

DISAPPEARANCE

Lionel Bawden, Kevin Chin, Marcel Feillafe,
Betra Fraval, Simon O'Carrigan,
Drew Pettifer & Chris Bond

25 November—17 December 2011

Kings Artist Run Initiative
Lvl 1 / 171 King Street Melbourne
Wed – Sat, 12-6pm

Disappearance presents a collaboration between curator and artist Simon O'Carrigan and five artists asked to respond to the idea of 'disappearance'. Lionel Bawden, Drew Pettifer with Chris Bond, Betra Fraval, Kevin Chin, and Marcel Feillafe have examined this theme within their individual practice's and have explored it further within this exhibition.

Lionel Bawden's work's *The Fissure* and *The Calling* are taken from his 2010 series "A Void / La Disparition". The focus of this series saw Bawden delve into Joan Lindsay's iconic 1967 novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, focussing on the vanishing of three girls and their teacher whilst on a trip to the rock formation. Though unexplained in the original novel, and Peter Weir's 1975 film, Lindsay had penned an answer to the mystery. A concluding chapter not published until 1987 described a void encountered by the protagonists: "It wasn't a hole in the rocks, nor a hole in the ground. It was a hole in space" seen by the girls "as painters and sculptors saw a hole, as a thing in itself, giving shape and significance to other shapes." This negative space was, ultimately, the same power utilised in the novel and film. The omission of the explanatory chapter continues to enross audiences.

In *The Calling*, Bawden presents us with a physical gap between the rock formations. In *The Fissure*, a real gap (through which we see a depth-less monochrome sky), it is a foil to the murky wavering non-space of the void below. Bawden carves into his painting a space that is at once solid and amorphous; charting not only the events of the story itself, nor the twists of publishing history, but also the space in our psyche so receptive to the notion of vanishing into the mysterious Australian bush – a subtext too bottomless to resolve.

Where Bawden places the agency with the paranormal power of the landscape, **Drew Pettifer** in collaboration **Chris Bond** retain control of their disappearance. For them, to disappear is a *choice*, enacted under the artists' hands. Pettifer's photographs of male nudes in the landscape are printed up before having the figures painstakingly painted out by Bond. A world away from Photoshop techniques, this is artifice rendered by hand; the final disappearing act is in the absence of the painter's hand: he erases his tracks behind him. The landscape, previously obscured by figures, crawls back over them, consumes them behind a film of paint. Just as many

of Pettifer's recent works have functioned to block the audience's view, to reserve a portion of the image for the privileged eye of the photographer alone. Here are a series of figures now moved to a place behind the picture plane, kept safe from prying eyes. A tension remains between three decisive actions: the figure to camouflage themselves, the photographer to capture them, the painter to obscure them. Three agencies that seemingly could not co-exist, leaving it impossible to ascertain just whose power enacted the disappearance.

Betra Fraval's monochromatic works on paper explore each moment in time as a possible disappearance. Like Bawden's and Pettifer's work, Fraval's content is tied to the bush, the forest, the woods. Unlike Bawden's and Pettifer's work which document and simultaneously enact a disappearance, Fraval focuses attempts to harness and capture moments (and places) before they dematerialise. Underlying is an ecological theme: catching glimpses of a world that is vanishing.

The black backgrounds become a void-like stage where images flicker on and off within the vast space. As particles of light, the images appear as delicate fragments hanging in space for a moment that is frozen before they dissolve, fade and finally disappear. These works grasp at transient forms and capture traces, markers and imagery that anchor the self within the vastness of space. Alluding to the relationship with mortality, the impermanence of matter and the passing of time, they channel our ambivalent relationship to the passing of time – and the passing of all things in it.

In opposition to the other artists' works, **Kevin Chin** views disappearance as a positive. His work displays the personal, private world of fantasy and play; a secure bubble within the domestic sphere. His notion of the void pervades his work across painted and sculptural pieces, where the cut-outs (peering through here and there in the form of canvas left blank or gaps in sculptural space and lines of sight) provide breathing space filled by the imaginary. Kevin's partner dons a stolen magazine body, riding a seal through a vibrantly patched-together world of under-sea adventure, complete with floral arrangements and sea-animal toys. For Chin, this imaginary world is one disappeared into by choice. His accompanying sculpture provides a

child-hood cubbyhouse, using stickers to improvise a lace tablecloth, now pink and dotted with smiley faces. The stickers on the plastic overlay are removed with only the edges of the sticker sheets remaining. Reversing the process of assemblage seen in the painting, this negative space rests only upon an absent tabletop, the only figures upon a blank canvas ground. The cubby-house is opened up, the barrier between private and public shifted from physical to imaginary.

Throughout the space can be heard the sound sculpture by **Marcel Feillafe**, echoing footsteps and muffled conversations. The unmistakable ambient sounds of a large-scale art museum are funnelled into the small space of Kings Artist Run. Recorded as if bootlegging a concert, Feillafe wandered the halls of the Tate Modern in August 2011, wearing monitor headphones and waving around a high-definition handheld stereo mic. Whilst other museum goers busied themselves with capturing images of each work, Feillafe mopped up the remaining experience of the space, presenting it here as an inverse audio guide divorced from its origins.

Where other art tourists head home to sort their digital photo collection, Feillafe divides his audio samples into eight mono audio tracks, pushing each through a single speaker. As opposed to a surround sound recording (ultimately compressed and forced by artifice into an encompassing mirage), Feillafe assembles eight separate audio points of reference through the space of Kings. The act of photographing works in a museum seems to divorce the material work from its context, to steal its essence away from its home. Transferred to this small space on the other side of the globe, the audible, spacious reverberating sound transplants the context but strips away the art. It is a double-disappearing act, plunging the listener into a position somewhere between two limits, a liminal void. A space at once felt as vacuum and as crushing over-presence of sound.

Whilst Feillafe plunges the audience into the space of the in-between, **Simon O'Carrigan** samples an iconic piece of visual culture. Referencing the cult television series *Twin Peaks* (Mark Frost / David Lynch), O'Carrigan presents us with a pivotal moment within the series. O'Carrigan's triptych shows Major Garland Briggs vanishing from aside a campfire at which he sat with Special Agent Dale Cooper.

The two portraits in O'Carrigan's rendering sit either side of a shadowy, cloaked figure borne forward by bright light – a possibly ethereal character, appearing in this scene as an agent of transcendence. In the first panel Briggs washes out of focus, on the edge of vanishing. The final panel presents Cooper's reaction to finding no trace of Briggs. In contrast to Briggs' soft-focus, Coopers is rendered solid and bathed in the receding flash of light as Briggs and the unknown figure recede into the ether.

Briggs returns later in the series, and tells of a visit to the *White Lodge*. The premise for *Twin Peaks* focuses on a confused phenomenological series of disappearances. The moment that O'Carrigan has chosen to present us is no less shrouded in mystery. Underpinning the series is an ungraspable dialogue around two mythical realms, of what appears to be the stepping stone to an afterlife; the diametric opposites of the *Black* and *White Lodge's*, twin waiting rooms to hell and heaven entered into by ones emotional state – fear/hate or love; disappearing from the tangible boundaries of our known reality to an alternative space of existence. Foils not only in psychological state, Briggs and Cooper here are contrasted as those who disappear willingly and those who fear it.

Each artist has addressed *disappearance* in various forms of representation and ideologies; disappearance as extinction, fantasy, psychological monologue, the literary, the personal, the conceptual. Dependent on point of view, the notion of *disappearance* may be enveloped within vivid reality or the haze of psychological delusion; the flux or pull between positive or negative; it may be a result of outside force or a personal agency.

1–3. **Betra Fraval**
A Time of Disappearances
Gouache on Arches paper, Series of three, each: 115 x 90, 2011

4. **Marcel Feillafe**
Untitled
Sound sculpture, dimensions variable, 2011

5. **Drew Pettifer & Chris Bond**
Untitled (Benjamin in a tree, erased)
Oil on chromogenic print, 26 x 38cm, 2011

6. **Drew Pettifer & Chris Bond**
Untitled (Dylan balancing, erased)
Oil on chromogenic print, 26 x 38cm, 2011

7. **Drew Pettifer & Chris Bond**
Untitled (Dylan in a tree, erased)
Oil on chromogenic print, 26 x 38cm, 2011

8. **Lionel Bawden**
The Calling
Acrylic on canvas, 101 cm x 83.5 cm, 2010

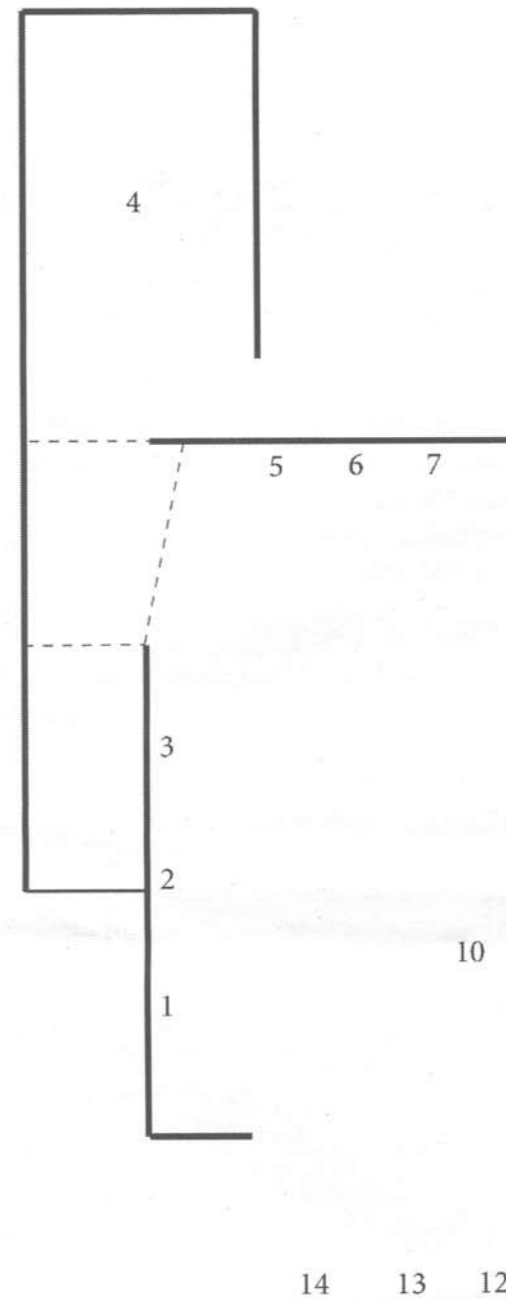
9. **Lionel Bawden**
The Fissure
Acrylic on canvas, 83.5 cm x 101 cm, 2010

10. **Kevin Chin**
Stuck on You
Sticker sheets, PVC, Ikea table, canvas, sea-animal marker pens, 75x120x75 cm, 2011
Not for sale

11. **Kevin Chin**
Under the Sea
Oil on canvas, 142 x 162 cm, 2011
Not for sale

12–14. **Simon O'Carrigan**
The Vanishing of Garland Briggs
Acrylic and oil on paper and panel, Triptych: each panel 40 x 35 cm

Further enquiries may be directed to the gallery attendant who can refer you to the artist / representation as applicable.



The artists gratefully acknowledge the support of the National Association for the Visual Arts. The Janet Holmes à Court Artist Grant is a NAVA initiative, made possible through the generous sponsorship of Janet Holmes à Court and the support of the Visual Arts Board, Australia Council for the Arts.

Lionel Bawden's work appears courtesy Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne.

Chris Bond's work appears courtesy Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne.

Simon O'Carrigan's work appears courtesy Daine Singer, Melbourne.