

NOVEMBER 3 - 24

Forced Fields

Tao Wells (NZ), Raised by Wolves (NZ), Michelle Ussher

Curated by Emily Cormack

Gallery & Enclosure

The 'invisible hand' is a metaphor commonly used in reference to free market capitalism. The term implies that in an unregulated market natural human forces would function to create predictable and self-balancing patterns of behavior. In a wider sense the term has come to refer to the invisible omnipresent forces that guide and muster human activity. Supposing our social and economic activities are guided by unseen influences and funneled through predetermined conduits, this exhibition hopes to bring these latent influences and attitudes to visibility. The three projects presented in this exhibition throw these forces into form, provoking discussion and awareness.

Housed in a contemporary art space, which is after all the prescribed repository for this variety of creative output, this exhibition is highly aware of its own presence within the systems it seeks to reveal. New Zealand conceptual artist Tao Wells highlights the complexities of this context and its tendency to neutralise the potential potency of 'political' or 'socially aware' artworks in its traditionally safe and accepting confines. Through installing a vacuum cleaner in the airtight door to the gallery, Wells creates a 'vacuum', which metaphorically deflates his own 'socially aware' project inside the gallery.

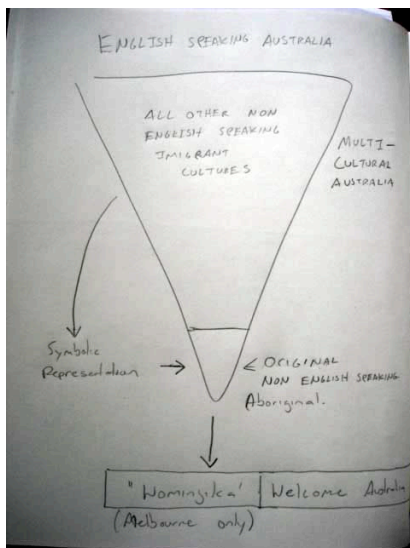
Wells' project in this exhibition, which began during a three-month residency in Melbourne, can be seen as a tourist's snapshot of power dynamics in Australia. The resulting diagrams draw particular attention to the organisational relationship between indigenous Australia and multi-cultural or 'Immigrant' Australia. Borrowing from corporate and institutional forms of biculturalism in New Zealand, and working in consultation with local Boonerwung Elder – Carolyn Briggs, Wells proposes a new template for power – one that imbeds local indigenous language in its foundation, with the intention of facilitating structures and opportunities for discussion on these issues.

With a similarly intent focus on the structures that control our movement and interaction with others, Michelle Ussher's large watercolour paintings depict a variety of municipal structures that contain and regulate the public's movement through space. In this series of works, Ussher has grafted together apartment buildings and official infrastructure from across Europe and Nepal into vast impossible architectural edifices. Alongside this work Ussher presents a painting of the Kinchela Boys Home, a house that operated as an Aboriginal boys home from 1924-1969. The building was used to house Aboriginal boys who had been removed from their family with the 'official' purpose of 'education and training'. Like Well's work, these watercolours reveal the ways that governmental and economic forces influence our interaction with space and our relationship with the land.

The collective known as Raised by Wolves from Wellington, New Zealand spent six weeks in Melbourne on a residency at GCAS. During this time they investigated Melbourne's official land use, both contemporary and historical and in doing so created a cross section of the changing visions and ambitions of each successive government or group of people who have impacted upon Melbourne's landscape. Through conducting ecological studies on sections of Fitzroy, Raised By Wolves gathered an understanding of the systems and forces at work in the creation and occupation of Melbourne.

In this work they have drawn particular attention to urban design's profound influence on our movement and experience of space. Paying particular attention to Melbourne's grid and the ways in which one traverses it via cross signals and instructional architecture, the artists have attempted to infect the grid with an absurdist sensibility, humour and dance. Through choreographing a dance that can be performed in concert with the audible clicking, *Raised By Wolves* extend the traffic signals function from instructional to participatory. With a strong emphasis on environmental awareness, these artists have created their own system that can be woven through the pre-existing one, that encourages walking and de-emphasizes car use. Likewise in the second phase of this project *Raised by Wolves* have focused on Melbourne's trees, drawing attention to the sparse nature that does exist in carefully planned, urban landmarks like Lygon Street, Carlton. They have documented the small, sad topiary that are nature's only representative on this heavily promoted tourist trail – forcing the trees into a staccato dance that mimics the regulation of human movement in a neatly orchestrated urban network such as Melbourne.

Forced Fields brings these three distinct artists together so as to sketch some of the systems that influence and guide our interactions with our context. Nudging at the nubs and cogs that stir and steer Australasian culture, this exhibition brings to light some of the many complex forces that determine our field of experience. Turning them over, and making visible the intricate interlacing that highlights our place – our role - in these forces, and urges us to become conscious and deliberate in our interactions with them.



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