



COLLABORATING WITH 'THE OUTSIDE'

SoMA postgraduates present and discuss projects that draw in, stage and question the inside/outside of contemporary media arts practices:

- **Danny Ford, *The Cassette Project*** (SoMA PhD)
- **Lyndal Jones external artist example only (material compiled and presented by Anna Munster): *The Avoca Project, Victoria.***
- **Grant Corbishley, PhD candidate in collaboration with Houghton Valley locals: *Stewardship as an ethical aesthetic response to an uncertain and unsustainable future.***

When: 5:30pm, Friday October 5, 2012

Where: Norman's house, 41 View Rd.

Danny Ford, PhD: *The Cassette Project*

Background:

Cassette Project is a performative and relational project initiated by the artist Danny Ford. Three artists/bands participate in each event, each playing and alternatively taking on the role of 'sound engineer' for a live, treated documentation of each performance, recorded directly to cassette. In the role of 'sound engineer' the artists, isolated from the performance space, have access to microphones, mixers and sound manipulation equipment. The mixing artist can distort, silence, sample and otherwise alter the sounds of the live performance. The live manipulation of the performance is then free to be duplicated and shared, with rapid cassette duplicators accessible in the space. The project places cultural producers, consumers and the artist in a shared environment dependent on communication and collaboration, focused around the uses and cultural image of the object of the blank cassette. The project is designed to give opportunity for artists to present their creative work in a new format, as well as to begin a discussion on the future of music distribution. The project for the artist is concerned with ideas about collaboration and community. This research examines, through the staging of repeated iterations of an event design focused on live collaboration, a particular strain of facilitation-based practice as an emergent method of creative practice. Utilising the production and documentation of staged collaborative practices with music practitioners, along

with written contextual research, *Cassette Project* explores dynamics around live and recorded sound, and the capacity for certain technologies to shape understandings of the roles of musician, audience and the artist as a creative facilitation-based practitioner. Operating throughout the practical research is the appropriated form of the audio cassette, applied as material, metaphor and icon. The location of the research is primarily in the field of creative media practice. The research is, however, also active in the expanded field of music production and reception, which at the time of exploration is under considerable challenge and scrutiny.

By structuring unique collaborative parameters and employing methods rooted in older and newer technologies it is possible to generate new creative work, new relationships and immersive audience environments, all of which extend our understanding of music production and reception.

Further info on The Cassette Project at:

<http://cassetteproject.net/about-theartist/>

Questions for discussion:

1. If authorship is challenged by collaboration, in what ways can creative outcomes be measured? Does collaboration automatically resist the language or 'authored' creative work?
2. In what ways are the dynamics of collaborative work altered when collaborations evolve from one-off, 'fleeting' engagements to recurring and formally organised group efforts?
3. Can we use an idea such as dramaturgy to also understand the events Grant and the Houghton Valley locals have been organising? (Dramaturgis a term drawn from theatre studies and refers to the contextual and background research and design involved in staging performance. It has recently been used to think about online and remote mediated music performances between collaborators or different performance sites. I am drawing upon this idea in my PhD research).

Lyndal Jones: *The Avoca Project: Art, Place, Climate Change, Victoria*. Example of an external artist (material compiled and presented by Anna Munster)

The purpose of using this example of collaboration is to provide an external reference point for all participants and presenters in the seminar that is outside their own research. This will provide us all with 'common ground' and references to discuss. It is also an example of a different form of collaboration in the media arts context. Background (text taken from the website on the project:

<http://avocaproject.org/>

<http://avocaproject.org/2012/>

The Avoca Project is an international art project in regional Victoria, Australia, centred on Watford House. Referred to locally as 'The Swiss House', this prefabricated gold-rush residence was imported from Germany in 1850. The house is thus an immigrant, its walls revealing stories of wealth and a European glamour now faded by the harshness of the climate and the decreasing services that are the result of globalisation and climate extremes in rural Australia.

Lyndal Jones is an artist who focuses on context and place through very longterm projects. Here she works with the local community and national and international artists, scholars and climate change experts to develop a series of works of art to heighten this image of the house as immigrant, weathered but resilient, and the place, the land, the landscape as a site of climate change and response. We will also watch a video of an art event held at Avoca. Link is here: <https://vimeo.com/36394715>

Grant Corbishley, PhD in collaboration with Houghton Valley locals:
Stewardship as an ethical aesthetic response to an uncertain and unsustainable future.

Background to Houghton Valley and the collaborative projects by Norman Smith, a Houghton Valley local.

Houghton Valley is a small suburb on the south coast of Wellington, the capital city of New Zealand. When it was first settled 150 years ago Houghton Valley/Houghton Bay was one of a series of semi-rural outlying communities a few kms beyond the 'heart' of Wellington.

The subsequent growth of the city has created pretty well continuous housing between Houghton Valley and the central city and for the last 50 years the area has appeared to be "just" a small and low profile dormitory suburb of about 500 houses. Shops, churches and recreation facilities such as tennis and bowling clubs have long gone as the economic and social life of the area became part of the greater urban hinterland and infrastructure.

However rather than continue what seemed to be an inevitable decline local Houghton Valley, activities have greatly increased over the last two years. From a modest base such as a locally owned and run community hall and resident's association there are now a further 20 plus projects. These are locally initiated and include creating and naming walking tracks on reserves, native tree plantings to re-generate hillsides and gullies, an embryonic civil defence network, two-weekly local newsletter and community garden.

Increasingly the community is deepening its 'internal' connections while also engaging with the city and regional councils on issues of mutual concern such as road safety.

This community renewal culminated earlier this year in a project understood to be unique in New Zealand, a community archaeological dig, where a number of people gave hundreds of hours to organise and run the event.

The notable increase in community-based activities coincided with Grant Corbishley's commencement of his PhD study based on Houghton Valley. Is this happenstance or synergy? Has Grant been the catalyst or was change in Houghton Valley already beginning to happen aka the international Transition Towns movement and greater interest in local resilience? Has he effected permanent change or does Grant remain the hub without whose focus many of these projects would fade away? Further info on Houghton Bay and these collaborative projects at:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Houghton-Valley-Hornsey-Rd-Community-Project/118404768189002>

Background and questions on the specific collaborative 'event' of the Archaeological Dig (part of the entire PhD project) written by Grant Corbishley.

There has been much thinking about the collaborative process, and many have written about it. I have been using some of the ideas of Gilles Deleuze to think about the 'event' of participation and then rethinking the archaeological dig, which Norman mentions above, as an event that was both participatory and yet also involved many, many micro - events leading up to it. Here the event took priority, not the individual people involved. It is not that there is no place for people but rather people are in constantly in changing relations with each other and with nonhuman elements - such as the weather - to produce the conditions for a singular event to emerge.

For instance, for weeks before the dig, it rained every day, but serendipitously it was sunny on the day of the dig. Also, in the weeks before, the word had gone out that a dig was going to take place, and people's curiosity began to build. We had hired a marquee (which cost \$1200.00) to provide shade / shelter for visitors, but a week out from the dig, we hired another, and on the day, both were filled to capacity.

1. Is there something going on (or not) before a collaborative event takes place? Is there for instance some latent energy or subterrean rumblings

before something ignites the beginning of a collaboration. This maybe what Massumi describes as 'bare activity'. He writes, 'In what way 'bare activity' is effective and felt, even though it lies at the very threshold of experience just coming into itself' (Massumi 2011: 3).

How would this be described in terms of your own experience? Think of some examples of collaborations – these might be with other people or with technical systems etc. What is occurring at a threshold level prior to decisions being deliberately made to enter into a decisive engagement with others / other things?

2. Nomadic distribution refers to the distribution of an idea from an initiator of an emerging event to other elements of the event, which then take up the (co) emergence of the event. Gilles Deleuze writes about nomadic distribution as,

'This is a nomadic and non-sedentary distribution, wherein each system of singularities communicates and resonates with the others, being at once implicated by the others and implicating them in the most important cast' (cast in this sense meaning a mixture of bodies affected by the event in question). (Deleuze, 1990: 70).

We might think about collaboration in these terms; i.e. something initiates the collaboration then the event is distributed across co-collaborators who then take 'ownership' of the idea. If we put this in purely human terms, this can sometimes feel like a loss of control for the initiator. In Houghton Valley this has taken another step. A number of locals who have an understanding of the collaborative nature of Grant's PhD, and are stakeholders in the community, have assumed shared 'ownership' of Grant's PhD and one has begun writing his thesis.

Is losing control of an idea part of a strategy leading to the production of eventual conditions, or does it mean that the collaboration as planned by the initiator becomes something else?

References:

Deleuze G. (1990). *The Logic of Sense*. trans Mark Lester and Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin Boundas. Pub: London: Althone Press

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Massumi B., (2011), *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*. Pub: MIT Press, USA.