

six nine

69 street
smith

Art news and images from 69 Smith Street, an artist-run initiative

Issue 20, October 2007



Darryl Anderson, *Cupboard*

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A Word from Merle

Congratulations to Irene Amorosi and James Bryans; they were selected for the Moving Image and in a few months' time you will see their work on the trains.

Two new sculptures will soon appear in the sculpture garden – there is room for a couple more, lets hear from you, send an e-mail, photo description, etc.

Julian's quirky sense of humor has been at work have you noticed his floodlight and "Contact" ?

Gabrielle Bates our Asia correspondent and Ulrika Holmlund our Europe correspondent have been working very hard and achieving great results. Their reports make interesting reading.

Keep a watch for some fun days for members and friends the end of year dinner and early '08 a pin hole camera day. Details to come.

2008 will be a celebratory year for us as we will have survived 10 years!! Just think of the number of artists that have passed through our door. Where are they now? What are they doing?

How do you think we should celebrate this milestone? 10 fantastic years of fun, friendship, artistic achievement, hard work and comitment. Please let's hear from you, our members.

I am really looking forward to our end-of-year members show *The Drought Has Broken?*

It's always fun to see how the theme is interpreted.

Send your applications in ASAP please, Denise is waiting to receive them.

During the Melbourne Fringe Festival our fabulous exhibition coordinator, Denise De Keyzer, is having a show please come and give her your support.

Well done to all the committee, helpers and all devoting some of their time to 69. It's a fantastic space and a great environment. Philip, the newsletter is 'looking good'.

The AGM is comming up soon. Notification will be sent shortly – looking forward to seeing you there.

—Merle Parker

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to *six 9ine's* October edition! We have lots of art reviews, interviews, news and info from all over the globe for your reading pleasure.

Ulrika is now back from Finland, and we have some great articles from her on the Venice Biennale, Digital Art Weeks and the art scene in Fiskars, Finland. Gabrielle has another fantastic article for us from Malaysia,

and Marianne has written a great background piece on artist books. Our page 3 is now entirely dedicated to members' news. If you are a 69 Smith Street member and have something to announce, please get in touch and we will do our best to include a plug.

Happy reading!

—Philip Ingman



Oscar Muñoz, Venice Biennale

The Drought Has Broken?

Don't forget, 69 Smith Street Gallery is having a group exhibition at the end of the year. The theme of the show is: 'The Drought Has Broken?' – it's the end of the year and summer has finally arrived.

The air is filled with the sights, smells and sounds of celebration in preparation for the seasons festivities and for many the holidays to come. The sweet smell of summer erupts from the cold wet winter of hibernation and along with it comes change. It may be a change of heart, the capturing of someones heart, the first glass of vino in months or maybe its environmental. You decide if and how 'The Drought has Broken?'

The show will run from 5–23

December 2007 using the entire gallery space. The participation fee is \$40, and works are to be a maximum size of 1x1x1 m.

We encourage sculpture submissions for either the outdoor sculpture garden or inside the exhibition rooms. We also encourage video and projection installation submissions and provide the equipment free of charge.

For more details either contact me, the exhibition coordinator, on 03 8300 0984 or at info@69smithstreet.com.au or go to our website and download an application form.

—Denise De Keyzer

Members' News

Congratulations to Fidelis Easawi-Boyer, who was a finalist in this year's Corangamarah Art Prize. It is a benevolent exhibition with all proceeds going to the Corangamarah Aged Care Facility.

The \$5,000 acquisitive prize is awarded for a contemporary work of art which has been inspired by a happening or experience from the year preceding the exhibition (a conceit). Fidelis' painting, *My Beautiful Mind*, represents three very important events – getting married, having a baby and

defeating a 17-year battle with bipolar.

Helen Clancy was astounded to win an award at the Chapel on Station Exhibition, with the theme 'Daring Dancing Deity'. She submitted a sculpture (hand-built, glazed ceramic), named *Call Thy True Love to the Dance* from a poem by W H Auden. Helen was informed it was very rare for a sculpture to win against all those paintings. The prize was \$1000, plus a week's free exhibition space. Not to be sneezed at! She is still reeling.

Upcoming Non-69 Exhibitions

Jillian Gregurke

Helpmann Academy Mentorship Exhibition, *Momentum*, to be held in the Adelaide Festival Centre ArtSpace. Opening: 7 November 6 pm to 8 pm. Exhibition period: 7 to 18 November. To be opened by Christopher Menz, director of the Art Gallery of South Australia. Curated by Heather Young.

Westopia: Art Made in the West, Western Region Artist Network (WRAN). To be held in conjunction with the Big West Festival at The Incinerator Arts Complex, 180 Holmes Road, Moonee Ponds, Victoria. Weekdays 9 am to 5 pm and weekends 11 am to 4 pm. Exhibition period: 19 November to 9 December.

Email gregurke@bigpond.net.au, or check www.withallmyart.com.au

Marianne Little

Wilson Prom is an exhibition of works depicting the landscape of Wilsons Promontory after the 2005 bush fire. The fire left the land bare with black verticals defining the lay of the land. Apart from the damage, the visual aspect was fascinating. So started a series of works in hand made paper, manipulated and rolled to convey the ideas of fire, burnt out trees and a denuded land.

The Gallery at Werribee South, 680 Diggers Road, Werribee South. Melway 199.E10 Exhibition: 6–28 October, open weekends 12–6 pm.

Opening: 7 October at 3 pm
Enquiries: Marianne Little 9885 2479; Gallery 9742 1878

Boundless Books: Sinclair Gallery is hosting and exhibition of Artist and Sculptural Books as part of the Textile Fibre Forum being held at Geelong Grammar School, Corio. Approximately 40 bookbinders and book artists are presenting over 80 books that will

challenge your ideas of the book. You will also be able to view the textile and art work undertaken during the week of the Forum downstairs in the same room. If you are interested in textiles and artist books, this is a fabulous opportunity to see a vast amount of work in one go.

Sinclair Gallery, Geelong Grammar School, Corio. Open to the public Saturday 9:30–12:30. For more information, contact Marianne Little 9885 2479

Ulrika Holmlund

Entangled Bodies consists of two video installations: *Wrapped* and *I Spy...*, produced by Ulrika Holmlund while in Fiskars, Finland, for an artist residency. The installations feature trapped bodies in a private and contained environment, frustrations and anxiousness is wrapped up in the installations with reflections of isolation and alienation.

Basement ARI, Antskogintie 36a 2, Fiskars, Finland. Opening: 24 September 6–8 pm 24–26 September, 3–7 pm
For more information please visit: www.ulrikaholmlund.com



Ulrika Holmlund, *Entangled Bodies*

Interview: Darryl Anderson

Darryl's *X-hibition* was shown at 69 Smith St Gallery 3–21 October 2007.

Which photographers' work do you admire?

Helmut Newton, Spencer Tunic, and Peter Gorman are some.

What part does the location of the shoot play in your work?

The background is important to me, as it can set the emotional character of an image just as well as the model can. It has a character of its own. I tend not to use a studio, as to me it's a false set up, and lacks the rawness and reality I'm looking for. I like to find a background which can either add a layer of contrast to a shot, or expand on an idea somehow. For example, sites of urban decay and abandoned buildings can speak of loss and rebirth, and the continual cycle which we are all caught up in. Other locations may be chosen for their linear perspective and repetition, which again in my mind ties in with the cycle of life.

Why use the nude in the work?

I place the nude in my work for a number of reasons. I like to use nude as the 'constant' in the image, to represent humanity. Clothes also seem to set a time period, so they get in the way of the sense of timelessness – or time confusion – which I wish to create. Also, since the nude has been used in art for centuries, I'm continuing a tradition but trying to recreate it afresh. I also find the nude gives a headstart in immediately provoking a response from the viewer.

Would you say that your intention is to speak a clear message through each work?

I guess each series of shots has its own *raison d'être*. There's usually a story I'm trying to create or a social comment I'm hoping to get across. However I try hard not to overstate this, as I believe the viewer should be free enough to find their own response to an image. Often I'm surprised how a viewer may draw a certain solid conclusion about an image when I hadn't thought of that aspect, but that doesn't make it less valid. I think a viewer's reaction can show much about their own emotional journey.

What future plans do you have for your work?

I'm continuing to build on the current series, and aim to have a book published to be available internationally.

Fiskars: The Art and Craft Centre of Finland

It is ten in the morning and I can already see the buss load of tourists rolling through the tunnel into Fiskars. During three months of the year this is a common sight. Tourists account for more than half the heads in Fiskars during the summer, so why do they venture here?

Saunas, vodka and design are the things you associate with Finland and sure enough they are all present in this Nordic north in equal parts once you set foot in this Scandinavian haven, but another thing you find here in Finland, Fiskars to be more precise, is a growing artist community. 90 km west of Helsinki is where you will find Fiskars, tucked away between trees and lakes in the municipality of Pohja. With well-managed advertising, the busloads present golden opportunities for the local artists to exhibit and sell their work.

In the seventeenth century, Pohja became the center of iron manufacturing in Finland and it was here that the famous Fiskars knives and scissors were produced. In 1996 the artisans, designers and artists established Fiskars Cooperative and the old knife factory soon became studios to the artists and designers of Fiskars. Today the cooperative has over 100 members, representing over 20 different arts, design and crafts areas. The artisans, designers and artists who have moved into the village have brought a new vitality to Fiskars and transformed it into a much acclaimed center for Finnish art and design. It is amazing that this village keep two hundred artists, designers and craft makers with a population of only six hundred. The annual exhibitions, which are now among the biggest events in Finland, receive a lot of media attention and visitors. The number of visitors increases with each exhibition, and these days the annual Fiskars exhibition attracts some 25,000 visitors. The latest offerings are *Transparent* in the Granary Space featuring 38 national and international artists that reveals both abstract and tangible structures and puts what was secret into the public

domain; and *Point of View* in the Copper Smithy Gallery, featuring 65 national and international artists presenting views from within and without, from near and afar. Both exhibitions feature a crazy mix of jewellery, ceramic, sculpture, painting, video, textile, glass and furniture under the same roof in two separate buildings. There is something for everyone.

Karin Widnäs is a Fiskars artist who has for the second summer opened up her award winning home to the public. This summer Kim Simonsson's ceramic sculptures were featured. Widnäs, a ceramicist herself, wants to open up the arena for non-traditional ceramic artists and exhibit work far from the craft section ceramic often ends up in. This summer's exhibition consisted of four childlike figures; almost alien looking with their big black almond shaped eyes. Grouped together they appear to be participating in a game of exploration.

In the capital of Finland, Helsinki is where Fiskars resident Ron Nordström is exhibiting his latest works at Galleri Sinne in September. Zoo consists of five works represented through video, installation and drawing. The work asks for the audience involvement, breathing animal sculptures on motion sensors, squeaky toys attached to cords generating

sound made by the visitors and a video installation with real-time movement controlled by the spectator along with drawings. Sound and movement service as the central point of Nordström's work, toys are often used in his installations and the interaction between the work and spectator is present.

—Ulrika Holmlund

Fiskars Artist in Residence 2007



(Above) Work of Ron Nordström, and (below) Karin Wildnäs.



Digital Art Weeks 2007: Zurich, Switzerland

DAW07, set in July each year in downtown Zurich, is a festival bringing together international artists, engineers and scientists. It's a crazy mix with a great intriguing collection of symposiums, installations, wearable art, sound art, public art, robotics and performance art. I was fortunate enough to take part of this year's event.

The events and symposiums took place at different venues around the city, all the performances were set in Cabaret Voltaire, a historical place where the DADA movement was founded in 1916 by Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, Hans Arp, Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco. The venue served as the perfect setting for this eclectic mixed crazy group of performances taking part of DAW07.

When the streets of Zurich was still filled with life and bathing in the early evening light, inside Cabaret Voltaire Feedback Fred, artist Benoit Maubrey arose from the smoke, climbing up the stairs with a speaker attached to his back and a stocking over his head. He interacted with the audience, felt, hugged, pushed and annoyed the spectators with a twenty-minute long sarcastic and ironic monologue after which he collapsed and the plug to his speaker was pulled.

Downstairs during the violent performance Feedback Fred, Putzfrau was high up on a table wearing fitted lights to her body and pink rubber gloves. The artist, Genevieve Favre performed a ten-minute cleansing sound performance, using the lights on her body to sing and generate sound. Each light was connected to a specific sound and as Favre proceeded to go through the cleansing act the audience started singing along with the artist. Daniel Wilcox took the stage with his performance Robotcowboy, while wearing a fully functional red desktop on his head clutching a guitar he performed a three part sound session entitled *Experiments in Energy* while circling the audience. After a few Cable Madness drinks in my system it was time to head out to the dusky Zurich night and tread home to prepare for another crazy day of the DAW07.

For more information, photos and videos about DAW07 kindly visit their website: www.digitalartweeks.ethz.ch

—Ulrika Holmlund



(Left) Benoit Maubrey and (right) Daniel Wilcox.



The Artist Book

Essentially, artist books are books conceived as art rather than books, about art or artists, where the main purpose is to convey information.

The concept of the artist book has been around for over 100 years but since the 1960s/70s with the rise of fine art prints, artist books have become more prominent and exist in their own right. In recent decades, exhibitions of artist books have become more frequent with regular exhibitions in Noosa, Mackay, Bairnsdale, and in Melbourne with exhibitions at Australian Galleries, Port Jackson Press, Artisan Books, Stonnington Stables Museum of Art and the State Library of Victoria. This exposure has drawn many more appreciative viewers and participants.

The attraction of the artist book to participants, whether they are artists, sculptors, print makers, textile artists or work in other area of the arts, is strong. For many it is a way to use the skills they have taken time to acquire in a different form of art and a different form of expression. The area is also more conducive to collaborative works.

For viewers, it can present a different way of viewing art in that it can be experienced in a much more private way as in reading any book. Also, the ideas contained within the book can be revealed over time and can be manipulated by the artist in the way images and/or text are revealed. There are many ways in which the book artist can control the viewing experience. The book object can also be

handled, with some books being soft, noisy or just the right size to fit in the hand. The feel of the book can be very important. Books can be made out of any materials and can take absolutely any form.

Once the artist book is seen as a piece of art rather than just a book, the scope of practice becomes infinite. Usually it has some reference to books in having pages of some kind and bound in some form. The pages may be much reduced, free form in shape, with relief work. The pages can be quite sculptural and simply fit together in some way. The binding may be a box to contain the pages, bound as in a scroll or a sewn binding. Books that still retain a traditional structure may be made of unexpected materials like fabric or metal with the emphasis in on how the book is presented as a sculptural work. A solid piece of stone carved into a book is still a sculpture. Artist books can still be recognizably a book but usually with an imaginative approach, or they can be on the edge and question the nature of the book.

One final point. There is little consensus on the name of this area of art. Various names include artist's book, artists books and all the variations of these two words: sculptural books, book objects and maybe the best, the 'book arts'.

—Marianne Little

Southeast Asian Window

October 2007: I can't quite believe I've passed the half-way mark of this residency. In my last 69 Smith Street correspondence I outlined the Malaysian contemporary art scene and spoke of the difficulties artists have here, but since then, I have revised my perspective. I have also become more familiar with the pros and cons of doing an art residency. The best thing is that I've been able to do a lot of traveling to learn about the region and as a result, new and interesting opportunities have opened up for my practice.

As previously mentioned, Malaysia has no government grants, marketing support schemes or art societies to speak of. That said, I've met more artists who work 'full-time' at their practice here than in Australia. Without any statistical evidence, I believe this is possible because the cost of living is far lower (breakfast costs just AUD30c at the local mamak stall) and there are many art buyers who are extremely serious about building local art collections. That is not to say that artists don't struggle. Most artists I've met are Malay Muslims or Malaysian Chinese (between 25 and 45 years old), with families to support.

The Malaysian art community supports each other's art practice in ways I haven't seen back home. Every opening always feels relaxed and friendly, brimming to capacity with buyers and viewers. Meals are usually served (noodles and rice), alcohol often not. Yet red dots abound. I have been lucky enough to bear witness to an amazing scene one night when I joined a table of two art collectors, a curator, two designers, three writers and four artists. Many were rivals (in a commercial sense), yet there they all were, happily sharing stories and swapping cigarettes. No one was running away or hiding from anyone, no 'divas' in sight. I can't say that I have ever sat at a table like that in Australia. It is a stark contrast to the anonymity many Australian artists experience, especially when it comes to connecting with networks of like-minded individuals in the profession (such as curators or writers or collectors).

While I remain on the outside of this community (everyone knows I will eventually leave, they're used to fly-by-night Aussie artists), I am lucky enough to have been gently embraced by it too. Being an artist in residence comes with a bit of cache.

People are interested to know what I am doing. I've conducted informal workshops, participated in art forums and

performances, done a TV interview, even helped a local school kid do an art project. There's been a flourish of activity that has brought my professional practice up a notch or four.

The challenge however, is the isolation. I'm living 27 km north of the capital, in a village or 'kampung'. It's jungly and full of critters. Few people speak English. I'm not saying this is bad. Being alone for days at a time has forced me to go 'inward' and I have learned a lot about myself in the process. This has shown up in my practice. I'm not under pressure from any commercial constraints to produce a certain 'style', so am free to push the boundaries of my practice and experiment with new media. The shifts are enormous. I have been experimenting with pencil pigments mixed with local pond water, Chinese ink, Indian henna wedding tattoos, embroidered gold, silver and bright red thread with little bells tied to loose ends. The scale has increased, although most experiments remain on 45x60 cm canvas. I've also made a couple of stop-frame video animations. In the back of my head is the knowledge that I may not get another chance to push this hard for a while, so every minute in the studio is precious.

Many of these developments are also owed to travel and adventure around the Southeast Asian region. I have been north, south and east of Malaysia, Singapore and Bangkok. Each new location opens up and shifts my understanding of Malaysia – most striking is that I no longer find it exotic. Rather, it feels a little like a nagging parent. This is due to the strong emphasis on decency, modesty and decorum that I have encountered, it can be a bit stitched-up in a way (except in Bangkok where I experienced pure joy for the first time since leaving home – probably because I could wear a singlet out of doors). In any case, these impressions have had a strong impact on the evolution of my work (to see more of it go to www.gabriellebates.com or check out www.gogabba.blogspot.com).

The blessing of course is that Rimbun Dahan has an ever-changing parade of artists coming to stay and produce art. The strongest impression came from choreographer Donna Miranda who resided from March through June. She produced a number of dance works and generously posed for my early paintings. From this friendship I found the courage to re-embrace the conceptual aspects of my



(Above) Artist Ivan Lam talks about his new show at Wei Ling Gallery, KL



(Above) Latest from the studio, 'Berkelakuan Sambang', Embroidery on canvas

practice. Plus we're exploring the possibility of my doing a short residency in Manila next year. Another RD artist, Mun Leng Lau, will produce several performances based on language, comprehension and notation in the coming weeks. I'll participate as a guest artist in this piece.

Okay okay, in conclusion I have not been nude frolicking in hot-houses and brandishing my colleagues bottoms with bay branches. Sorry. If anything, I have taken some pretty hard lessons about the limits of freedom of expression in a non-permissive society and put my laconic side out to dry for a while. Being flexible to a new place is what being in residence is about, so I'm going with the flow (or lack of it). If you want to know more you can email questions to me at gabrielle@gabriellebates.com, I check emails most days.

Wishing you well and much success in your artistic pursuits.

— Gabrielle Bates

69 Smith Street former exhibition and PR coordinator Gabrielle Bates is the current artist in residence at Rimbun Dahan Contemporary Art Centre in Kuala Lumpur (www.rimbundahan.org), Malaysia from March '07–February '08.

Venice Biennale: Beyond the American Tourist

After a six-hour train ride from Zurich, leaving work, rain and wind behind me, I arrive in summer-warm Venice on a Friday afternoon.

The 52nd Biennale is my scheduled weekend gore. I make my way through the hordes and hordes of tourist and honeymooners to squeeze onto the boat that will take me to the Giardini, one of the main two venues for the biennale. All and all there is 70 biennale exhibitions in the city of Venice. I soon realise that in the course of three days it would be impossible to visit them all. A plan was constructed with the help of the friendly staff at the Australian pavilion.

“Mate, go get a map from the British pavilion and bring it back here,” I was told and left the Australian pavilion with my sight set on the Brits and Tracey Emin show *Borrowed Light*, which grabbed my devoted attention for all about three minutes. I strongly believe her work has not developed since *My Bed*, an installation in the 1999 Turner Prize exhibition and even then not a great piece of art in my humble opinion. After witnessing Daniel von Sturmer’s video installation once again (exhibited at ACCA in 2006) back at the Aussie pavilion, off I went with a detailed dotted map of what not to miss and Tracey Emin’s exhibition glowed with her absence.

This year it is the grand tour, meaning a summer of contemporary art in Europe. So if you have time and money, you have

till end of November to get over here and enjoy the Art 38 Basel, the Venice Biennale, Documenta 12 and Sculpture Projekte Munster 07.

When I saw Louise Bourgeois name in the catalogue I quickly made my way to where her work was being exhibited, only to find a wall filled with blue ink drawings on small A5 paper arranged next to each other creating a square. After seeing her work in various exhibitions and knowing her work very well, a huge wave of disappointment came across me. At every exit in the Arsenale building Adel Abdessemed’s *Exil* neon light sign drew little attention with its subtle placement, but gave a strong impact with its wordplay and meaning when you discovered it.

Bill Viola’s *Oceans Without a Shore* was exhibited in the fifteenth century church of San Gallo. The three stone altars becoming the portal between the afterlife and our world investigate the presence of the dead in our lives. The polished videos were great to experience, but the theme of the work seems over examined and over done and feels like repetition of his previous work.

Aniwaniwa by Brett Graham and Rachel Rakena is a video installation with a collection of suspended vessels with carved exterior and internal projections and sound components that you can only view lying flat on your back on supplied white mattresses. This installation was worth the trip to Margazzini del Sale to experience in

a city that is sinking. *Aniwaniwa* is a tribute to Horahora, a place now submerged under water.

My favourite work can be found outside the Scandinavian pavilion. It’s an outdoor sound installation, not to be confused with public restrooms. I immediately got fascinated by the colourful present of the three boxes painted in the colours of the French tricolore. Made by the Norwegian artist Lars Ramberg, the work consist of three 1980 JCDcaux public toilets originally commissioned by former president Jacques Chirac. While standing outside the red toilet listening to the sound installation reflecting political views and nationalism I turn around to find a queue formed behind me, all waiting to go to the loo.

On I went to view Oscar Muñoz, a Columbian artist video work, a simple video installation consisting of five faces being drawn on paper with water, slowly the water dries and left is the unmarked paper, mortality and presence was conveyed in a simple but arresting way leaving you with the words ‘here today gone tomorrow’ and a few hours later I was ... gone.

Australian artists included in the Biennale: Daniel von Sturmer, Shaun Gladwell, Rosemary Laing, Susan Norrie, Christian Capurro and Callum Morton.

—Ulrika Holmlund



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This edition of *six 9ine* was created

through contributions from Merle Parker,

Denise De Keyzer, Marianne Little,

Veronica Hodgkinson, Gabrielle Bates,

Ulrika Holmlund, Darryl Anderson, Jillian

Gregurke, Fidelis Easawi-Boyer, Helen

Clancy and Philip Ingman.

Veronica Hodgkinson

Treasurer

What kind of art background so you come from?

My main self-expression is photography. After moving to Melbourne in 2002 I started a part-time course at Photography Studies College, graduating in 2006 with an advanced diploma in photography, majoring in art.

Why did you get involved at 69 Smith Street?

69 Smith Street caught my attention for its innovative exhibitions. It also encouraged members to participate, which was a great way to meet other artists. I have been a member of 69 Smith Street for about two years now, joining the committee at the 2006 AGM. In January 2007 Julie Harsworth resigned as Treasurer and I volunteered for the role.

What motivates you?

At the moment my motivation comes from my involvement in the arts. Being a part of the team at 69 Smith Street and running my own gallery, PhotoSpace, with my partner Mark Lockett has been awesome.

What do you hope to achieve with PhotoSpace?

Our aim is to promote the fine art of photography with an emphasis on traditional and alternative historic processes. I also hope to have a number of educational events where artists talk about the processes being exhibited.

PhotoSpace

A gallery dedicated to the fine art of photography
Exhibition hours: Wednesday to Friday noon - 6pm
and Saturday noon - 4pm

For more information:

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