

The Super Pit Brodie Ellis

May 17 – June 7 2008

Kalgoorlie was born because of gold in 1893. Three prospectors were travelling to Mount Youle when one of their horses cast a shoe, and during the ensuing delay the men noticed signs of gold in the area and decided to remain. From the outset then, Kalgoorlie's existence has been predicated on its ability to yield profit rather than sustain life. In this regard, the mining town is a microcosm of one of capitalism's fundamental problems – that material gain should take precedence over the survival instinct.

In 1989, Alan Bond made a bid to bring together the scattered leases of gold-rich land around Kalgoorlie, now pitted like rotten snow with the mines of individual prospectors. His intention was to convert them into one massive pit-mine. It took some time and financial intervention for the project to succeed, and when it did the Fimiston Open Pit, more commonly known as the Super Pit, was born.

The Super Pit's sinister qualities take the fore in Brodie Ellis' installation of the same name. Ellis takes the mine, the people and the environment which co-exist in the fantasies of KCGM's PR executives and posits a space where the reality of their interrelatedness is freed from corporate agenda, and some of the ghosts and monsters which the Super Pit at once hosts and denies are released.

Ellis has reproduced a set of objects from the mine which function as ideas, records of force. A massive, blown-out tyre and a disused excavator bucket, purposive artefacts which are situated at the public entry point to the Super Pit, have been translated into a brittle, provisional material state. Pine armatures support cardboard, fabric, and clay, all materials which are ultimately destined to give way. The cardboard and pine suck moisture from the clay, causing it to crack. It is an approach of enforced vulnerability, not merely imposed upon each object but inserted into its core, allowing for failure to remain on its own terms – indeed gunning for failure. Objects which were formerly defined solely by the mine's driving pragmatism are decontextualised and in turn somehow humanised. This aspect of Ellis' work is like a ritual, an alchemical exercise; an invocation of half-dead apparatuses and their relationship to the doomed, but still pulsing, mine.

Ellis' reconfiguration of objects and entities into inherently impermanent formal meditations, often made from painstakingly gathered materials, transfigures them into something fragile and revealing. The work is like a shadow of a shadow in this regard, akin to those anxiety dreams where you find your teeth are the consistency of chalk and they begin to crumble when you bite down. Her particular brand of mimesis parallels homeopathic magic; 'Sometimes homeopathic or imitative magic is called in to annul an evil omen by accomplishing it in mimicry.'¹ The attempt has been made by many people in many ages to harm or destroy an image of something in the belief that the thing itself will in turn suffer or perish. Ellis' mimesis is not an infliction of damage, but an apprehension of the Super Pit's imminent annihilation, held suspended.

*'... the theory of death presupposes (and doubtless not entirely without its knowledge) a theatre: a structure of representation and a mimesis, a space which is enclosed, distant, and preserved ... where death in general, decline and disappearance, is able to contemplate "itself", reflect "itself", and interiorize "itself".'*¹

Helen Johnson
(Excerpt from Catalogue – available at Conical)

CONICAL

Brodie Ellis is currently a resident studio artist at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces. In 2005 Brodie graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting from the Victorian College of the Arts. Her solo exhibitions include *Spaceship 1*, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne (2007); *Swarming Behaviour*, West Space, Melbourne (2006); and *Thin Red Line*, three site-specific projects in Melbourne's CBD in 2004.

Brodie's work has featured in a number of group exhibitions including *Too Near Too Far*, Care Of Gallery, Milan, Italy (2007); *A Bridge Too Far*, Alliance Francaise, Melbourne (2007); *Wallara Travelling Scholarship Exhibition*, VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne (2005); *Hurt Couture*, Blindside Gallery, Melbourne (2005); and *Landed*, Domain House, Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne (2004). She has also collaborated with fellow artist Tony Cran on exhibitions including *Under Embargo*, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne (2006), and *Half Way*, George Patton Gallery, Melbourne (2005).

Special thanks to:

Next Wave, especially Ulanda Blair and Jeff Khan, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Conical Inc, Luke Ryan (graphic designer), Trevor Ellis (film maker), Jeremy Jones (botanist), Misha Dumnov (composer and performer of original film score), Helen Johnson (writer), the sponsors and my patient friends.

NEXT | FESTIVAL MAY 15-31, 2008 NEXTWAVE.ORG.AU
WAVE | ...CLOSER AND CLOSER TOGETHER
WHILE MAINTAINING A HIGH CONSTANT
STRESS...

Upstairs 3 Rochester St
Fitzroy Victoria
Australia 3065

T: +61 3 9415 6958
E: info@conical.org.au
www.conical.org.au

Gallery Hours:
Wed - Sat 11 - 5pm



ARTS
VICTORIA



THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY