because of the nature of working across multiple projects and it can take the form of a very identifiable collaboration or an ongoing one that is playing with a group of musicians on an ongoing basis, or meeting to talk to another artist about future projects in formation, so it is very present and it is within my consciousness at all times. I would say that it defines a great part of my practice.

How would you be if you worked solo?

I do work solo, but it has never been just that and in one of the last questions we did talk about swinging between the two extremes and there are times when I really want to work independently, and I do, and there are other times that the work needs an extended dialogue. I would never give up individual practice, that's also really important. A lot of the sculptural work that I do is identified as individual work anyway.

It sounds like you investigate most forms of collaboration, such as the collective entity out of a group like the Open Spatial Workshop and your music projects and then other roles in your collaborations sound more administrative such as coordinating Mma and the Triennale. I suspect by now you have pretty much explored the gamut, all shade of collaboration.

In the last year there has been a shift and that shift, for me, is towards slowing it down a little bit, slowing down the multiplicity and being much more decisive about who I choose to work with or where I choose to put my energy.

That sounds good and healthy to me because it seemed like you were in a mode of overproduction, in a way, to a great end mind you! But how long can you sustain that and enjoy yourself as well?

Yeah, and I am getting more interested in – maybe it's because of the reading I've been doing in the last year – but doing things that have no outcome, no product and that you don't capitalise upon in terms of your practice. In a way, not wanting to fold everything into your practice.

Yes, I remember I had a similar conversation with Lucas, because Lucas is a bit of an overproducer too.

You reckon!?

One of his lecturers asked him, do you ever just go to the beach? Do you ever take time out from being an artist? This was at a time when Lucas was video recording everything, strapping a video camera to his chest.

Jesus Christ! Do you know that, for me, in the kind of work that I have done that my internal critique of it, and of my peers, I guess who are doing it is, just let that not become part of your practice, why does it all have to be folded in?

All subsumed into practice?

Yeah, that's a megalomaniacal relationship to living.

It's always living within the frame too. What art allows you to do is to place yourself outside something and look at it critically but you are always doubling yourself if everything becomes art.

Yeah, I guess the temptation with that is that if you take the position of what art allows you to do is to reconfigure or redistribute those practices or those activities, then it is appealing to fold them in to then creatively explore their potential, but at the same time –

– it's making a product of everything that you do.

Yeah it is, and that's very Protestant in its orientation, it's very product oriented and it's very egocentric because at the end of the day it's pinning itself to your identity and subjectivity.

And how interesting is it all anyway, these never ending bi-products?

And also there are people who do this stuff everyday and they don't connect it to their egos, it's not about their identification as an artist or a producer, it's daily practice, it's the practice of everyday life! I don't know where that fits in.

I think it is an interesting discussion, the exoticising by the artist of 'the everyday'. The 'everyday' becomes this rarefied mode of being for the artist who often has a difficulty in spending their time doing something without it being a product of their practice, without sectioning something off to look at it, not being able to 'be' in the place and allow it to enter their experience without it coming out again as something, a photo that might be used as source material for an art work, for instance.

While you are talking, I am thinking about how the two questions relating to the avant-garde and to Relational Aesthetics. I don't know if we should go into that now, or wait. Maybe the avant-garde, when I first read these questions I thought, I don't know what my relationship to the frigging avant-garde is! It is something that I have always avoided actually thinking about, but in writing the essay I had to confront it and it was fascinating because it made me realise the kind of obsession with the Everyday comes from a movement within the avant-garde to blur art and life. That was one of the main processes within the avant-garde movement; art and the Everyday, bringing art into the Everyday, folding the Everyday into practice and radicalising the Everyday or radicalising practice through the Everyday. Then in reading this article, the critique of that by Stuart Martin, was that the Everyday isn't outside the scope of exchange and consumerism, it's absolutely rooted within consumptive culture, so to move into the Everyday is not to find a radical place for art, which is the problem of Relational Aesthetics, he writes, it is to go right inside the belly of the beast.

Do you think Relational Aesthetics thought it had an argument with the avant-garde?

I think it's a descendant of the avant-garde in that it's about the realm of the social as being –
This new radical practice.

Yeah, Martin critiques Bourriaud as saying it's not radical, it uses a Marxist idea of the subject becoming the object and the object becoming the subject. You use the realm of the social and what you are doing is turning the social into the object. He is really cynical about it and he says that it is the most disgusting form of consumption there can be and then at the same time these artists gain this kind of status that any artist would that is working within the dominant realms of production; superstar status. So nothing has been reworked, Rancière says that nothing has been redistributed in terms of subjectivity, in terms of core values, God I sound like a Labor politician, but you know, things that are underlying production.

Well the fact that in his book, Bourriaud is generally citing artists who have gained another kind of epic status he is creating that status by lauding them in his book, but they are also working in these cultural enclaves such as the public gallery or museum that are very, very specific. So in a way he is holding to the idea of the avant-garde whilst questioning it, this new relational work is setting a new precedent as so holding on to this idea of original creativity at the forefront. It is supposed to be inclusive but I would say that once again it retains those qualities of reification and exclusivity to those who have the education or mix in the right circles to understand it.

Yeah, but having read through these things, the thing that it has brought me to is, I haven't formed my understanding very well yet, but there is something to be said for art that is doing something more simple, like the fact that art exists and its relationship to society in terms of the poetic, or the excessive, is kind of interesting and the fact that people do it is pretty interesting. It is pretty absurd and if people are doing it in interesting and experimental ways for the sake of doing it, it is like a line of pursuit of living and questioning and thinking.

Well you are producing something but it is not necessarily functional. If I was asked, what does art allow you to do? I would say it allows you to follow eccentric lines of thought outside of what is useful and what is functional and what is logical, to act like an eccentric person, if you look at a lot of activities that artists pursue in the name of art, they are mad! If the product were not called art then it would be called eccentric plain and simple. Art also allows you to engage in these activities that are worlds unto themselves, but how do you differentiate this from hobbies such as craft, I don't know how you differentiate the pursuit of

art from that, or indeed how relevant that is today. I don't know just how separate the category of art needs to be from the other things that people do where they are creating something out of nothing, such as 'time creatively spent' in a more general sense.

And you can do that across lots of spheres of your life and it is also about human potential, potential for consciousness. If you live a life where you have the opportunity to pursue your creative potential and the potential of your consciousness that is kind of lucky.

It is a luxury.

You can also choose it, it is a luxury but at the same time it is a choice.

It's a luxury but it is purgatory as well, being faced with the blank space, be it page, wall, room or expanse. I was listening to an interview with Tim Winton and he was saying, every day he has to pull a rabbit out of his arse, that that is the way he has chosen to live, but it is hard, especially as he is a provider for a family with small children. But that is the thing, the artists place themselves – this is very romantic – you could say they are placing themselves in the void, but you could also call it a white space and producing something from nothing, which, especially when it has to go out in front of the public, is quite a confronting experience.

That's another thing, it related to this thing of what art allows you to do, it gives you time over money. There are ways to make money if you can be smart, or if you are in the right time and place, but it is this thing that Terri talks about, you make the choice, you choose to be an artist and you choose to work a certain amount of days a week to just survive to pay rent and studio, but you are time rich. So, rather than giving all your creative time to a job that would be nine to five –

You are poor but happy rather than rich and miserable.

Yeah, but we all know that working nine to five absolutely exhausts you and by the time you get home there is no energy for anything but cooking and whatever, so you are buying time to actually do something that is opening up potential. It's an exchange or it's a bargain, you lose security –

Well artists live like students, in the main, for most of their lives.

But at the same time they can also travel more than other people because of what we were talking about before. So I think you need a will of iron, you have to be very open to not

having security and just roll with that and not buy into the pressure of what one needs to have to have a happy life. It is insecure but life is insecure in its reality anyway, so maybe you are connecting more closely to that reality by having less money, no house – I am kind of going off the track.

I think you are saying that you were previously disdainful about this idea of the avant-garde; of being at the forefront with the privileging of newness accompanied by the heroic mythologising of the artist, but it sounds like you have become a bit more interested in certain ideals of the avant-garde.

There is a strain of the romantic in me; I can't deny that, as I think there is in most artists.

Oh, for sure. You are conscious of pushing your practice to the very edge, I think.

This is really corny, and I might want to edit this out, but I want to be an artist the way I have a yoga practice, some sort of esoteric practice. You submit to the practice and you try to do it without ego. That's impossible, that it's about the practice and you can't deny all the other stuff, the administration, the system that's churning that you are involved in, the politics, the hierarchy, that's all part of it, but maybe if your intention is to do it for the practice...

Like an Agnes Martin kind of approach, she integrated her art into a kind of meditative practice, in the way you were just talking about yoga.

But yoga is strenuous, it makes you sweat and stink and it make you angry.

But for Agnes there were given forms or conventions within which she worked, geometric forms in 2D. Your practice sounds a little bit more crazy and frenetic. The image of proliferation is not restful, none of the way that you talk about your practice is restful or placed or contained. It doesn't hold its space.

No it doesn't.

It takes up more and more space.

Yep. I mean, I am as confused as anyone.

Bit it does sound like you a beginning to want to contain it in some way. The idea of proliferation maybe had a twenties energy about it and in your thirties you want to hold it, the art/life balance.

Yeah, yeah, at the time of this I am going through a major shift on lots of fronts so naturally my relationship to my practice is shifting as well.

But all three of you are talking about this, even Lucas is wanting to do that. Whether it is possible for him to or not, I think there comes a time where you want to 'be' as well as 'make'.

And when you are younger you think the most important thing is the work and one of my students, I remember she said, "I don't need to do this, that and that, because all that is important is work", and I said, "No X, life is more important, you should know how to cook and look after yourself". Because she was saying that she couldn't cook and that she was still living at home. And I was saying, "These things are important, they are more fulfilling than art, you know?" I was thinking about her last night in relationship to this question and keeping that outside in its own space, I want more of that.

Yeah, comes a time... So do you want to talk about Relational Aesthetics further, or do you think we've answered that?

I did talk about that in the question of when I was living in Holland and things were happening there that I was influenced by but I didn't realise it was called Relational Aesthetics and it was being dubbed that while I was there and so I was lucky to have a first hand experience of these practices and they did shape my thinking. And then when I came home later I realised that that was something that was being identified. But already my practice had been radically informed by it.

And was there anything that you observed when you came back that people were doing? Sometimes it just means that your antenna is up for different kinds of activities.

It always has been and it still is a very multiple terrain in Melbourne and there is definitely, in the last few years, this question of Relational Aesthetics but I think the position that people have taken has been of very negative because of the kind of critique that has come out by people like Claire Bishop.

When I heard that term, Relational Aesthetics, I thought that's what being involved in an artists' space is, that activity becomes work of a particular kind.

Spiro's critique is, what artist's do is have, what you are saying, but it's 'relational practices'. We all have relational practices, the problem with Relational Aesthetics is that it makes an

object of that practice and that's precisely what the artists that he talks about have done. It's hard not to be cynical about that.

I was observing that this broader identification was coming about around the mid '90s with the set of ARIs around then. At this time you could say that one product of practice was the space and the activity, not aesthetics necessarily but the space existed as an entity. At that time there seemed to be a different kind of community engagement across artists' spaces, a non-competitive, social thing happening in which there were a number of parties-as-events and other kinds of collective projects or engagements between different groups were brought into what you would do in a space outside of just seeing an exhibition.

What is the role of locality in your practice?

I have been embedded in Melbourne for ten years so Melbourne is my locality, but that has been opening in the last few years because of connecting to people through CLUBSproject, it opens up to Sydney, Brisbane, and then beyond and that's because of working overseas in London. But wherever I go the local is important to me, we touched on that a little bit and it also relates to what Lucas was saying, it's about the local/global. It's about when you go somewhere, how do you sink into the place through the knowledges of the people that you meet.

And it's a particular kind of sector that you match up somehow, it's the sector that one kind of person is building in Melbourne that's the same kind of sector that you look to elsewhere.

Definitely. Because I am not interested in the globalised art scene, when I was in New York, you see that and it's kind of disgusting, the Chelsea strip.

It's bewildering.

It's like this isn't art, it's just crappy business and there's a hideous global art market on operation there, it makes me want to top myself, it's boring. Some artists operate within that realm but I think most people are working within local groupings that are sustaining them, they actually give a shit about what they do in a real sense, so everyone works within a locality in that sense. That's really a fundamental question to my practice, especially in terms of working with CLUBSproject and Open Spatial Workshop and in particular developing the West Brunswick Sculpture Triennial, because that's taking the local on very tongue in cheek but specifically and connecting with a group of people within that locality as well; Ocular Lab,

Tom Nicholson and Nikos. So yeah, it's a fundamental question of how you work with the local and how you produce the local through what you do. It will always be present I think wherever I am, I don't feel I have to stay here to have that.

But you need to have an understanding of how things function on a lived-in level.

Yeah, 'lived-in' is a good way to put it. How practices make a space and how that produces a sense of how a space is lived in.

What is your current relationship to the ARI or Artist-led Sector? I suppose this question came about through the VAR-I event or festival last year that made an object out of the sector via invitation from a bureaucratic body. This wasn't self-generated, it was at the behest of...

Yep and my interest is in self-determined practices with groups of people so I won't talk specifically about VAR-I, but I will talk about the ARI thing. Not being involved in CLUBSproject now, because CLUBSproject is no longer, I am more of a spectator to things and I am more mobile across spaces, but I am, at the moment, working with The Narrows quite closely, with Warren to develop a show and a publication. So that has connected me into an artist-led space, well its design-led space actually.

It's a practice-led space, I would call it.

And it's amazing because Warren is really hands-on in terms of talking with about ideas and he is very present in the space, very generous and it's a really fruitful working relationship. In a way it's the most proximate relationship I have had with a space ever because I have been working there over an extended period of time, I used The Narrows as a studio in January, he invited me in to work on-site.

That would have been a nice place to be.

It was, especially in the heat. So at the moment we have got this close working relationship between me and The Narrows, the show will happen in April, so that is at the moment my current relationship to that. And then working with Open Spatial Workshop is artist-led and the Triennial is artist led.

These are projects rather than spaces but anything is an initiative, I suppose.

Yeah, but I am not interested in the sector, I am interested in being mobile and that includes across museums, schools, institutions, I am not anti-institution. I will work in any space – even commercial space, so my interest is in being mobile and shifting positions and not limiting myself to my own ideas at the time that narrow me.

Yeah, I think the VAR-I thing created a fixed rhetoric, it was creating an imposition, actually, on something that had been quite open-ended. It created orthodoxies, which is what spaces are set up not to be involved in.

And that's because of the agenda of ones that are maybe more professionalised.

It was a contradictory impulse, actually, to create this unified voice out of initiatives that are set up to differentiate themselves.

And I remember one of our problems with it when it started was that we are already pouring energy into something and we want to, but this is requiring more and we don't have that energy. We want to preserve that for this activity that we love not for being 'good' artists.

The organisers also vetoed how you presented yourself in the publication that seemed really bizarre.

So I am a bit ambivalent towards that whole movement.

That institutionalisation of the ARI.

Absolutely.

Where do you see yourself within a lineage of a composite practice and do you see yourself as marking out new terrain and, if so, what terrain?

That's a hard question. The lineage? I have always been excited when I have read artist's writings or when you find out about artists other activities that inform their practices or that connect to their practice that has always excited me. I did mention these names in part one of the interview, people like Robert Smithson with his writing in particular, not just on his own work but writing on others and flying a plane and how that informed what he did and going on walks and filming. So I regard him as being one of the grandfathers of the composite practice.

So Smithson included all of those aspects as practice?

Well, within his published work, yep, the written documents with the photo narratives. And the Gordon Matta-Clark is actually a really important figure in terms of running that restaurant/café called 'Food' in New York and also writing, but particularly there is the food thing and then roasting a pig underneath one of the motorways, he did an event like this. So this food event really interests me. And then, people like Yvonne Rainer more recently, she is a filmmaker now, she was a dancer and also a prolific writer. I guess I am listing things here, maybe you want me to talk more philosophically about it.

I suppose I would like to know how useful that terms is and had you already conceptualised your practice as being 'composite' and, if so, does it allow you to think about practice differently? If this is the case, who might your colleagues be, whom might you identify as defining, or contributing to that lineage and does the definition of 'composite' alter the precepts of how you think about your practice?

The idea emerged through working at CLUBSproject because of the multiple activities that were taking place that I was involved in and then in tandem, writing a PhD, trying to make sense of those multiple activities with, in tandem talking to you about the term 'composite', so that's where the consciousness of 'composite' emerged. I write this in the PhD and in the essay that I will give you that if you take on all of these activities as part of the practice what that does is it allows you to work congruously across them, rather than say, well this is my official realm of production that is based on my ego or identity or individualised relationship to what I do and then this is all the other stuff that I help others with or administer. So if you bring all that in then you can work creatively on all of that and you take it seriously, potentially, and you can rework it in a creative way rather than seeing all this other stuff as what you do as a functionary or a bureaucrat, you actually take it on and work it to its limit to remake how it is that you do do these things. So that changes your relationship to the idea of your practice. I guess it's an ethos of self-determination and wanting to actually take that stuff on because you believe in self-determination. I feel embarrassed to say that work, it's so Marxist but the alternative is indifference and leaving that stuff up to –

Well that's where producing the text, writing yourself into the history rather than someone else interpreting I think is where the self- determination, you are articulating your role, rather than someone else designating your place and value.

And, do you know what? It's got to do with a scale of economy as well, it's like a small cottage industry attitude, if you are self-determining it is like, I can do this, this and this but I can only do so much and that keeps it at a particular scale. I think the other model is, the thing that you see in New York or huge cities when the artist is just producing there's a certain demand on what they are producing that will then scale that production up to the most absurd degree, factory based work. One of my friends worked in one of these situations and said it was unbelievable, people are working around the clock making work that will be shown in Barbara Gladstone gallery or Gogozi, and well, that's all fine and good and there's a place for it, but personally I like the dickier cottage industry scale of things. What kind of market is that work feeding? I find that really problematic politically and socially.

It's like franchising yourself.

Yeah, and is that art? Why do you have to be an artist anymore, aren't you a designer, aren't you a puppet master, aren't you different, aren't you a business?

It goes back to the model of the master and the apprentice. The master would draw up the cartoons for the frescoes and then there would be a whole team to make the work, there are all sorts of models that have always been in place, think of Andy Warhol and his factory.

This feeds free market capitalism, there's a difference in scale of economy and production.

So composite practice sounds like it feeds into these ideas of yours about locality, community, and integrating all these facets that you want to move between. You like writing, you like working with other people, you like setting up projects and you like working on your own, but does the idea of composite practice, then, you are talking about wanting to maybe create a bit of a space outside of practice, does the concept of all that you do towards art, teaching - all of those things, does that seem to leave less space by putting them all into this broader category - like a big jelly fish over it where you can see all the different bodily parts? Does that make it seem that the space for being outside of art seems very small?

Yeah, I think so. I think it's both a very useful position and it's also a bit suffocating, although I wouldn't abandon it, I think that's the way I want to work, but perhaps its about minimising the bits that you set together into the gel.

Or else being reflective about how much you take on and more selective or discriminating about what you take on. I guess the thing about proliferation is that you always proliferate

out and if you have reached a critical mass of your own production then you need to start reining it in.

Yeah, and it's good to ask yourself on a regular basis, what do I really want to be doing? I have been reading Chris Krauss over the summer and she often mentions in her book, whatever it is, the thing that you should do is the thing that makes you feel most alive. I think that is a really good point. So, what is it within this composite that makes me feel most alive? And maybe that connects again to, what does art allow me to do? It doesn't matter what it is that you are doing, it is what amplifies living?

And sometimes it's more of this or less of this.

(Bianca and Sandra discuss here that the question on individual practice has been well answered earlier in the interview.)

Yeah.

What interests outside of the visual arts inform your practice broadly?

This is going to be a list: cooking – absolutely, in terms of it being a practice where knowledge is passed down through recipes and also exchange of knowledge through people and the idea that the thing that you cook embodying that in its singularity but that it produces a difference. I find that really beautiful.

So you cook to recipes?

No, I create my own recipes and I note the recipes down but they are mostly appropriations from things friends have cooked or things that I remember. My grandmother was this incredible cook, I have such nostalgia for her –

Where was your grandmother from?

Hungary. She cooked in Florentino's when she emigrated and there are stories of how she cooked a huge cauldron of goulash at my mum and dad's engagement and things like that. Her passion for cooking has always sat with me in relationship to my practice and sometimes I bring food in, but I would like to re-enact the cooking of the goulash in a pot like that. So cooking as a practice because of its presence and the attentiveness that it needs and its relationship to the social, to technology and to object as well, it's really influential. Music is a really important practice that weaves into my own work and that also informs my work in

more of an open sense in terms of a notion of rhythm and refrain and parts becoming whole that has really informed the way that I work visually. Also, the history of music or the way that people practice music in terms of experimental music and have multiple practices across arts and music. Is reading one of them?

Yes, of course, reading generally, that you can immerse yourself in, so that informs you at a parallel.

Well, in the past it has been reading lots of philosophical texts that then inform the way you work that shift your relationship to how you live and work. But more so I am getting into fiction, because I guess the PhD is the end of that intense phase of reading and now I am into fiction. I was reading, in particular, Chris Krauss when I was in New York, *Torpor* and *I Love Dick*, and, in relation to that, Anna Sanderson who is a young New Zealand writer who was influenced by her. I am really interested in this female post-feminist writing that blends art review with personalised text. Chris Krauss, have you read her? – she is critiquing the patriarchy of literature by demanding that we write from a personal position and claim that space. Anyway, having read these two women I have become more, like, maybe I'd like to start writing in a way that blends composite interests from philosophical or theoretically based things to narrative and actually I am interested in bringing in the personal a lot more, I've never done that so writing seems to be a platform for opening that up. Text has always been an important influence in terms of what I do. And then, bodily practices like yoga and dance have always been important but are becoming much more important. It's always been an interest in my life but now it's becoming more present within how I am going to work I think, so issues of embodiment that connect to dance and to bodily practices like yoga, they have always been there but are coming more to the forefront. I don't know how I am going to work that in but I know that I will.

Yeah, that's my feeling, as we said last time we met, the PhD was very much about materials and it sounds as if you might be moving into the immaterial or rather using the body as the material, so potentially you are moving through space rather than being held by space and filling up space.

And I wonder how you can do that though where you are still offering something to an audience where it is not just lodged within your own process and your own movement. That connects me, and this is very vague, but I am interested in ritual practices and I would like to

research that more, particularly something Terri Bird told me about the Papua Nui Guinean Sing Sings. I have got this dream that is surfacing, because I studied percussion and I play that in a band, I came back from New York thinking, OK dance and music is where I want to go, I don't know in what capacity yet but it is really what interests me at the moment and I would like to go and study it elsewhere and into cultures where it is more part of the vernacular rather than something that is curated off and performed. That connects to my interest in ritual where it is a communally based thing that involves costume and all week events. The thing that interests me that I was talking to Terri about, is that you can't really be a spectator at a Sing Sing, it's all pervasive and I find that fascinating and my interest in the carnivalesque and in celebration connects to that. It is just an interest that I haven't pursued that I would like to. That also connects to Michael Taussig's writing on the ficto-critical – he lived in Bolivia or Columbia for a time with groups of people studying ritual. So these are kind of nascent and I guess it comes out of festive, relational stuff that has been present, but I would like to take it further.