

The Anthropology Section

I made a wrong turn. I followed the map on my iPhone up to the final point. I u-turned; and around the bend was the underground car-park Malcolm described. I collected a ticket and found a parking space. I was entitled to park free of charge for one-and-a-half hours.

A few days earlier I had met with Malcolm at the Royal Hotel in Redfern, a pub we both enjoy visiting to tease out projects, a ritual we've created since we started working together several years ago. There we discussed the *territorial transgressions* Mal was developing in a studio residency at the Firstdraft Depot and he invited me to write a text and borrow books for his exhibition.

As I stepped into the elevator I asked a tiny lady inside which floor the library was located on. The first. I thanked her, embarrassed, I told her I wasn't from the area. I walked towards the information desk and requested membership for Waverley Library.

I presented the librarian my ID; she an application form. As I began to write my phone number she stopped me, queried whether my address was on the Central Coast. I courteously told her it was South-West Sydney. For this project, Mal had chosen Waverley Library as he was confident that anyone could become a member provided they lived *anywhere in Sydney*. Even so, I imagined how unusual it might be for the Waverley Council to have a Campbelltown resident wanting membership to their library.

Nonetheless, I was granted a card, explained the terms of borrowing and was asked whether mail or telephone was my preferred mode of contact. I reluctantly said either; they're equally invasive.

I meandered by the newspaper stall where Mal found me. I greeted him and laughed at something, but he told me to hush, we were in a library after all.

He guided me over to the anthropology section of the library and instructed me to borrow fifteen books (the maximum amount). I was disappointed to see Waverley's knowledge of anthropology to be so limited.

I cleared the bottom shelf, discreetly checked out fifteen titles on Black Australian history and carried them to the locker room where Mal waited by a locker already filled with books.

A close friend of Malcolm's would soon arrive to enact the same task. I think he administered the final blow and now the entire section was empty. On the shelf we have created something like a *refrain* (Deleuze and Guattari) in the borrowing cycle.

Down underground we load the books in the back of my car. Malcolm needed these things to be transported, so I agreed to cart them for him. Receiving conflicting directions, I drive back to the city and I'm not sure where exactly we were going. The three of us bear a similar quality to the mock conquistadors in the *Us, Ours: Them, Theirs* video in the exhibition, lugging our colourful totems, railing against nature; against late afternoon Sydney traffic.

At the Depot, beneath a no parking sign we unloaded the books; the beginning of their transformation from containers of knowledge into art objects. And in their re-location into a gallery space a new kind of territory is marked, and with this, another series of territorial negotiations will need to be considered.

Sime Knezevic

Me: Mine texts cited and referred: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Of the Refrain*; Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*; Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*; Robert Anton Wilson, *Prometheus Rising*.

Me: Mine



Me: Mine: Portraits of the Artist as Sovereign Figure

A non-compulsory paper on the exhibition, broken up into paragraphs by five digressional intrusions.

I have this on-going fear regarding my signature. I fear that it does not adequately represent me. I fear that it can be easily counterfeited. I fear that it did not mature with the rest of me at puberty and remains, like my handwriting, inferior and childish. Perhaps it is because I was absent from primary school that day when the rest of the class took the mock test to receive the “pen license”, a rite of passage where upon completion all the children received certificates to endorse their progression from lead pencils to ink filled pens. Maybe I should still not be working with materials and actions of such finality. Thankfully I can do much of my writing now on a computer like this. But my hand still shakes almost uncontrollably when I go to sign my name. I think it is a fear of the ultimate finality that the signature represents that causes these shakes and perhaps has prevented it’s articulation. Our autographs act as the ultimate portraits of ourselves as artists that are sovereign figures of a particular domain; a bank account, a piece of mail, a passport, a tax declaration, a medical procedure, a cheque, a drivers license, a lease, even an idea or discovery of something (the naming of a planet or the Pythagoras theorem for example). It is our name in action and it is the personification of our identity. In an infinitely expanding universe these signatures help us hold on to and grasp a sense of being and belonging, and most importantly, a sense of ourselves.

1. *This is both the beginning and the end of digression number one.*

While this universe is infinitely expanding, it is also finite in its extent at any given time. At the same time the edge or boundary of this same universe is indiscernible. In this very small part of the universe that we occupy and know as Earth we too exist on a finite planet in which edges and boundaries are growing increasingly slippery to define and contestable to possess. We can see from bacterial studies that the expansion of territory is in the biological make-up of all living things. It is a biological, sociological and cosmological imperative. Quantum physics suggests that it is the expansion of the universe that in fact causes time to move forwards rather than backwards, and so is of utmost importance to life as we know it. However as the universe expands it is also increasing in entropy. The same of which could be said for the increasing hostilities within our moist little globe as territories here expand and collide. These range from the terrorism involved in border feuds and occupation of foreign states to the offense, trivial in comparison, that is taken when we receive junk mail in OUR letter box.

2. *Did you know that the world is not round and rotating around the sun but that it is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant turtle? This turtle is supported on the back of another giant turtle which is supported on the back of another giant turtle which is supported on the back of another giant turtle. It’s just turtles turtles turtles all the way down.*

Could it be a tandem increase in entropy with the increase of territory when I sign my name that causes these shaking hands? Deleuze and Guattari note that the expressive is primary in relation to the possessive and that expressive qualities or matters of expression constitute a having more profound than a being; “Not in the sense that these qualities belong to a subject, but in the sense that they delineate a territory that will belong to a subject that carries or produces them”. Here I put my name to a body of work made up of expressive acts of attempts of possessing. These acts take the form of letters from the local council, telephone calls, an en masse borrowing of books from the library and a video of mock conquistadors shot in the sublime natural surrounds of Arthur Boyd’s Bundanon Trust property.

3. *You will not find a single picture of digression number three on the internet. It exists only here, in twenty-two words.*

The entirety of the universe is made up of delineations of territory that belong to that which carries or produces them, yet the rhetoric and rules for these delineations differ from subject to subject and consequently create a conflict of understanding. It has been my aim to expose and play with these conflicts that delineate the beginnings and ends of what is ours and how these delineations inform our identity. What you hold in your hand now is an extension of this body of work. I will sign it at the bottom. This will be another performative act which is absent to you as a viewer, but the artifacts of which is presented to you now in the gallery as what Deleuze and Guattari might call “territorializing marks that simultaneously develop into motifs and counterpoints; reorganising functions and re-grouping forces”.

4.

What you now hold is as autonomous and tangible as the works which feature in the exhibition. Like the works it announces itself to the viewer, not to be didactic or pedagogical but to close a critical distance and open a space of affective participation, manipulating and reordering personal understandings of territory in relation to a broader range of conflicting political, historical, sociological, anthropological, cosmological, biological and sociological understandings. I have sought to ground the abstract notion of territory into everyday forms and functions that we readily understand, allowing them to be cheeky, mischievous and generously accessible.

5. *E!ruke
Ureeka!
Eureka!*

I will use this final paragraph to note further a particular area of participation involved in the work. I lay claim to the exhibition as an orchestrator of ideas and so it bears my name. But territory is always about other active subjects. And so I would like to thank the subjects that have allowed my name to go on their participation in this body of work, particularly Laura Caesar, Sean Johnson, Jack Mackey, Dara Gill, Frank Mainoo, Marissa Gilles, Aileen Huynh and the book borrowers - Laura Caesar, Noni Cowan, Aileen Huynh, Sam James, Sean Johnson, Paula Johnson, Sime Knezevic, Tessa Leong, Lucy Parakhina, Joe Parro, Gideon Payten Griffiths, Mark Rogers, Kana Salim and Will Whittaker. To me this process does not stop now that the exhibition is open but opens up a further meeting point with viewers. I hope you enjoy all the work in the current exhibition at Firstdraft, and leave you now with a final question: is this catalogue that you hold yours or is it mine?

Malcolm Whittaker

Special thanks: Firstdraft, Bundanon Trust, Laura Caesar, Alistair Davies, Paul Fitzgerald, Megan Garrett-Jones, Dara Gill, Regina Heilmann, Anneke Jaspers, Sean Johnson, Sime Knezevic, Mora Main, Georgie Meagher, Will Whittaker.

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