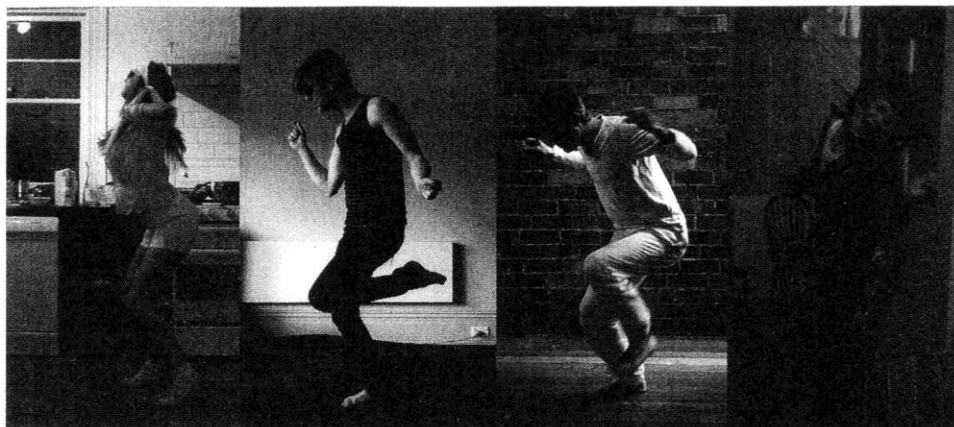


NEW08

Sarah Tutton

Gabrielle de Vietri, study for *Where's my community?*, 2008, instructional video, dance floor, dance performance, courtesy the artist and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne.



The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art's sixth incarnation of its annual showcase of young and emerging Australian artists, 'NEW08', was curated by Anna MacDonald, coordinator of the two previous NEWs. As with past shows, the exhibition was designed to provide audiences with access to the work of younger artists while at the same time providing these artists with the time, space and support to create an ambitious new work at a crucial moment in their career. 'NEW08' brought together new works by seven artists in an exhibition that despite its lack of an overarching theme revealed a number of shared concerns and tendencies.

Gabrielle de Vietri is a Melbourne-based artist largely known for her text-based works. Shifting into new territory, 'Where is my community?', 'Today is a day like no other' and 'Songs to people saying things I couldn't otherwise say' took her into the arena of dance, theatre and music with three intersecting meditations on the meaning of community, each performed on different days through the exhibition. At any one time audiences may have encountered dancers learning a new piece guided by an instructional video, musicians collaborating on a new song or actors repetitively enacting scenes of arrival and departure. Linking these disparate parts were *Studies for performances*, 2008, Fimo-sculpted objects referencing the performances, displayed on small shelves around the gallery. De Vietri brought together moments of humour, more than a hint of *So You Think You Can Dance*, and a nostalgia that harked back to a time when community was perhaps a less self-conscious affair.

Paul Knight's series of large-format photographs of couples having sex exhibited alongside sculpture pieces and a simple soundtrack similarly explored the bonds that tie us together. Knight is interested in the private world of intimate relationships. Stripping away any markers of personality, class, background and related narrative clues, *11 months, 17 days*, 2008, and *1 year, 8 months*, 2008, were confronting and explicit works. Knight photographed each couple from above, replicating the lighting and tight framing, and exhibiting three photographs of each couple. The focus was squarely on the physical, intimate language shared between each couple, exploring how the camera can represent the minutiae and uniqueness of bodily communication.

Chris Bond exhibited four linked but separate works that explored themes of duplication, facsimile and simulacra. The central work was the ambitious *Mirrorworld*, 2008, an expansive and meticulously crafted replica of the artist's living room and studio and its mirror image. Bond carefully placed pairs of everything – watering cans, plastic plates and cutlery, brooms, children's easels – on opposite sides of the room. In another work, a collection of books all titled *Flesh and Blood* looked familiar, yet they were all fictitious copies of types and genres that hinted at an illusive certainty. Likewise, *Twin set (Pollock)*, 2008, a pair of almost identical canvases with details taken from a Jackson Pollock

painting, played with the friction between the real and the copy. Like a 'Spot the Difference' newspaper game, these paintings were not quite the same, their differences artfully hidden to trick the viewer.

Continuing his interest in pattern-making and its history in both minimalist art and traditional Indigenous mark-making, Jonathan Jones's *SPEAK SOFTLY AND CARRY A BIG STICK*, 2008, stretched across the back wall of the gallery, a simple embossed zigzag pattern made from white-painted plywood, obscured at one end by two simple vertical columns covered with blue tarpaulin fabric and lit from within. As with many of Jones's works, this installation drew from multiple and complex sources – from Indigenous line-making to the work of abstract artist Tony Tuckson, at the same time nodding to contemporary debates on Aboriginal community housing.

Daniel Argyle's installation of re-purposed record covers also brought together visual references from multiple sources. Argyle foraged through record shops and second-hand shops to discover classics by Django Reinhardt, Judy Garland and Ella Fitzgerald. With 111 albums accumulated, Argyle set about cutting out an ornamental lattice pattern – sourced from a seventeenth-century Pakistani hunting palace known as *jali* – from the back of the covers and placing this over the cover artwork. What emerged was an image that combined hints of the original cover overlaid with a heavy geometric pattern. Displayed in vertical and horizontal rows on the gallery wall, the geometry loomed large, while on the floor lay a clay replica of the *jali* pattern.

Matt Hinkley's intricate, abstract drawings in pencil and Texta on found pieces of paper – a Pantone palette sheet, a page from the London *Financial Times* – were exhibited within a purpose-built room brightly lit by fluorescent tubes that created a more intimate, scaled down environment for viewing. Hinkley continued his interest in mark-making and patterning, transforming humble materials through repetitious, labour-intensive processes. These drawings were muted, delicate and ephemeral, indicating a shift in register in relation to some of the bolder works in the exhibition.

Sandra Selig is an artist with a growing reputation for her large-scale installations. Displayed within a blackened room, *Lensing room*, 2008, was a rather disorientating installation that used light and acetate to create an illusion of altered space. A globe surrounded by a circle of phosphorescent white paint slowly pulsed on and off, reflecting on shimmering sheets of Perspex suspended from the roof. Depth and distance were disrupted and the exterior world beyond the gallery shut out to create a place that was both contemplative and unnerving.

NEW08: Daniel Argyle, Matt Hinkley, Sandra Selig, Chris Bond, Gabrielle de Vietri, Paul Knight, Jonathan Jones, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 12 March – 11 May 2008.