

at Ishak and Tom Nicholson, *Proposition for a banner march and a black cube hot-air balloon*, 2003–14. Installation view, Shepparton Art Museum, 2012. Photograph Amina Barolli

Proposition for a Banner March

Nicholas Croggon

PROPOSITION FOR A BANNER MARCH and a black cube hot-air balloon, 2003–14, is a collaborative work by Raafat Ishak and Tom Nicholson centred on the public event summarised in its title. Key to the work is its propositional nature – while the artists have presented the work a number of times since 2003, the actual march remains unrealised.

In its most substantial presentation to date, Ishak and Nicholson displayed a number of elements evocative of the idea: a series of 100 black-and-white images collected and shared by the artists over the years, a line of text translating the premise into the various languages spoken in Shepparton, and a banner and video of the previous march and a large black box. Perhaps most significantly, the exhibition also announced a time and date for the event: 7.18 Sunday 9 March 2014.

Proposition's pairing of Nicholson and Ishak seems unlikely – while Ishak is best known for his paintings, Nicholson investigates and presents knots of history, place and culture. *Proposition* manifests these differences: Ishak draws on his interest in the black cube as a point of iconoclasm, referencing Kazimir Malevich and the Kaaba; Nicholson deploys the banner march as a form of iconophilia, the power of an image to draw people together. *Proposition* allows Nicholson's and Ishak's ideas to pirouette conceptually with each other, complementing and unravelling their various formal and political meanings, and hold these meanings in a dynamic tension. It does so by suspending the work under the banner of the proposition – the constant delay of finality allowing the artists to set up a machine for generating formal and political meanings, thus also making visible the nature of collaboration

Proposition for a Banner March and a Black Cube Hot-air Balloon, Shepparton Art Museum, 12 July – 9 September 2012.



Ken and Julia Yonetani, *What the birds knew*, 2012. Uranium glass beads, aluminium wire, UV lights. Courtesy the artists, Artreel Gallery, Sydney, and GV Art, London. Photograph Zan Wimberley

What the Birds Knew: Ken and Julia Yonetani

Sunil Badami

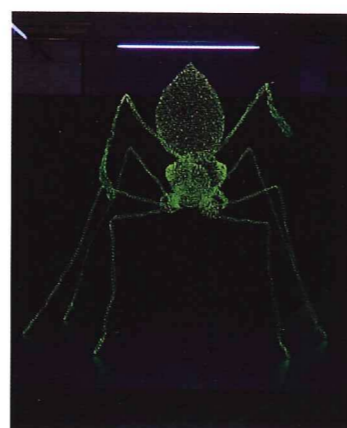
HAVING WORKED IN SALT AND SUGAR, the acclaimed Yonetanis employed radioactive glass made from depleted uranium, once widely used in Victorian glassware and infamously by American forces on civilians in the Iraq War, not only to respond to the recent Fukushima reactor disaster but also to invoke environmental anxieties.

The exhibition's name refers to the alternative title for Akira Kurosawa's *I Live in Fear* (1955), in which the protagonist, terrified of nuclear attack, declares that if the birds knew the destruction that was coming they would flee. It also echoes the tragic story of Hiroshima schoolgirl Sadako Sasaki and the 1000 origami cranes she tried folding before succumbing to radiation sickness.

Crystal Palace: The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nuclear Nations (USA), 2012, glimmered ominously in the blacked-out foyer, symbolising decadence and evoking London's then-wondrous palace built for the 1851 Great Exhibition, later destroyed by fire. Upstairs, an enormous atomised ant glowered: a confronting mutation inspired by the Kunwinjku green-ant sacred site, located only metres from the Nabarlek uranium mine in Arnhem Land. Despite the community's warnings that if the ants' nest were disturbed disaster would follow, the mine went ahead, its ore sent to Japan, among other countries.

Given how resonant the allusions, the 'Electric Dreams' (2012) series opposite the ant and comprising the words 'radioactive', 'electric dreams' and 'meltdown' struck the only unsubtle note of this otherwise deeply thought-provoking and affecting show, in which the juxtaposition of the technological and the primordial, the industrial and the mythological, beauty and horror, was at once a reminder of memory's fleeting half-life and a portentous augury of forgetting's consequences.

What the Birds Knew: Ken and Julia Yonetani, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney, 3 August – 3 November 2012.



Michelle Ussher, *Geryo*. Glazed porcelain, epoxy felt and steel. Commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre. Courtesy KALIMANRAWLINS, Melbourne

There's a Hole in the Sky

Danielle Robson

HOW DO YOU TRANSFORM ANXIETY INTO ART? This is the question behind both Tom Polo's flourishing artistic practice and his recent curatorial venture 'There's a Hole in the Sky'. A heady exhibition of nine international and Australian artists, including Ivan Argote, Aleks Danko, Urs Fischer, Naomi Oliver, Campbell Patterson, Stuart Ringholt, Giselle Stanborough, Lara Thoms and Michelle Ussher, it grappled with notions of anxiety in space – public, private and psychological.

Curatorially united as 'portraiture', the works swayed between seriousness and humour: alternatively bleak, provocative and absurdly funny. British artist Patterson positions the viewer as unwitting voyeur, filming himself becoming the 'meat' in a fold-up bed 'sandwich' or ferociously pumping soap into an ice-cream tub. Conversely, enfant terrible Argote, shown here French kissing a metal pole on a Paris metro or capturing the reactions of passers-by to whom he has yelled 'I love you!', mines the public domain for insights into the human psyche.

A number of works were commissioned, including an arresting installation of hampers entitled *Commerce*, 2012, by Sydney-based Lara Thoms, where the artist stockpiled wares from local retailers in a valiant effort to provide short-term support to businesses based in the suburb with the second highest rate of bankruptcy in Australia: Campbelltown. Arranged in mock-graveyard style, the hampers had a sobering effect.

When an artist performs the role of the curator, interesting synergies emerge. Polo assembled multiple works by each artist, significantly enhancing their presentation. Exhibiting the likes of Fischer and Danko alongside lesser-known artists suggested an assured focus on concept, not reputation.

There's a Hole in the Sky, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney, 18 August – 7 October 2012.



Performprint performance, Joel Gailer, 2012. Photograph courtesy Fremantle Arts Centre

Performprint

Gemma Weston

JOEL GAILER CLAMBERED atop a stack of replica brillo boxes, with a megaphone pressed to his ink-stained face, shouting 'Nothing here is original. Everything is a copy.' Behind him, Michael Meneghetti stood at an etching press, churning out grubby monoprints bearing the phrase 'the male ego'. The pair were building to the close of the 'Performprint' performance, a ten-hour epic in which signifiers of masculinity and print processes meshed in absurdist theatre.

A feverish pitch was reached in the final hours as two duelling bands provided an aggressive soundtrack for the arrival of a troupe of leather-clad 'bike enthusiasts', who contributed a petroleum drum roll to the pair's climactic statement. As the sun set and engines roared in unison Meneghetti heated a copper matrix – the words 'Hot Process' making clever reference to Gailer's winning entry in a previous FAC Print Award – and briefly held it to his collaborator's exposed thigh. This moment was strangely anticlimactic, although as the artists retired behind a makeshift screen to deliver closing remarks in silhouette, Gailer's shadow displayed authentic distress.

'Performprint' was evidence of a thorough understanding of the central role that 'reproduction' has historically played in shaping social understanding. Each of the performance day's activities was a knowingly re-enacted moment from a complex history of masculine representation. Matthew Barney, Richard Prince, Nam June Paik and Andy Warhol appeared, among others, in referential effigy. Gailer and Meneghetti's shambolic, enigmatic work describes a troubling, messy and yet vital relationship between visceral embodiment, the generation loss of transmitted history or discourse and the production-line of stereotype, exposing a difficult reality and its implications for bodies and boundaries: nothing is original, everything is a copy.

Performprint, Fremantle Arts Centre, 22 September 2012.

