



**INTRODUCTION**  
**ANNA MACDONALD**

During *Today is a Day Like No Other*, one of a series of performances presented by Gabrielle de Vietri for *NEVER*, a group of people cluster together, going inertly upon a bare section of the gallery's wall. De Vietri has instructed this troupe of actors to look at the wall as if it were an art object. Their reverent and questioning expressions, directed towards a blank space, may be mistaken for a critique of contemporary art practice, a cheap jab at the expanded definition of a work of art. Certainly, contagious behaviour is at the heart of this project: if one person directs her gaze with enough confidence and curiosity, before long the eyes of others will follow. But in that pursuit and despite that confidence and curiosity, the gallery visitor is not led to perceive in the wall a work of art. Rather, it is the relationship between the viewer and an encountered image which is of interest to de Vietri, and which forms one part of a broader exploration of the negotiation of subjectivity within collective social encounters.

The relationship between viewers – our selves – and a work of art is a negotiation. The stakes may not always be as high as those attending our interpersonal relationships, but our shared histories can be as long – longer even – and as complex. As with social encounters, we invest images with meaning. We can't help it: it happens naturally (often unconsciously). We feel our reaction before we know it, before we begin to make comparisons and to draw conclusions, before we can articulate a response and make it known to others, before our personal meaning and memory morph in the process of becoming collective.

To varying degrees, the work of each artist in this year's *NEW* selection recalls the negotiated encounter between a self and a work of art. It emerges as a concert with optics and the way our eyes work with our brains (and without our brains about it) in order to complete a partial pattern or to decipher shapes of light in the dark. It's there in a delicacy of mark-making that draws the viewer gradually closer (and still closer) to an image, towards a more intimate relationship with the work and a growing awareness of the materials used in its realisation. Elsewhere, it can be found in the form of a Borzochio blot composed not of ink, but from everyday household and art-making materials, yet that nevertheless sparks similar associative processes in its abstract symmetry. The negotiated encounter is everywhere in the gallery, whether we avert our eyes from an image or open ourselves up to the unguarded discovery of a work of art.

Like de Vietri, Paul Knight explores human interaction. In a series of photographs, brittle cement sculptures and a sound piece, he captures the native tension within intimate social relationships. Knight has pared away the accomplishments of each photographed liaison. The camera is fixed, the lighting identical in each frame. The usual markers of personality, with which we confer character and construct narrative are not to be found here. Instead, we are witness to the physical and emotional mediation of a shared space. Like his fragile sculptures which echo and amplify the form of an umbilical cord and his ambient audio work (the sound of two falling wooden blocks gradually knocking in, out and back into, sync with each other), Knight's photographs capture the lure and release of a private, deeply personal negotiation. One that is then held up for public view. These photographs are stripped of the distractions that delight a wandering eye. They revoke our viewer's capacity to avert our direct gaze yet dwell within the picture frame. Turn away and we are left with the uncomfortable impression of having witnessed something private, something forbidden. However, if we allow ourselves to look, let our eyes linger upon the physical details – the forensic evidence – other signs of life begin to emerge.

In Knight's *NEW* body of work, individual subjectivity shifts and reasserts itself through intimate coupling, or for the viewer, as a result of observing that coupling in forensic detail. For Chris Bond, coupling also has a role to play. The two halves of his three-dimensional *Minorworld* *Rorschach* blot become meaningful – the beauty of their symmetry, the order they create from chaos is revealed – in their effortless accord. In their handmade repetition, Bond's paired facsimile objects and paintings lead the viewer to a consideration of failure and obsolescence, to a search for the flaw that distinguishes one representation from another, before our personal meaning and memory morph in the process of becoming collective.

Human mark-making is central to the work of both Daniel Angley and Jonathan Jones, as is the concern with the apparent obsolescence of certain historical markings and materials. Where Angley can be found in the form of a Borzochio blot composed not of ink, but from everyday household and art-making materials, yet that nevertheless sparks similar associative processes in its abstract symmetry. The negotiated encounter is everywhere in the gallery, whether we avert our eyes from an image or open ourselves up to the unguarded discovery of a work of art.

**CHRIS BOND**

Chris Bond uses fiction to create parallel worlds of eerie authenticity. In the last decade he has constructed false identities, made artwork on behalf of other people, transformed found objects into painted artifacts, simulated standard modes of artistic presentation and written himself into art history. He is particularly interested in decay, failure and obsolescence, leading to bodies of work that chart the decline and fall of originality as an artistic ideal.

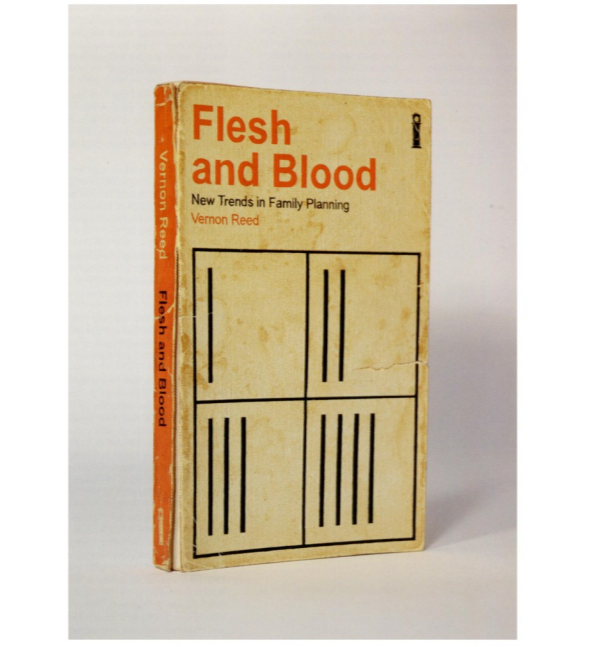
Selected solo exhibitions include *White*, Nelle Castan Gallery, Melbourne, 2008 (*Borzochning*); *Shelved*, Nelle Castan Gallery, Melbourne, 2005; *Survey*, 2000–04, Bus, Melbourne, 2004; *Project Room*, Melbourne Art Fair 04, Melbourne, 2004; *Original Tale*, *Translated*, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, 2003; *The Hitchcock / Fellmar Affair*, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, 2002; *Still Life*, *spaces* contemporary art gallery, Melbourne, 2002; 444, TCB inc Art, Melbourne, 2000.

Selected group exhibitions include *United Artists*, Palais Theatre, Melbourne, 2008; *Smaif Quiet Gestures*, Linden Gallery, Melbourne, 2007; *The Space In Between*, VCA/Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne, 2007; *Postscript*, Project Space, RMIT University, Melbourne, 2006; *Awkward Balance*, Blindside Gallery, Melbourne, 2005; *Self-made Man*, Spacemart Gallery, Melbourne, 2005; *Convered*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, 2005; *Bizarroforms*, *monetary psychological disturbances*, *GrandPrime Gallery*, Sydney, 2005; *Third History*, TCB inc Art, Melbourne, 2004; *Cult Classic*, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, 2004; *I heard it on the grapevine...*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2003; *Depth of Field*, Shepparton Art Gallery, Shepparton, 2003; *The Museum Aesthetic*, Gallery 101, Melbourne, 2003; *Art and Film*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 2003; *Light Trap* Philosophy, *hardly the stuff of murder and mayhem*, Thea Pater Gallery, Melbourne, 2002; *Glacier*, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, 2001; *A Brush with Death*, LaTrobe St Gallery, Melbourne, 2000.

Bond studied Studio Fine Art at RMIT University, Melbourne, 1984–7, and held a studio residency at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, 2001 – 03.

Chris Bond is represented by Nelle Castan Gallery, Melbourne.

**THE RESURRECTIONIST**  
**ASHLEY CRAWFORD**



**CHRIS BOND**

Chris Bond is a busy man. He has simultaneously become a renowned footballer, an accountant, a successful guitarist and the star of a YouTube spoof based on that other, slightly better known Bond, James. Indeed, that is just the beginning. With 31,600 mentions on the web Chris Bond is a pretty popular guy.

That is more than can be said for the authors of the books sharing the title *Flesh and Blood* which the artist Chris Bond has painstakingly reproduced on canvas for this exhibition. There are a number of Google hits for Arturo Silvestri, Kathy Galler and Lee Ostrum but none of them appears to have authored a tome called *Flesh and Blood*.

There is a Patrick Verheggen who is a real estate agent specialising in properties on Mlaui, and another who is Senior Vice President of Corporate Industrial Ecology at the Hickom in Zurich, but neither seem likely to have come up with such a fond title.

There are real books with the title *Flesh and Blood* by such authors as Michael Cunningham and Jonathan Kellerman. It is also the title of the tenth series of the science fiction television series *Stargate SG-1*. But these are distinctly of this world.

In Bond's alternate reality the grisly cover of Michael Lambert's *Flesh and Blood*, if we judge the book by its cover, is a crime and/or horror thriller published by Locke Books. To a search on Locke Books and one inevitably stumbles upon the philosophical writings of John Locke published by Routledge Philosophy, hardly the stuff of murder and mayhem. There is a Wentworth Press based in Sydney, but to all appearances it has never published *Flesh and Blood* by Norton Hayworth. But of course academics and journalists alien to their charges, have learnt that Google is often far from any true reality.

I first came across the term simulacrum as a teenager when I read my first Philip K. Dick novel, the 1964 conspiracy story *The Simulacra* (which had a cover Bond would have loved). In Dick's book everything about America (sales and even the President) is an android, a not implausible theory today. The Latin term simulacrum seems to have first entered the English lexicon some time in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century largely to define a copy of a holy relic. And there is, of course, something about Chris Bond's work that hints at a precious object, something rescued and cherished. But over time sacred images, like sacred texts,

are re-inscribed time and again, becoming distorted and often diluted in the process, thus simulacrum became a term to suggest degradation of an image.

In recent decades however the simulacrum has taken on vast new dimensions via the disparate writings of such philosophers as Jean Baudrillard and Gilles Deleuze and the explosion of popularity of Philip K. Dick. Baudrillard and Dick clearly influence the notion of 'what is real' in such films as *The Truman Show*, *Matrix* and *Existenz*. Baudrillard of course held that a simulacrum is not a copy of the real, but becomes a 'truth' in its own right, a notion that can be applied directly to Chris Bond's exquisite paintings.

But simultaneously there is something distinctly unnerving about this notion, as captured in Dick's books and one of the key films inspired by them, *Blade Runner*, in which memories are implanted in 'replicants' – organic machines that are largely unaware of their own artificiality. The key to the power of *Blade Runner* is its melancholy, a future full of dusty books and photographs. And of course a key to the appeal of Chris Bond's works are their sense of past; his book covers are replete with wear and tear, folds, rips and scratches, as real in appearance as the real.

In a strange way Bond is a resurrectionist; he scours old bookshops in much the same way as grave-robbars undertook the secret disinterment of bodies for anatomical lessons before the UK Anatomy Act of 1832. Books, like bodies, hold memories and both bear the scars of their lives and those who loved them. The resurrectionist would deliver the bodies to medical schools where students were encouraged to draw their subjects with rigorous realism, much the same as Bond. Books are not literally alive, but they contain simulacra of other lives and events, and carry the musty melancholic scent of the past.

A part of Bond's strange lust for these objects is purely graphic. Late last year the Miegunyah Press alongside the State Library of Victoria produced the marvellous book about books: *The World of the Book*. Chris Bond would love it. It's a cornucopia of the old and the new, from illuminated manuscripts to paperback pulp fiction, from ancient medical tomes to comic books.

As *The World of the Book* tells it, the first Penguin books went on sale on July 30, 1935, priced at 6s/6d and designed, like Dick's book everything about America (sales and even the President) is an android, a not implausible theory today. The Latin term simulacrum seems to have first entered the English lexicon some time in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century largely to define a copy of a holy relic. And there is, of course, something about Chris Bond's work that hints at a precious object, something rescued and cherished. But over time sacred images, like sacred texts,

are re-inscribed time and again, becoming distorted and often diluted in the process, thus simulacrum became a term to suggest degradation of an image.

In recent decades however the simulacrum has taken on vast new dimensions via the disparate writings of such philosophers as Jean Baudrillard and Gilles Deleuze and the explosion of popularity of Philip K. Dick. Baudrillard and Dick clearly influence the notion of 'what is real' in such films as *The Truman Show*, *Matrix* and *Existenz*. Baudrillard of course held that a simulacrum is not a copy of the real, but becomes a 'truth' in its own right, a notion that can be applied directly to Chris Bond's exquisite paintings.

But simultaneously there is something distinctly unnerving about this notion, as captured in Dick's books and one of the key films inspired by them, *Blade Runner*, in which memories are implanted in 'replicants' – organic machines that are largely unaware of their own artificiality. The key to the power of *Blade Runner* is its melancholy, a future full of dusty books and photographs. And of course a key to the appeal of Chris Bond's works are their sense of past; his book covers are replete with wear and tear, folds, rips and scratches, as real in appearance as the real.

In a strange way Bond is a resurrectionist; he scours old bookshops in much the same way as grave-robbars undertook the secret disinterment of bodies for anatomical lessons before the UK Anatomy Act of 1832. Books, like bodies, hold memories and both bear the scars of their lives and those who loved them. The resurrectionist would deliver the bodies to medical schools where students were encouraged to draw their subjects with rigorous realism, much the same as Bond. Books are not literally alive, but they contain simulacra of other lives and events, and carry the musty melancholic scent of the past.

A part of Bond's strange lust for these objects is purely graphic. Late last year the Miegunyah Press alongside the State Library of Victoria produced the marvellous book about books: *The World of the Book*. Chris Bond would love it. It's a cornucopia of the old and the new, from illuminated manuscripts to paperback pulp fiction, from ancient medical tomes to comic books.

As *The World of the Book* tells it, the first Penguin books went on sale on July 30, 1935, priced at 6s/6d and designed, like Dick's book everything about America (sales and even the President) is an android, a not implausible theory today. The Latin term simulacrum seems to have first entered the English lexicon some time in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century largely to define a copy of a holy relic. And there is, of course, something about Chris Bond's work that hints at a precious object, something rescued and cherished. But over time sacred images, like sacred texts,

are re-inscribed time and again, becoming distorted and often diluted in the process, thus simulacrum became a term to suggest degradation of an image.

