

A Suspended Reality

*For in that sleep of death what
dreams may come*

In scene one of Hamlet’s third act, Shakespeare likens death to sleep. Or at least, to a state of suspended rest—limbo—in which we long to dream but cannot. A collapse of self collapsing into the self. Somehow within the notion of sleep we fold into and onto a unified sense of our body, which we can never seem to fully grasp or know. We have all had that sense of falling into sleep: the hypnic jerk that jolts us awake before we let go. Even the language of sleep hovers around descent and ascent. We fall. We wake up. We let go. We hold on. Existing below the horizon line or in a state of perpetual twilight, we are tethered to our consciousness, releasing ourselves to the desire for sleep, drifting into non. And in so doing become lost in a reality we know nothing of or rarely even remember; held as it were in a mild state of amnesia. For however many hours a day each of us sleep, we are suspended within our own existence.

We slow. We stop. We fall to ground.

And this is where Bridie holds us in a double bind; metaphorically and physically everything is held in a state of suspension. Lunney reveals the liminal potentiality of the body to its location,

offering us a strange mix of cold-comfort—the hard surfaced reality of hitting the ground—and slumbered warmth. Her body collides with gentle repose: the intimate exchange between where two bodies meet. Operating between the hemispheres of space and place and contemplating where those two zones touch, we search the conterminous envelope or the horizon line between where that ambit might lay. Like the state between sleeping and waking, Lunney provides the space of a lucid dream in an unfamiliar place. Suspension Test proposes the state before we are truly asleep, the barely perceptible nuance that exist between things; to perceive the trace, the faint and often unseeable whilst still remaining sensed or felt. An intuition for the unseen collision between objects and bodies. The movement from inside to outside and back again, from one edge to the other—an ellipse in trying to find the region between seamless edges.

With each lateral movement, at the heart of all this, is the breach, where the boundaries between space/s, the borders of space and place are necessarily and instinctively ruptured. Architecture is broken, the body remains outside and isolated through consequence and we search for a way to navigate back into the heart of the structure.

There is an elemental force at play here. All the components are an inversion of fragments that allow the meta-structure

to become apparent or navigated to a single point: a gaze into the closed eyes of a sleeping man that hovers like a spectre before us. Caught within his repose yet remaining external to his condition, we are held in place. The poetic/s of slow movement can never be underestimated; it is hypnotic. Transformative. Like a dream we are caught within the internal space and structure, yet still remaining outside of it.

Attempting to offer us a pathway through her world turned upside down and inside out, Lunney’s search for connective meaning between the order of things is mediated through the state of equilibrium. Although inverted,

everything exists here within equal measure. Each element offers ballast to the other, harnessing the flux of both the gallery condition and the artwork in order to stabilise our way through. Lunney wants to lead us to a type of home, to a state of comfort or rest. Or at the very least, to contemplate the place in which we can connect most fully with our self. She takes us to that space in which we can sleep, in which we can suspend our reality. To the place in which we can dream.

Stephen Garrett

Monash University, March 2011

The Weight of Architecture

On Tuesday much of Christchurch abruptly collapsed to the ground. The Cathedral lost its steeple. Closer to home, and all that summer, the eastern seaboard had been inundated with water. Dislodged interior furnishings adrift down erstwhile suburban streets. Wild winds assailed coastal towns and from time to time the smaller settlements in the hills were razed by fire. Some ten years ago now the family farm succumbed to wayward flames. She walks its ghostly perimeter attempting to revive the architectural corpse.



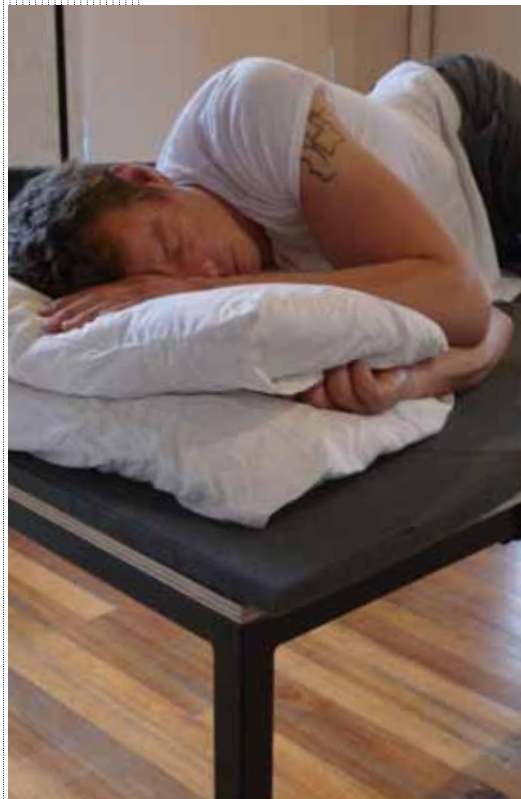
Where there was once floor, now there is ceiling and remnants of rafter. Where the roof once proudly kept at bay the forces of inclement weather, there is now only thin air. A radical redistribution of materials that calls to mind that melancholic and quiet photograph of men standing in the ruins of a bombed library, engrossed in a reading of the weather-worn spines of books that have barely survived.

And stupid, persistent, life continues.

It is not all sad passions, but joys too, for this destruction is also suggestive of constructive possibilities, and potential spaces awaiting activation by sensate

bodies. Architecture produces the first frame. As the first principle of shelter it prepares the possibility for the expression of all the other arts. The ground is rarefied sufficient for a performance, perchance a dancing body, or even a sleeping one. His face might be covered in soot or sand, fast asleep, dead asleep. His body that much lighter, huddled on a table, suspended in the air, counterbalanced by a weight of building debris. Meanwhile, she walks down walls, likewise counterbalanced by the ballast of building. Taut ropes keep her there, aerially improbable.

In apprehending the ongoing research of a spatial practice such as Bridie Lunney’s



it is worthwhile remembering that architecture does not stand inviolable, it is apt to crumble with decay and disaster. What's more, as Denis Hollier points out in his reading of Georges Bataille in *Against Architecture*, perhaps the origin myth of architecture misleads us: The first architecture is not the frame that composes the primitive hut, the home, the temple or the tomb, but the prison that constrains us, issuing orders and interdictions. Architecture constrains us to behave in a certain way, and the museum, temple to art, forces the audience to be especially mindful. With Bridie the audience is not allowed the opportunity to maintain a disinterested gaze. We are co-opted into the action, we

share the stage, human and non-human actors alike, animate and inanimate, mediated and unmediated.

Once we recognize that architecture is as much a leaky, fragile, finite body as the intimate body we know best, and habitually claim sovereignty over, a promising opening appears between the two. Small acts of domestic disobedience suggest themselves, why not sleep on the table and walk down the wall? New and animated relations of architectural body and human body emerge. These are our precious, experimental joys. It is only a matter of challenging the limits of architectural suspension. And this is what architects can learn from spatial practitioners coming from the other arts: God is not in the perfectly conceived detail. And it's not just about the carefully manufactured money shot. Instead, the detritus of destroyed and reconstructed and again devastated lives, tears and laughter, heaps ever upwards as unexpected winds blow in from Paradise.

Hélène Frichot
RMIT University, March 2011



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CONICAL

Conical Inc.
Upstairs 3 Rochester St
Fitzroy Victoria
Australia 3065

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

ARTS
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Suspension Test | Bridie Lunney