Stella Brennan
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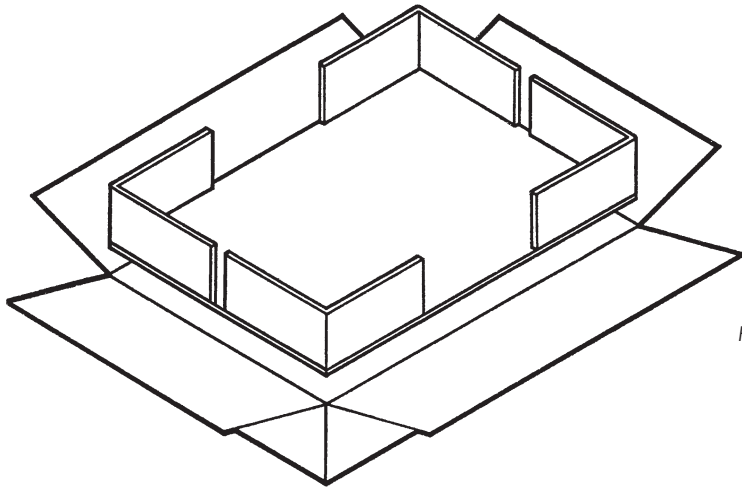
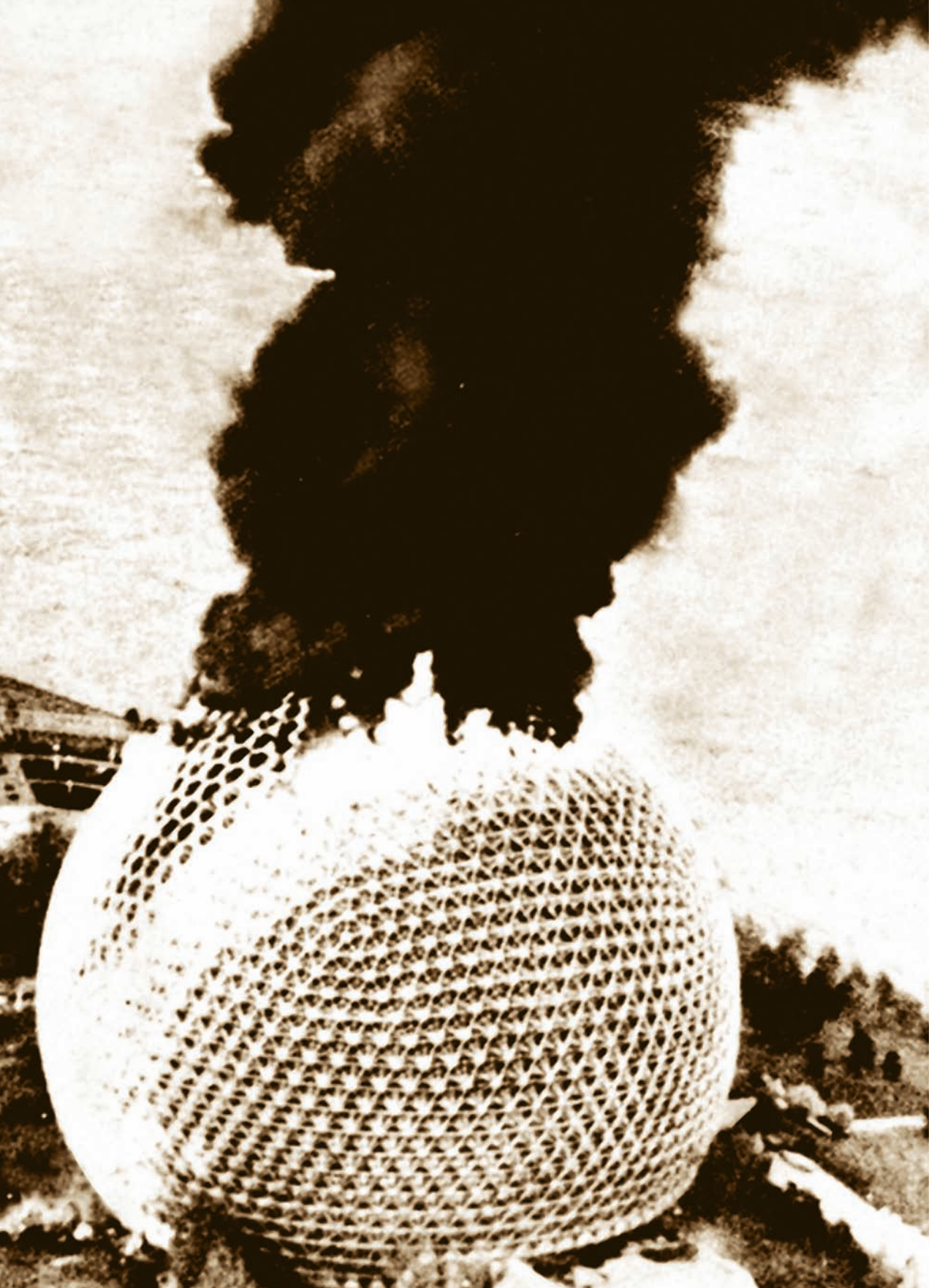


For My Teachers

COVER: 2005 *Light Universe / Dark Universe*
INSIDE COVER: *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* - detail, reverse and face
ABOVE: *Another Green World* - wall drawing



HISTORY CURATOR
ROBERT LEONARD

A small image in Stella Brennan's 2004 exhibition Tomorrow Never Knows gave me pause. Her digital print reproduced an aerial view of a gigantic geodesic dome on fire, a plume of dark toxic smoke billowing from its pre-fab acrylic panels. It could have been a riff on Ed Ruscha's *The Los Angeles County Museum of Art on Fire* (1965-8), except that Brennan's fantastic image was for real, a genuine news photo of Buckminster Fuller's forward-looking US Pavilion for the 1967 Montreal World's Fair, a "symbol of man and his world". In 1976 a welding accident started the fire and all the acrylic cladding melted away in just half an hour, the mishap making geodesic domes a somewhat harder sell. Brennan chanced on the image flicking through the 1978 instalment of *Shelter*, the faddish "scrapbook of building ideas", in its special section on dome building. To me Brennan's purloined image conjured up those 1970s disaster movies obsessed with the hubris of Think Big projects and looked forward to Chernobyl, Bhopal and 9/11. Brennan reproduced the shot as a sepia duotone, but this styling was tongue-in-cheek, her aim being to puncture romanticism, curdle nostalgia.

Brennan maps modern times from a postmodern vantage point. Her work explores the history and currency of modernity, the dream of human perfectibility and emancipation premised on rationality, technology, progress. She researches modernity's grand schemes and utopian ideologies, and their fate in the brave new world of the present. Her perspective is consciously generational. As she puts it: "Being 25 at the start of the 21st century has given me a fairly intensive experience of millennial preoccupation. I have looked on as my childhood dreams of Space and Armageddon turned into the Challenger disaster and UN Peacekeeping missions." Born in 1974, Brennan missed the Paris riots and the Moon landing, events that would shape her world, and inherited feminism and greenie politics as givens. She did however witness the digital revolution first hand.

In her MFA dissertation, Brennan offers the night sky as a metaphor for history. She points out that the light from distant stars takes years to reach us. The Crab Supernova remnant is about

4,000 light years away, and the Andromeda Galaxy 2.3 million. We see them as they looked aeons ago. The stars themselves have long since moved on; some are dead. Astronomers are like archaeologists, they read the night sky as layered with historical traces. In doing so they realise that the stars' appearance says as much about us, about the unique location in space-time from which we regard them. Brennan's works emulate this condition, enfolding distinct moments, even distinct historical epochs, but always with an eye to the here and now. Take her 2001-2 stitch-per-pixel embroidery of her iMac OS 8 desktop. It took over a year to do, and she needed help; a sewing circle of friends and family helped complete it. And, by the time it was done, it was obsolete. Brennan had a new computer, running OS X. Translating the digital into the pre-industrial, Brennan's work yokes opposing values – the computer screen's currency, immateriality and speed with craft's traditionalism, materiality and laboriousness; the ubiquity of the iMac, the quaintness of stitchery.

The woven computer screen can be read as daft, wrong, like an expressionist painting converted into paint-by-numbers. Perhaps the artist didn't really understand computers, what was at stake in them, their revolutionary implication. It can also be read as deft when it prompts the consideration of more subtle historical connections. Brennan recalls the use of punch cards to programme automated Jacquard weaving looms during the industrial revolution, and Ada Lovelace's proposal to use them to programme Charles Babbage's analytical engine, the proto-computer. The piece suggests questions for feminists and Marxists. Was the automation of traditional women's work liberating or oppressive? Were women – are women – the winners or losers with industrialisation?

Brennan's time-hungry work asks that the viewer take time to consider such things. Although the title – Tuesday 3 July 2001, 10:38am – suggests an instant, the piece enfolds time: the time taken to view the work, the time taken to make the work, and the whole stretch of technological, economic and social progress from the Bayeux Tapestry through the industrial revolution to the Macintosh. Brennan certainly puts an interesting spin on On Kawara.

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Brennan relates the daft-to-deft flip to cargo cults. These religious and social movements developed when isolated Melanesians

were suddenly confronted with the products of industrial modernity. Lacking the back-story of their function and evolution, they read Western commodities through their own values, making weird sense of them. Cargo cults show us not only the strange ways that outsiders can read our commodities, but also the peculiarity and contingency of our own understanding of them. They make us consider not only the gaps in their understanding, but also the assumptions and blind spots that underpin the naturalism of our own common sense.

Like cargo cultists, Brennan misreads. It takes a little while to work
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out what's wrong with her video diptych ZenDV (2002). Brennan ran the digital blue screen and colour bars through a filter that emulates the scratched textures of celluloid film. Today's movie-makers use this effect to imbue pristine digital images with authentic analogue texture, feeding our nostalgic desire for reassuring grain. And yet the irony of this work is that the blue screen and colour bars are the last things you would apply the effect to: they never had grain. Similarly, Brennan's title promotes her videos as devotional objects when surely only a Martian or a bewildered head-hunter would make the mistake of meditating upon them. Like the embroidery, *ZenDV* enfolds time. It makes us ponder our evolution from analogue to digital, and the tricks we play on ourselves to soften the transition.

Brennan creates evocative mixed-up structures. For her 2001
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installation The Fountain City, she walled off the space with polystyrene blocks. The wall was lit from within using fluorescent tubes, giving it an ethereal temple-glow. At one end, a head-sized gap allowed viewers to inspect the wall's interior spaces, which suggested vaulted architectures both ancient and space age. The utopian title recalled the Emerald City of Oz; in fact it is Hamilton city's official tourist moniker. Brennan added a soundtrack of downloaded waterfall samples so tragically compressed they actually sounded unnatural, more like white noise. At once primitive and futuristic, natural and artificial, secular and religious, *The Fountain City* defied interpretation. It suggested the telescoped histories that typify science-fiction, where mud huts have hydraulic doors, people ride personal hovercraft but wear bearskins and still believe in the divine right of kings. Science-fiction is deranged history, carnivalised history. Sometimes it serves to

obliterate historical understanding – as if to make us believe that somewhere mud huts with hydraulic doors might be possible. Sometimes in offering an estranged vision of the present it sharpens our consciousness of history, alerting us to contradictions.

The cargo cult idea has relevance for another reason. We live in a world of technology so advanced that no one really understands it. Legend has it that only one person in the world knows the complete process of microchip assembly; others know bits of the process only. In many ways we are ourselves cargo cultists, recipients of advanced cultural material we can't fathom. Brennan alludes to this in iBook Triptych (2002), where she monumentalises flatbed scans of the underside of her lovely new laptop – the latest – and the polystyrene packaging that came with it. She blew up the images as large as possible, tiling prints like she were Voyager photographing a distant planet, too big to capture in a single pass. However the lush information-rich images don't tell us anything worth knowing about the computer. The polystyrene husks are irrelevant, and even the computer's shell is just packaging of a kind. What is remarkable about computer technology isn't visible to the eye. And perhaps that's why computer design has to be so slick and fashionable, because we don't register technology's advance unless it comes in a new-fangled box with surprising new desktop gimmicks. Brennan succumbs to the culture's general fetishisation of packaging, scrutinising it up close, like a dumb ape checking out the surface of the monolith in Kubrick's *2001*, with no idea how it works. The quasi-religious dimension of Brennan's fascination is signalled by the altarpiece format.

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Brennan's oeuvre lacks stylistic consistency. One minute she's using cheap polystyrene packaging to parody retro-moderne interior design, the next videotaping rustic salt-glazed pots as her computer mindlessly recites Hundertwasser's "Mould Manifesto". But however disparate the works are in appearance they are linked by a consistent methodology. Brennan's sculptural language, if you can call it a language, is not expressive (it isn't about saying something), it's more experimental (it asks: what happens if I put this with that?). Locked on readymades, found objects, artefacts, her approach consists of presenting them, re-presenting them, arranging them, juxtaposing them, and translating or processing one through another.

This approach has its basis in Marxist dialectics. The Marxist-modernist idea – that history involves a dynamic interplay of antagonistic forces that resolve into a higher synthesis – has long been influential on artists. Modernist artists have frequently brokered bad marriages between odd elements – images, styles and processes – to release contradictions or expose unexpected sympathies. The idea particularly inspired those 1960s radicals, the Situationists, whose favourite strategy was code-crashing, which they called *detournement*: deflecting, diverting, rerouting, distorting, misusing, misappropriating and hijacking chunks of dominant discourse to expose its ideological undercarriage. Brennan however prefers to see her dialectical practice less in terms of antagonism than ambivalence.

Brennan is not only an artist, she's also a curator and writer. Not only do Brennan's curatorial projects provide a useful entry point into her art, the very idea of curating does. Her art is essentially about artefacts, researching them, presenting them, reframing them. This was Brennan's own point when, in the face of harsh opposition from Elam's powers-that-be, she insisted on curating a group show rather than offering a solo exhibition as her final MFA submission. *Nostalgia for the Future*, at Artspace in 1999, explored the recuperation of passé modernist style as retro-chic.

Modernity is a culture of eternal newness but also one of eternal return. Things go out of fashion but come back; today's rubbish is tomorrow's antique. Walter Benjamin argued that commodities attain a strong critical force when they drop out of fashion, when they are abject and nasty, before being recuperated as "vintage", before they become *That 1970s Show*. Brennan's centrepiece, Guy Ngan's techno-futuristic 1973 *Mural for the Newton Post Office* was a great example. It had been "permanently" installed in the Post Office beneath Artspace but, deemed unfashionable, it had been removed during a late 1980s revamp and dumped in the basement. Rescued for the show, the work opened up a forgotten vista of art (Ministry of Works modernism) and utopian social engineering (town planning). It surprised.

If the Ngan was an artefact that Brennan rescued, the other works, all recent, were actually or metaphorically rescued artefacts. Julian Dashper stretched garish old fabric to make a painting;

Fiona Amundsen photographed our old motorway interchange, Spaghetti Junction; Mikala Dwyer's work included a Danish designer lampshade from her childhood; Jim Speers' lightbox looked like a deposed sign for the global systems-and-control company. Brennan presented two works of her own: a signature wall painting represented the groovy logo for Stella, a long defunct local electronics company; and Zen, a video of a DIY kinetic light sculpture (she made it from instructions in a hobbyist manual) back-projected onto an etched glass door, accompanied by a shrill electronic whine. There was a strong curatorial voice to the show and one almost had the sense that Brennan had effectively appropriated the other artists' works as her own. The pieces she chose operated within her art's existing concerns, syntax and rationale. Whether the show was Benjamin's critical wake-up call or the advanced guard of recuperation was too close too call.

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Brennan is hardly the first artist to develop such a research-based and curatorial approach to art making. Precursors and reference points would have to include England's Independent Group, those pioneers of Pop Art, particularly Richard Hamilton's 1955 ICA show *Man, Machine and Motion* and various members' contributions to the Whitechapel's 1956 exhibition *This Is Tomorrow*. Enamoured of new technologies, mass media, popular culture and other latest-things-in-latest-things, these Independent Group displays blurred any distinction between art and artefact, gallery and museum show. In the 1960s and 1970s there was also the research-based art-writing projects of Americans Dan Graham (reading a wider social context into minimalism) and Robert Smithson (with his trippy telescoped histories and sci-fi themes). Smithson's essay "Entropy and the New Monuments" is one of Brennan's touchstones. Also, in the late 1980s, Jewish-American artist Haim Steinbach presented commodities and other items on his Juddian signature shelves suggesting shop displays. His juxtaposed artefacts literally told time (clocks), moved in time (lava lamps and wave machines), and hailed from or referenced different epochs (antique Victorian money banks, contemporary latex vampire masks, rocks). Steinbach's works folded time; they played with newness and nostalgia.

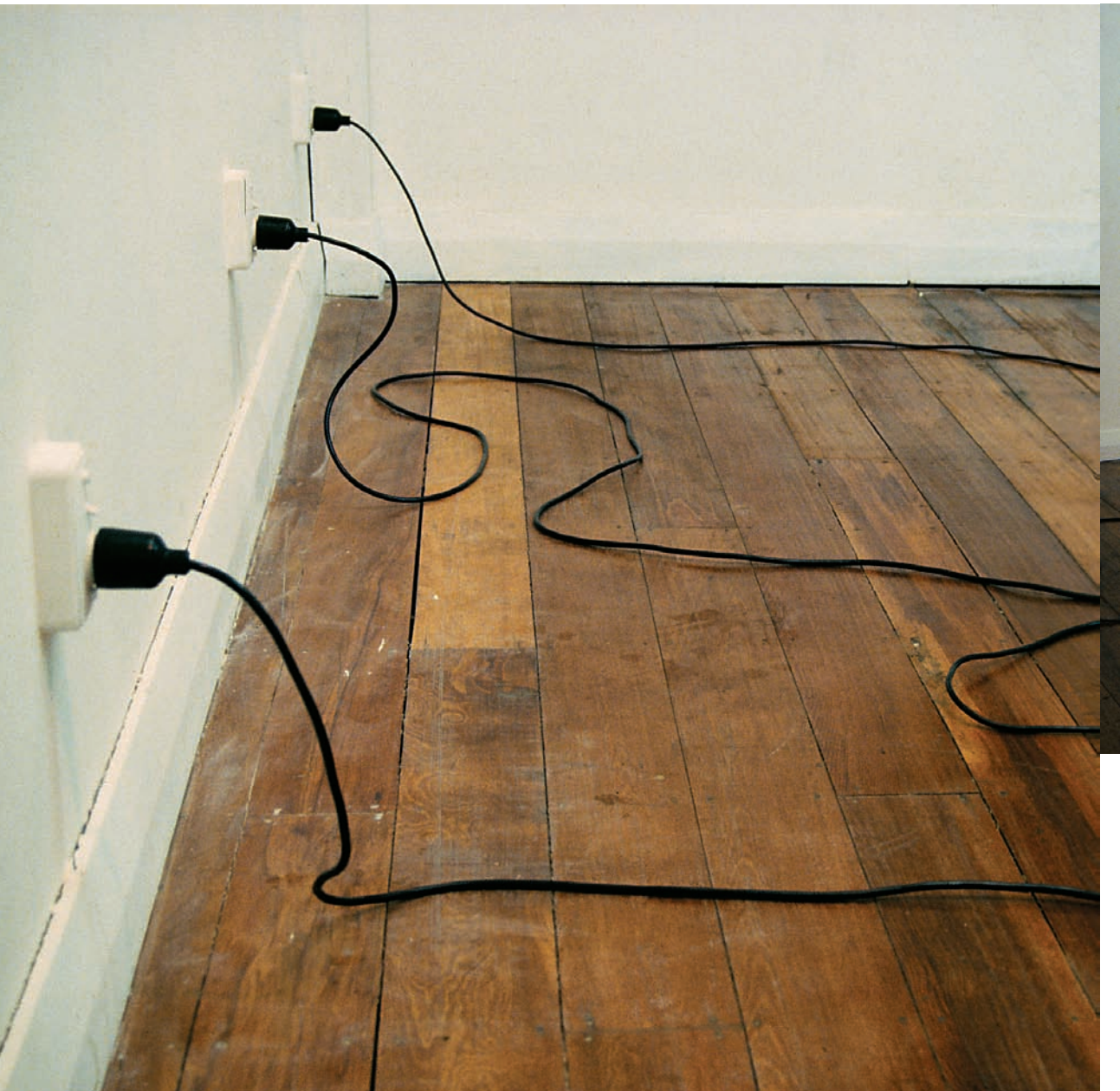
The most apposite point of comparison, however, may well be another New Zealand artist, a contemporary. Michael Stevenson's

recent social-history displays perversely align evidence – artefacts, documents, reconstructions and quotes – to provide stranger-than-fiction views of the recent past. For instance his project *This is the Trekka* at the 2003 Venice Biennale uncovered the story of New Zealand's attempt to manufacture a New Zealand car in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Stevenson's show drew on historical ironies. Although Cold War New Zealand aligned itself with America, it operated like a communist centralised command economy. While the quest to build Trekkas was informed by burgeoning nationalism and kiwi can-do, their guts actually came from Czechoslovakia; our national car was premised on behind-the-iron-curtain trade deals. Stevenson's time-warped show looked like a reconstructed period trade display; its amateurishness and boosterism were tragic. This was neither how we remembered history, nor how we wanted to.

The comparison with Stevenson allows us to distinguish Brennan's approach. Stevenson's exhibition totally fulfilled Benjamin's imperative, using forgotten, unfashionable, even repellent material from the recent past for critical leverage, to disorient the viewer and prise open history and rewrite it. It was a veritable "return of the repressed". Stevenson wasn't at all interested in recuperating the Trekka as cool. He's totally sceptical about coolness, but Brennan isn't. She is far more conflicted. Feeling seduced and abandoned by old modernist ideologies (and anticipating similar ecstasies and agonies at the hands of new ones), she identifies *and* prepares to criticise. The Benjamin in her holds out against the recuperation of the just past, but the rest of her is a sucker for it. Caught in a constant flip-flop, her achievement lies in being able to sustain and explore her ambivalence. She explains it more simply: "These things are really beautiful, but they are also quite troubling."

Robert Leonard is the new director of Brisbane's Institute of Modern Art.

PLATES 1998 – 2003



1998 *Parallel* – electrical cable

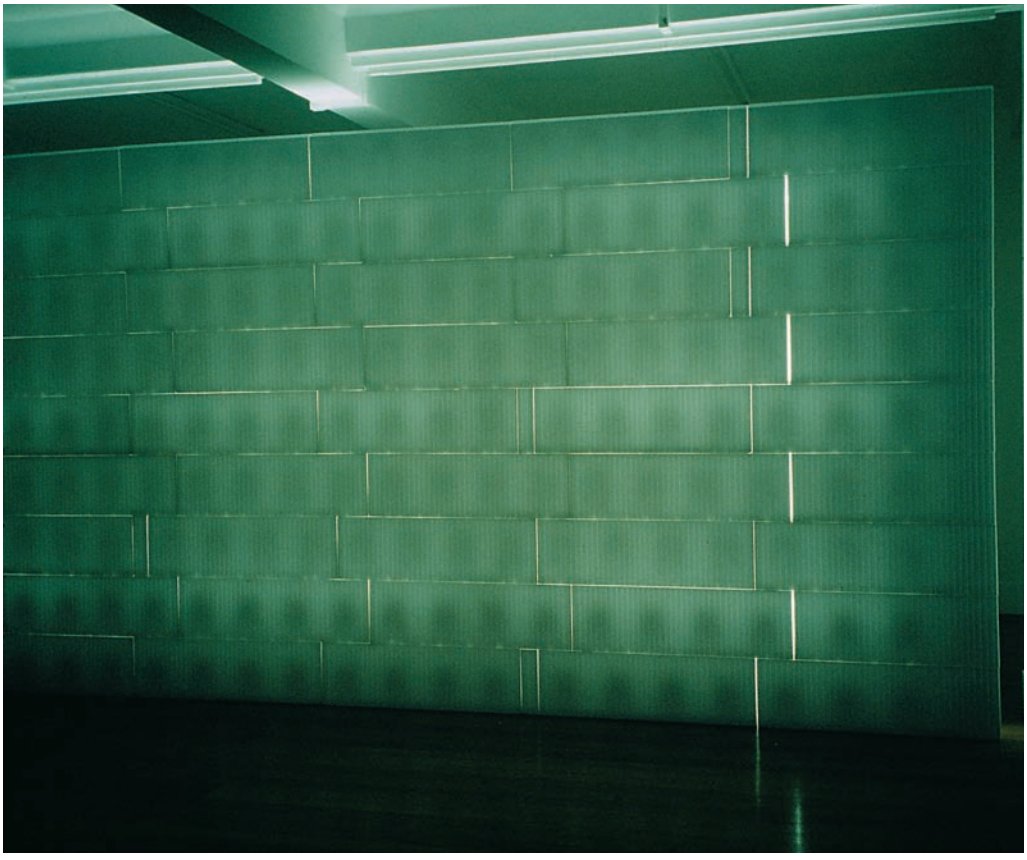
1998 *Untitled* – silicone rubber, sterile packaging

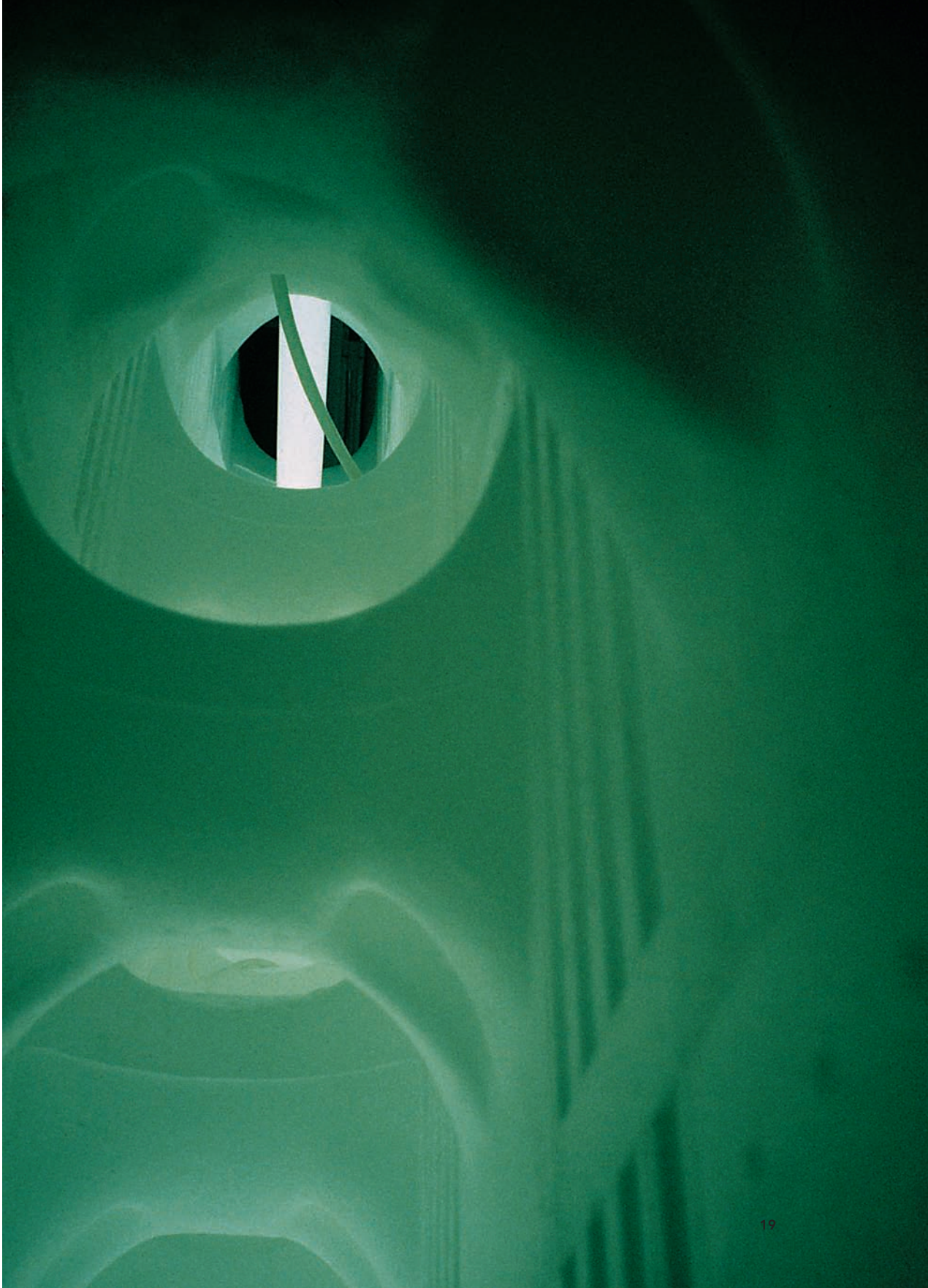
WIPAK MEDICAL
STERILISING E7
120 x 400 mm
4¾" x 15¾"

1999 *Zen* – video projection with 15 500Hz tone


stella

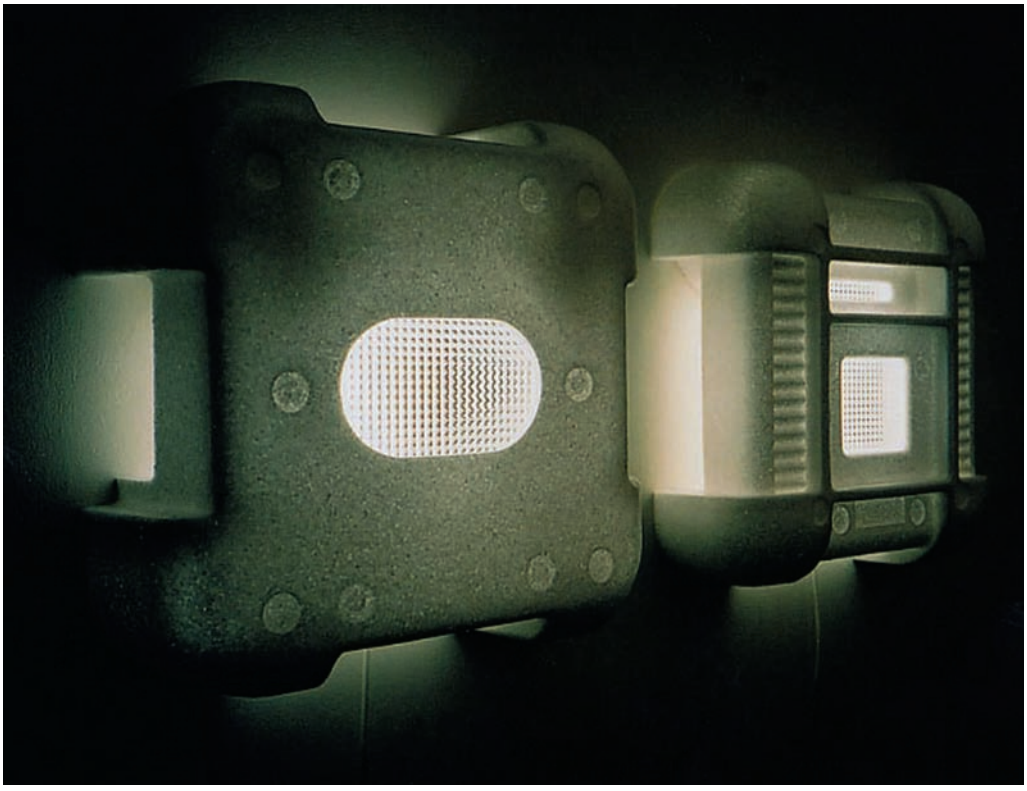
2000 *The Fountain City* – polystyrene building forms, fluorescent light, sound





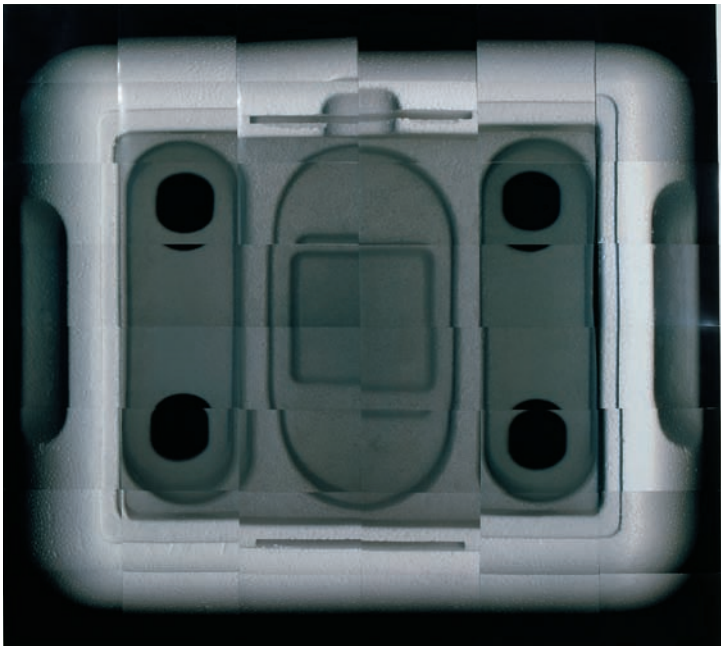
2000 *Fedex* – polystyrene, polyurethane, glass, fluorescent light

 2000 *Fedex - detail*

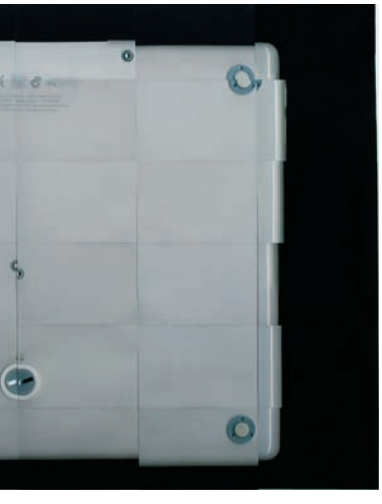


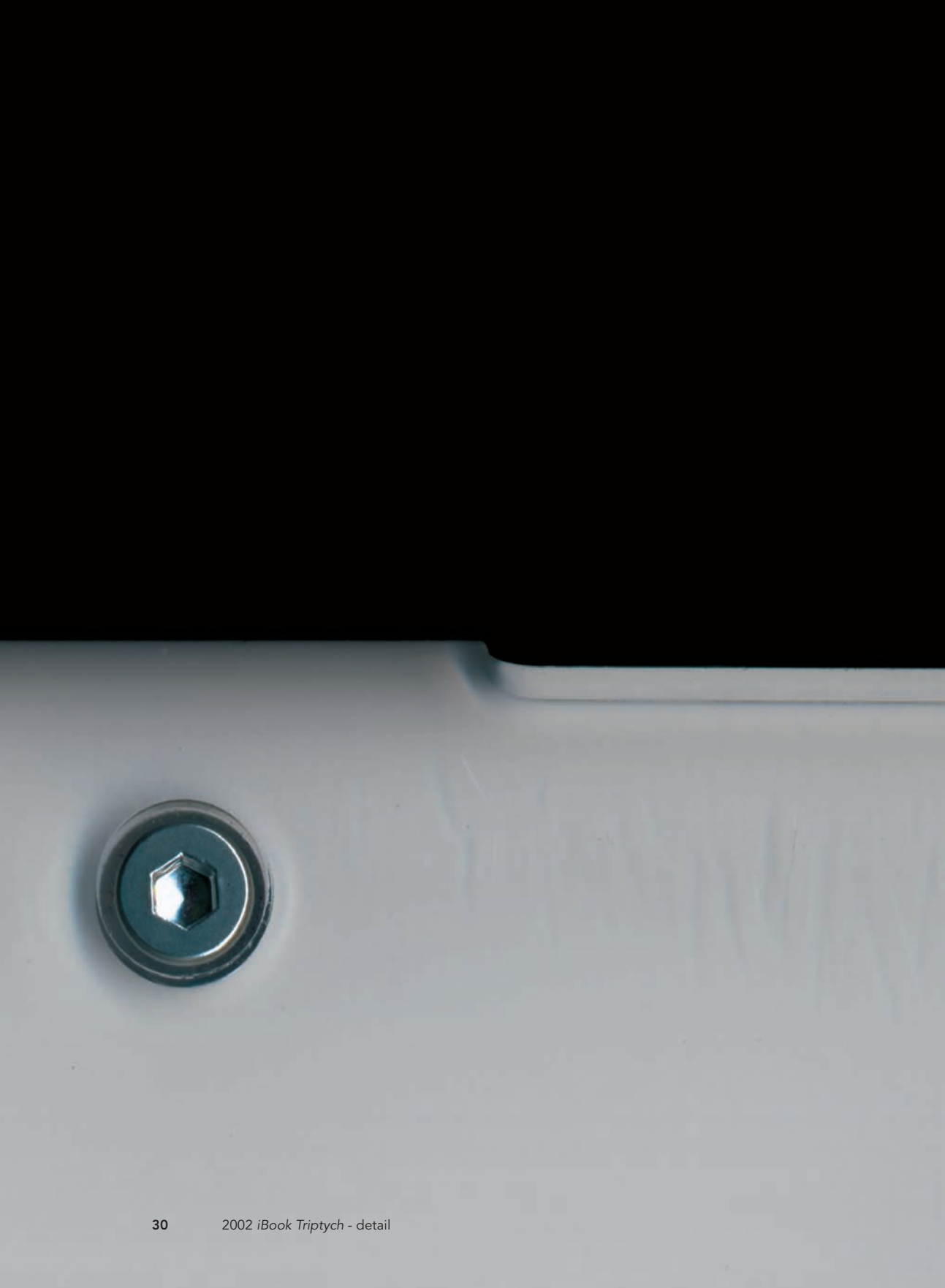
2001 *Studio Monitor* – polystyrene, acrylic, fluorescent light

2002 *Another Green World* – digital prints, data projections, wall drawing, hire plants, fluorescent light



2002 *iBook Triptych* - digital prints, each approx. 1700 x 1600mm



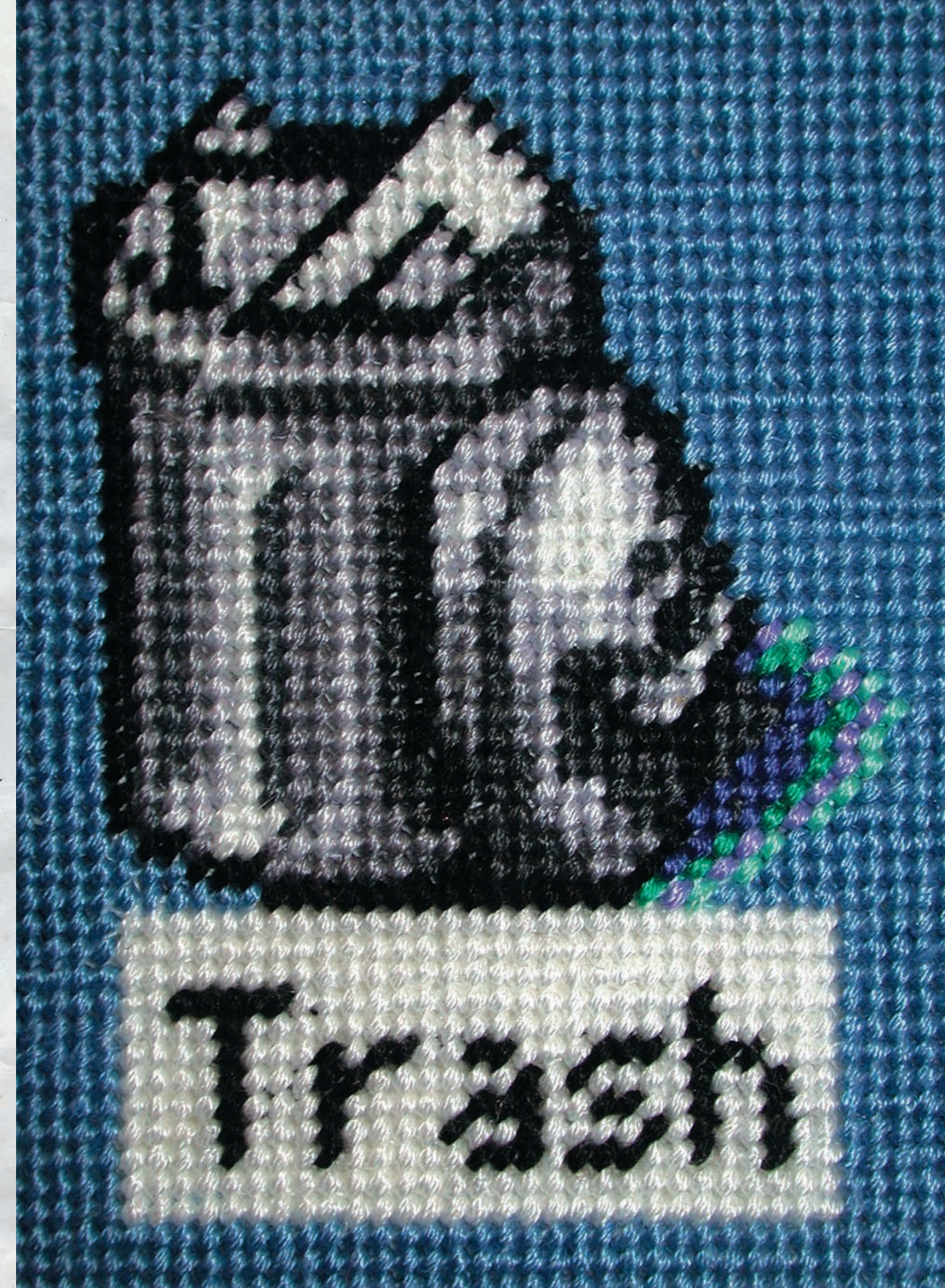


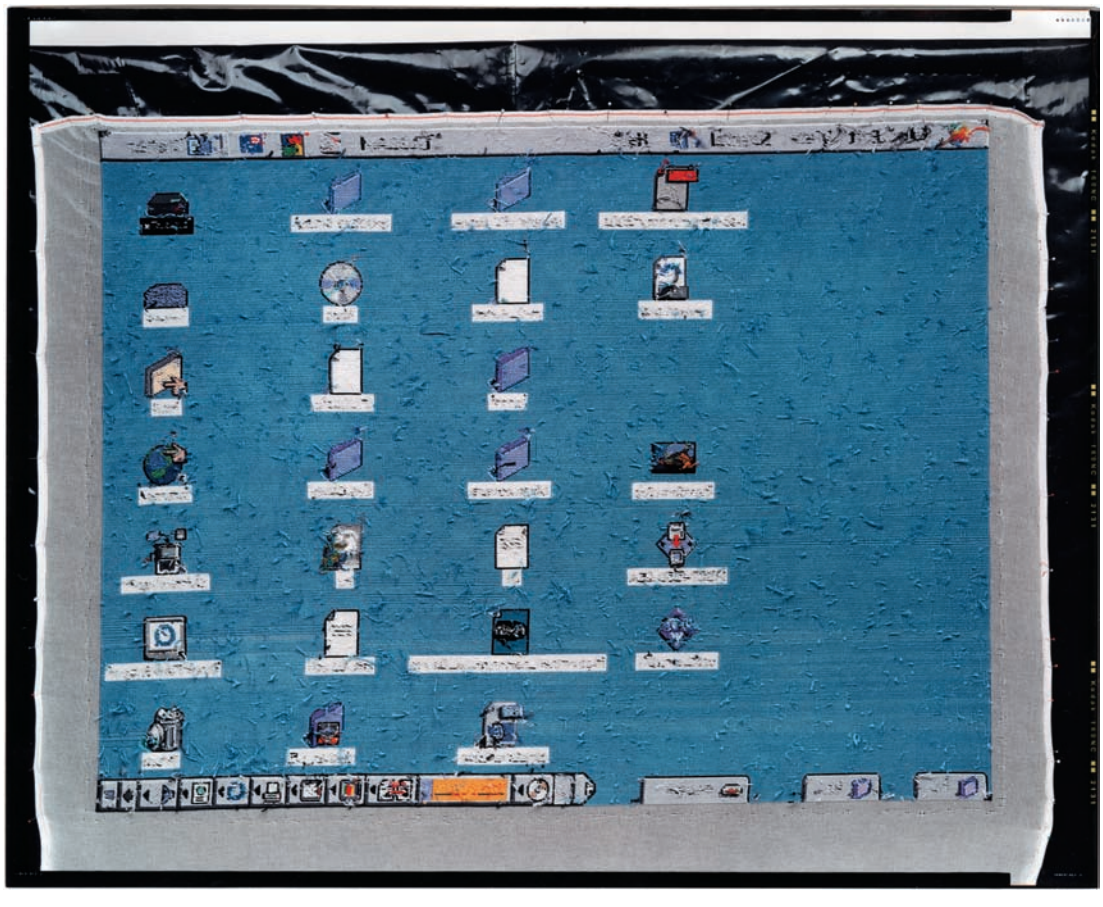
2002 *iBook Triptych* - detail


Tested to comply

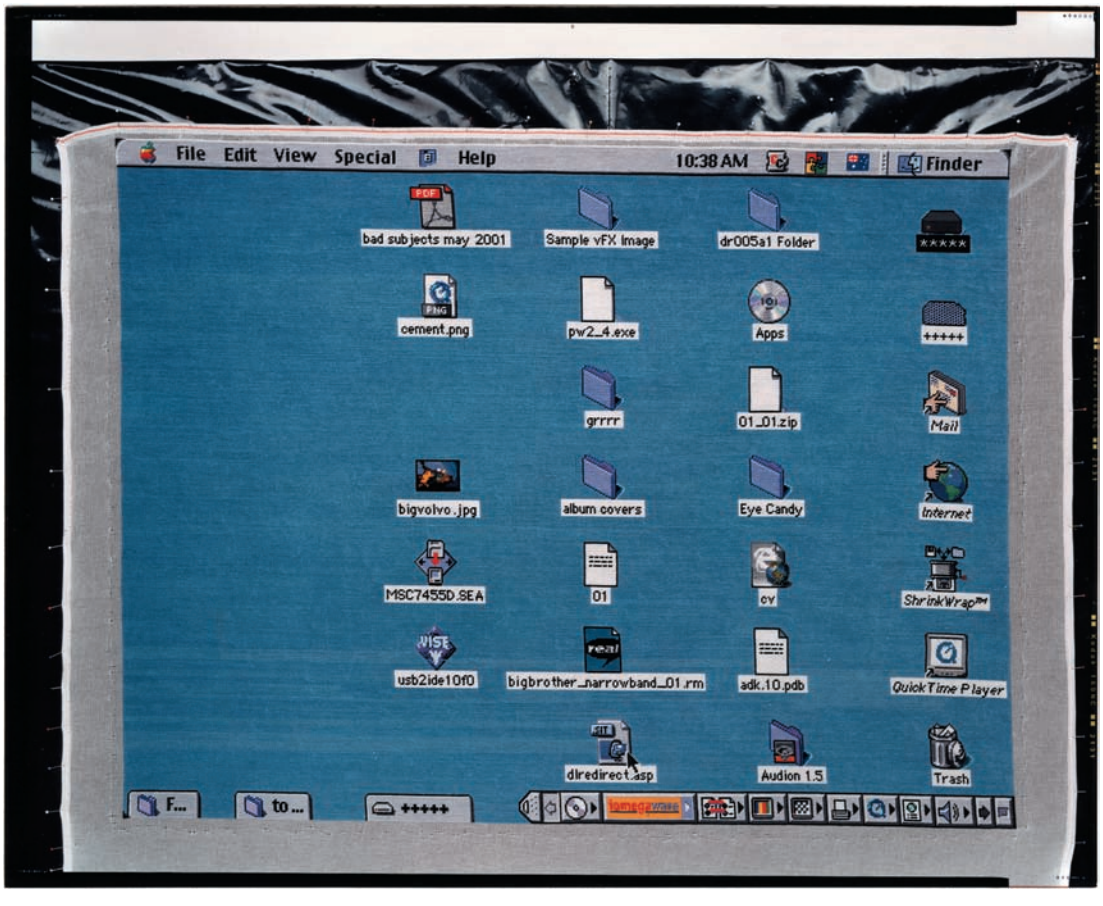
2003 *ZenDV* - 2 channel video, stereo sound

34 2002 sample pattern
35 2002/3 *Tuesday, 3 July 2001, 10:38am* - cotton on canvas (detail)


Trash



2002/3 *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* - colour photographs, 1200 x 1500mm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Making of 2001/2 *Tuesday, 3 July 2001, 10:38am*

with thanks to:
Josephine Brennan (below)
Claire Brennan
Steven Davies
Vikki Henderson
Juliet Pang (left)
Nova Paul
Johanna Perry
David Perry
Steven Ritchie
Elaine Robertson
Hanna Scott
Nichola Trevithick (left)
Siobhan Garrett
Tracey Wedge

CITIES AT THE EDGE OF TIME
SEAN CUBITT

Sometime between the upsurge of science fiction writing in the 1960s and the beginning of the new century, the future happened. The paranoia and the technofuturism were true: we have videophones! A shadowy cartel of vast corporations runs the planet! Elective surgery! Ubiquitous surveillance! And yet there's so little sense that anything has changed. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this correspondence of future and past in the present often seems much starker. The distances and proximities are as clear as the temporalities – indigenous, 21st century, ex-colonial. Here tradition and modernity meet in the raw. Here, at the last place on earth and the first place to enter every new day, Stella Brennan writes, curates, teaches and makes art.

A STITCH IN TIME

Curating a show called *Dirty Pixels*, Brennan made a stitch-for-pixel transcription of her Macintosh desktop to needlepoint. The design is based on a screen-grab – the date is clearly visible where it normally is in the Mac Operating System, up at the top right-hand corner. The needlepoint took over a year, and the artist had to ask her mother, husband and friends to help complete it in time for the exhibition. I have on my desktop a picture of the Trash icon made by levering the unwieldy artwork onto a flatbed scanner. There are perhaps four shades of grey, two mauves, two greens and a white involved, as well as the ubiquitous dusty blue of Mac OS8. Brennan's screen shot predated OS9, and by the time the work was done, OS X was steaming into view. Perhaps somewhere in the back of her mind was Sadie Plant's metaphor of women, weaving and the web, and the memory of Ada Lovelace (whose name would also partly inspire the title of the group Brennan helped establish, ada, Aotearoa Digital Arts) and her brilliant use of Jacquard loom control cards to manage inputs to Charles Babbage's difference engine, back in the mid 19th century's false dawn of the computer age.

A classic of modern design, the Macintosh desktop, as its name suggests, draws on office imagery. This workspace is full of folders, in which files are stored. They can be moved around the desktop and stashed inside each other. The interface is a meta-

phorical filing cabinet. The filing cabinet was one of the elements which, along with typewriters and adding machines marked what is often called, by analogy with the Industrial Revolution, the First Office Revolution. By the late 19th century, the US market in adding machines was monopolised by National Cash Register, whose senior executive Thomas Watson, later became chief of the Computer Tabulating Recording Company, which in turn became IBM. But the continuities between the First and the Second, digital, Office Revolutions are not restricted to business genealogies. The First Office Revolution drove down wages by deskilling double-entry book-keepers and the artisans of copper-plate orthography. In the place of these highly-trained men, under-educated, under-unionised and under-paid women would move into the office. The computer – in particular the command-line interface – may have been a masculinised space: the Macintosh desktop metaphor addresses a workspace that had become, in the previous hundred years, a feminised one. So it seems appropriate that the desktop, initially envisaged as the intuitive metaphor for office workers but describing an increas-ingly domesticated machine, should own up to its femininity, and be transported into the older feminine discourse of sewing.

The needlepoint desktop is also very definitely about time. "The physical process of creating this work is an important part of the piece", Brennan wrote in 2001. "I have been embroidering for over a year to render a desktop snapshot that took a fraction of a second to capture. The embroidery has become for me a tactile exploration of the Graphical User Interface". The tactility of pixels, the replication of the cathode ray tube scan as stitches, the textile surface: all of these speak of the qualities that slip away from the digital display: touch and time. The instantaneous betrays its long making. Karl Marx analysed technologies as dead labour, the ossified and accumulated manual agility of the centuries abstracted and congealed into machinery. In manufac-tures he sensed vampyre capital fastening on the blood of the workers, but we, for whom these machines are familiars, might instead think of them as anonymous, mute, exploited but ever-present ancestors assembled at our fingertips. The stitches of this screen, which is not a screen, and which represent interac-tions far more involving than most of our interactions with its digital analogue, are past in a way that the screen is not, even

when its design comes from what we now rather coyly call 'heritage' computers. The eternal present of visual display units is of course a mask, a snare and a delusion. The stillness is a product of refresh rates, the monitor's quiet hum evidence of hurtling electrons, a mathematical frenzy microns below the screen's cold face. Behind this glassy but turbulent surface lie the ghosts of those who made it. Extending the moment of perception across the months of sewing stretches out the present, and in an elaborate pun stops the magic from vanishing from the screen altogether. Because this is also tapestry, of the kind Rapunzel or Penelope might make, and is itself a thing of beauty and an achieved piece of work, as it would be if it showed unicorn and maiden in place of hard drive and trash can.

Although this way of working references the masterpieces of the past, Bayeux, let's say, and displaces battle with peace, it is also a homage to those countless generations of sewing women, working women and the daughters of the wealthy denied labour but encouraged to sew, whose art this was – largely excluded from the museums and wholly from the galleries – despised and marginal. It is in such margins that Stella Brennan discovers her materials.

FREE DOWNLOAD

Such for example are the clip-art samples, the quintessence of non-art, downloadable from Microsoft's website. Blown up beyond their usable scales, the images, all of them derived from iconic and occasionally sacred sites in Aotearoa, become artefactual, splinter, break up, crumble into the inadvertent cubism of pixellation, Cézanne without the cylinders and spheres. Equipped with wall-mounted magnifying glasses, viewers can home in on the breakdown of this mute language of landscapes and tourist vistas. Beside them in a vanishingly small typeface is the legal agreement users enter into when they download one of these seemingly innocuous pictures, a screed that marches down the wall, the legal banner of Microsoft's lawyers laying claim to landscapes they have never seen. Omnivorous, blind, globalisation colonises every landscape, not with muskets this time but with legal instruments wrapped in the innocence of postcard imagery. But still these picture-perfect pictures retain their absurdly jolly attractiveness, in that glassy, faultless and numb

fashion that we know from magazines in dentists' waiting rooms. In at least one, typically curious, typically elliptical, typically wry way Stella Brennan is a landscape artist.

THROW-AWAY LINES

Did I say numb? Not numb in the offensive, glib pose of Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*, where the orgy and the deathcamp sit uncommented side by side in the assortment. Numb as in the 'whatever' teenagers say, the 'whatever' that Thierry de Duve noted was also at the heart of the movement of modern art towards art about whoever (Pisarro's cabbage growers, say), or whatever (Van Gogh's old boots perhaps) and then an art made of whatever (Picasso's bus tickets, Schwitters' Merz). Numb like the numb heart of the commodity revealed when the glamorous goods are gone and all that remains is the unglamorous packaging. As Microsoft's legalese is the unwanted, cast-off packaging revealing the vacuity of their clip-art, images that in turn disguise the genuine offence, so too is cast-off packaging both vacuous in the most literal sense and an offence: litter. Iterate litter. Litter reiterated as literature: a wall of mysteriously lovely styrofoam casts, a barrier pretending to be a light source, resonating with the aqueous digital sound of a heavily compressed recording of a waterfall in 2000's The Fountain City. More packaging in Fedex the same year. Scans and assemblages of scans of polystyrene packaging appear in 2002's Another Green World in Sydney and creep round the walls of the video installation Theme for Great Cities a year later.

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In the last-named, you can only approach the video monitor inside an igloo made up of the flattened remnants of the boxes in which Apple's then-premier machine the G4 arrived. Perhaps there is some fine art memory here, of Wodiczko's *Homeless Project* maybe, or some of Jeff Wall's digital cibachromes, those instants of impossibly vivid deracination. A hovel made of the wrapper that delivers the tool of choice for dream-makers – commercial artists. Is the Mac G4, fetishised design icon, degraded? Does it find here alone its reason for existing, away from the hidden recycling yards of the over-developed world? It's strange and revealing to crawl into this uterine environment; the hovel is humble but homely, and the sheer proximity to the big screen TV incongruously housed in it is reassuring, like a child's-eye view of electronic modernity.

The soundtrack plays one of those artificial voices added to computers to read your text back to you (I believe this voice is Macintosh's 'Ralph'). Preparing text for this speak-back function is harder than you think. You have to change the spelling to match what the programme can handle and provide gaps and punctuation to coax it to more credible phrasing. There is a certain skill to using even these built-in ready-made voices; a certain skill to stripping the readymade of its intrinsic meaning, the meaning it gleans from being purely digital, so that like the packaging, it can reveal the impurity of digital margins, the dirt among the pixels.

The voice reads a passage from Raoul Vaneigem. The hedonist among a hedonistic sect, Vaneigem was the near-forgotten sidekick of Guy Debord in the Situationist International, remembered perhaps for his treatise on anarchist self-indulgence *A Book of Pleasures*. During the late 1990s the art world rediscovered the Situationists. I'm not sure what this means except that October sponsored a book of translations with an emphasis on the art world shenanigans of the group, rapidly depoliticising what was briefly the voice of the disaffected intelligentsia in revolt against de Gaulle. The Situationists left in Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* a masterwork of anarchist analysis in which, along with the rest of consumer society, the art world itself is pilloried as the decorative hat on the military police chief. This text of Vaneigem's is then not without its maculate provenance. He is one who wanted to be one with the homeless, as here, burrowed into this unlikely igloo, the viewer too becomes one with the street people, even though he is in the gallery and they are still on the street. "Urbanism is the most perfect and concrete fulfilment of a nightmare", it begins in its granular baritone. The voice is nearly comic, a cliché, a voice that isn't a voice speaking words that it cannot speak and that are not its words, a ventriloquist throwing the translated words of a dead man. The viewer begins to feel a hand up the back of his jacket. The voice speaks of "total mind control". You fear the ventriloquist is mad. But all ventriloquists are of course schizophrenic, and the dummy is always the villain. All this and more we have learned from television.

On the video screen there rolls a blurred but steady pan – I thought of the pan that gave the technique its name in Porter's

Panorama of the Columbian Exposition by Night of 1902, proceeding in daylight over the Midway of the exposition grounds to the middle of its course, where it fades to the same 180 degree pan continued in darkness punctuated by the million electric lightbulbs of Porter's employer, Thomas Edison and the Edison Company. The analogy is flawed. Brennan pans left to right. Porter had but the greyscale of the available film stock: Brennan exposes her camera to greys and whites but also to reds, blues and greens, the primaries of digital video. Porter continued his left-to-right pan after the midway point. Brennan stops about halfway and fades, like Porter, to black. When the image begins again the motion is vertical, from bottom to top, but (and here is the nub of the analogy) it is mirrored – a fragment of script tells us that the right-hand side of the screen is symmetrical with the left. The set, for that is what appears as the focus settles or your eyes acquire some familiarity with the proximity blur, also contains a mirror that inverts those letters, so we see them first upside down and moving in a stately process down the screen as their as-yet unseen originals progress towards the frame from above. The Lego bricks are now clear, and the pan becomes more like a serene remake of *Blade Runner*'s grimy demotic architectures. Brennan's camera move becomes parody of miniature set design, revealing in infantile stature the modelled schemes of architects like Corbusier and all those in broken line back to Haussman, the urbanist who first showed himself ready to sacrifice the population of Paris to the militarist imperative of his boulevards.

The Vaneigem text ends with an ironic "project for a realistic urbanism" which abandons the earlier-enunciated faith in a 'building instinct' stolen and marshalled by social hierarchies into the construction of carceral cities. He promotes, but in the deadpan voice of "Ralph", Piranesi with elevators as a model for the subway.

On the walls of the gallery outside the viewing hovel is a paper-chain of photocopies from the styro-packaging of a G4. It forms a kind of map, a horizon lapping round the space to converge upon the simulacrum of the void where once rested the machine on which the video was edited, and the soundtrack synchronised. It is a lovely absence. Lovely like Rachel Whiteread's *House*, or

lovelier because unmarked by personal memories, the physical trace of wear, the unnoticed damages of mice and beetles. A spiritual space, though not a holy one ("The temple is holy because it is not for sale"). The void is the central mystery of commodity capital. For much of the 20th century the philosophers thought the great secret was death, and that because they had lost their faith the world had lost its mystery and death its purpose. Only the best of them recognised that death and godhead still held hands, that birth was the critical moment of tragedy and comedy alike, and that the greatest anxiety arises not from fearing that death is meaningless but from realising that life is. Capital is cynical: in Wilde's definition, it "knows the price of everything and the value of nothing". In the infinite exchange all things are swapped for the one thing that has no content or use: money. This black hole of meaning over which must be constructed and reconstructed every day the vast engineering projects of styrofoam utopias, last refuge of the rascal, last plaything of the dispossessed.

OUT OF GAMUT

Theme for Great Cities occurs, as is entirely appropriate, at the corner of something and nothing. This too is the suggestion I take from ZenDV – inspired obviously by Nam June Paik, whose *Zen for Film* makes a brief appearance in textbooks on the history of cinema, one of the many Fluxus artworks everyone knows but few people have witnessed. The motifs at the heart of this work are unbearably familiar to people working with digital editing systems , but are otherwise largely obscure, certainly to anyone whose confrontation with electronic media is pre-digital. Unfamiliar but also ubiquitous, the colour bars are used for colour calibration of monitors, while the blue screen is the default projection of a reference colour when no signal comes in to the system. In the colour bars the red, green and blue bricks of the first half of *Theme* return alongside their negatives – cyan, magenta and yellow, with black and white – in patterns designed to help adjust the colour response of a given screen. It is no secret that monitors each have their own colour responses, vagaries of manufacture, but also signatures of company-specific technical solutions to the problem of colour reproduction. The purest colours are not necessarily those most easily produced by the phosphors used in screen technologies, nor, often, the

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brightest. The closer red comes to infra-red, or magenta to ultra-violet – the closer that is, to invisibility – the dimmer they appear. Colours are shifted automatically by our machinery into the reproducible and the bright. Video black is a problem of its own: the monitor is a light-source. It does not take kindly to being asked to project the absence of light. Different machines use different gamuts to secure the best illusion they can. No screen reproduces the wavelengths that the world delivers to cameras or our eyes. The colour bars aid the editor to adjust the screen towards the best response for her film. Already evidence of slippage, they are ripe for a further slide.

A further reason why the editor needs colour bars is that every digital image goes through a series of compressions on the way to the screen. Mathematical matrices of colour, the data representing the image can be reformed as the image that represents the data. To get from here to there, from hard drive to monitor, from file to tape, from tape to broadcast, the image reverts to its mathematical nature. The data is rewritten both to suit its destination and to ensure a speedy move from one medium to another. Each presentation, each transmission, may require a different compression. The colour bars are a way of checking the results against the nearest thing we have to a universal standard. The fact that this standard is also a tool for adjusting the colour response of screens shows how tentative are our attempts to fix universality against the relativism of mechanical perception. A smarter sense than eyesight, hearing checks the reference tone, that high pitched, bell-like sound, for evidence of changes in speed in playback.

So in *ZenDV* we might contemplate the marginalia of broadcast and projection in and of themselves. It might be enough. They offer a kind of authority, a sense that among the imperfect images there is a reference that, unstill and malleable though it is, can form a gently wobbling pivot about which the image-scapes and soundscapes of digital media might revolve. Brennan's ploy is again a typical one: to exploit a little tool, a filter in Apple's video editing software Final Cut Pro, that adds bogus scratches to the video and audio tracks. The purpose is to imitate film, which being a 'wet', chemical medium, has a tendency to age visibly; to add speckles and dust, ground into the emul-

sion or lying on top of it. Old film prints look their age. The digital image is too clean, too much inside its own black box, to fool anyone that it is old, not without a trick. These randomised pops emulate the evidence an old filmstrip gives of its longevity. In this way, they reverse the process of the embroidered desktop, adding the appearance of age and experience to a signal that has neither, whose universality denies the specificity of the speck of dirt. Dirt is the evidence of reality. Dirt is, as Margaret Mead said, 'matter in the wrong place', but in the digital arena, and especially in the field of reference colour bars and reference tones, there is no 'wrong place' that is not first decided. The decay of digital images is abrupt and structural. They lose integrity, the field of the image begins to fragment into blocks, patches go missing. There is not the molecular decay of silver salts suspended in emulsion. The staccato puttering of the soundtrack is a symptom: a cinema projectionist would recognise it as a sign of dirt lodged on the revolving sound head. But here there is no sound head to revolve, and the rhythm is symptomatic of nothing whatsoever.

In its first iteration, Paik's *Zen for Film* was an hour of white screen, the film strip exposed as negative, printed to positive, and translucent, the sheer light of the projector itself. One might contemplate it as a shaft of light, as much as an illuminated screen. Its slight flicker, an artefact of the shutter's flicker, a pulse at the edge of perception. But as the filmstrip aged, so it began to gather the random evidence of its biography. John Cage noticed its accumulation of scratches, and understood how it began not only to trace the illusion of cinema but the reality of the real. Paik's *ZenTV* appeared in several versions. In one, a videotape filled a monitor for one hour with white. In another, a statue of the Buddha contemplates its own image in a closed-circuit monitor. In both, the specificity of the medium, its distinction from film, is significant. The Buddha version is a live broadcast – albeit one on which nothing occurs. Let me pronounce that differently: in which Nothing occurs. It is Paik's achievement as a metaphysician and ontologist that he created a work in which Nothing appears as itself, in which there is no 'something' to happen. He might as well have put a stone in front of the camera-monitor set-up, or a carrot. The irony of Brennan's digital variant is that something happens all right, but something that has no

existence. The something that occurs – the pops and speckles – are of one kind with the colour bars. Far from evidencing a history or symptomatising an intervention of reality into the machine, they are a potentially endless, mathematically underpinned, random noise.

One further step. Noise is a special something in systems and information theory. By definition random, noise is the opposite of information. Like the crackle on a phone line or the scratches on a filmstrip, it doesn't signify. Information theory, however, is probabilistic. If we have a conversation, the chances are we'll say the same things everyone says to everyone else (how are you? I'm fine. How are you? Fine. Nice day. Sure is). Repetition is insignificant. It tells me nothing new. It isn't information. Somewhere between totally random (improbable) and totally ordered (probable) lies significant, meaningful information. The irruption of the improbable makes the probable meaningful. Dust on the universal colour bars is therefore information. And noise on the soundtrack, generated by an audio filter to emulate the hiss and scratch of worn vinyl, is not random – the noise is not noise. It does not evidence the presence of the world accumulating on a surface: instead it demonstrates the absence of that kind of tactile history, and in ruling out the past of the artefact, it rules out the possibility that these scratches and crackles are symptoms behind or before which some absent cause lies hidden. There is no time before, as there is no space beneath what you see here in endless loop. And yet somehow you cling to the significance of the inflicted damage, such that *ZenDV* intimates another register, a digital dimension where these things signify. Impossible signification in some other dimension. Zen.

DROP CITY

Comparing and contrasting *Theme for Great Cities* and *ZenDV* suggests a double structure to Brennan's art; on the one hand a radical politics, on the other an ontological enquiry. It is not extravagant in this context to evoke David Batchelor's concept of chromophobia, a distrust, dislike, even hatred of colour in the rationalist trajectory of Western culture, and to suggest that the colour bars themselves refer to the Colour Bar, the premise that the pure and undefiled light of God and Reason is most sacredly upheld in the diminution of colour and the monad of the white

light and the pure tone. It is against all such totalities, all fabricated purities, that Brennan's work rages. Homelessness does not of itself displease her, simply the fact that it too is part of the grand anaesthetic of the city, of architecture as mind-control.

This rage against urbanism expands across two recent pieces,
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Tomorrow Never Knows and Citizen Band. In the years since the Second World War, there have only been a handful of moments when utopianism entered popular culture, not as a substrate but at the centre. One of those was the counter-culture, despised since punk by successive commercialised fashion styles lacking the political will of either punk, or the counter-culture on which it fed, but rightly rejected. What is more stupid than yesterday's utopia? The house of tomorrow in those yellowing magazines, the wall-sized screens, the hippy chicks in floral print miniskirts at the stalls of the Ideal Home Exhibition. Brennan's architectural
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haunting began with the video door of 1999's Zen. Now domestic LCD projectors are available, along with portable videophones, has the future caught up with the past? Can we give up nostalgia for white ovoid plastic chairs and circular windows? Or are those utopian-dystopian tales of JG Ballard, tales of the prima donna with insects for eyes, of crystal forests and drowned worlds, roosting again among us, with their acid colours and their brittle metallic sheen?

In the 2004 installation *Tomorrow Never Knows* the projectors display images derived from the sound visualisation software bundled with Apple's iTunes, a psychedelic swirl which, Brennan suggests in her notes on the work are "an evolution of the glowing, bubbling lava lamp". The audio track is, sure enough, from JG Ballard's early tales, a story of architecture that rebuilds itself in response to its user's moods. I remember reading the story years ago and recognise the foreboding as another computerised voice recites, this time accompanied by a computer-generated mobile mural. The title, you will no doubt recall, is the name of a track from the milestone Beatles' album *Revolver*. You might be forgiven though, for a momentary confusion with a James Bond film. They share the same 60s blend of utopian and dystopian, the same readiness to play with the fantastic in architecture –imagine those Bond villains' lairs. Those dreams, will they still haunt us tomorrow as they do today?

In the corner, by the yellow light of a floor-mounted lamp, are framed images that tell the story of the geodesic dome, a paradigm expression of the Whole Earth Catalogue, the first populist expression of green politics as a lifestyle option outside consumerism. You see the photograph of the Montreal Expo dome with smoke billowing out of it and recognise the burning of an era, as surely as the twin towers in flame mark the gateposts of the 21st century. As Buckminster Fuller's baby burns, you can almost hear the architects' relief – back to business as usual. Back to clearing the mess of Radio Alley to build, in monumental grandeur, that monument of the information economy triumphant, the World Trade Centre*.

It is dangerous to argue by analogy: where would you stop?

The video for *Citizen Band* is like a reprise of the video component of *Theme for Great Cities*. In fact it is a reprise. Perhaps we didn't get the point the first time round. The script derives from Hundertwasser, the Viennese artist and architect who adopted Aotearoa as his second home and left as his major memorial a glorious public lavatory in the Northland town of Kawakawa. A building replete with serpentine mosaics and recycled bottles, a green reincarnation of Gaudí. Like Vaneigem, Hundertwasser was of an anarchist persuasion and a hedonist, but a hedonist who recognised the expenditures involved in pleasure, not only from the enjoyer, but from the system in which the enjoyment takes place. Playful and popular in the way Klee is playful and popular; Hundertwasser's original contribution lay in developing a green consciousness, extending the social articulations of early radicals into their debts to the biosphere. But this doesn't make him misanthropic: on the contrary, nor elitist, quite the opposite. His Vienna housing development is entirely devoted to working class accommodation, and the co-operative who still run it are grassroots in every sense. So though there's a reprise, there is something else, a development from Vaneigem's ironic rhetoric towards an emergent aesthetic, not of individualist self-fulfilment as in the old French tradition, but of collectivist harmony with the natural and social environment that comes from the long struggle of the working class. No one else suffers as much from pollution. The voice here is 'Vicki', but sweetened. She announces, for

Hundertwasser, "The ruler is the symbol of the new illiteracy", an intonation which coats the transitions from German to English, from living to dead, in that ubiquitous dialect which has no home: International American English. Let the buildings collapse, she says, let the human sacrifice occur, rather than suffer the moral uninhabitability of modernist utilitarian architecture. Better mould than straight lines.

The video track describes a fantastic architecture, but this time a utopian minaret built from a radio antennae, oriental bronze pots, poured-glaze ceramics, bric-à-brac. The curves come just as the voice suggest their existence might be preferrable to "the chaos of straight lines". But the video pans vertically down the structure; then fades to black, and cuts to a horizontal pan laid over a pastoral valley, which stays in frame as the chromakeyed pan shifts to vertical, and only then, as the pastoral blinks out of view, changing to a diagonal drift to follow the slanted aerial. Another cut to black, and a tirade against Corbusier, Gropius, Mies and Loos, patriarchs of the International Style is accompanied by a grainy posterised zoom out on a fantastic miniature urban scape: rich blacks, sleek glazes, a fleshy, fruity pink pear-shaped gourd. Moments before the zoom and the voice cut to silent black, their outlines recall nothing so much as the nine malic moulds, Duchamp's bachelors in the Large Glass, themselves inspired by chess pieces, and anchored to the *perpetuum mobile* of *The Bride Stripped Bare* by networks of desire and propulsion.

Ecological thinking is all about networks. It takes the conceptualisations of information theory and begins to root about in them, adjusting the first generation concept – nodes exist and connections connect them – in second-generation terms – connections exist, and nodes form at their intersections. Flows of warm and cold water intersect to make local ecologies where marine mammals thrive on shoals of pilchards, and gannets and Bulla shearwaters and sunfish. The unit is not the dolphin but the locale. This is where the geography of Stella Brennan is significant. Aotearoa is the far end of the world, underpopulated islands with scenery in wholesale, but surrounded by over-exploited waters, and spendthrift in its petrolhead culture, its untreated farm slurry and clumsy power policies. Sitting beneath the ozone hole anxiously nursing each flowering freckle, it might

be easy to blame the Northern hemisphere. The knots that bind the sunlight to the Iraq occupation are of course meshworks of greater complexity, but their local nodes are shameless in making sure the country doesn't fall behind its "OECD rivals" as the politicians like to call the rich club – in chemical emissions, as in education. The system of desire and the system of ecology integrate in the system of architecture that in turn is the concrete form of the social system.

It is dangerous to argue by analogy but it is hard to make art without it. It is analogy we critics so often mistake for intertextuality. These are not citations but flows that channel through an epoch, whose currents shape the islands we call works, which works in turn deflect and redirect the local eddies that entrance and mesmerise like the iTunes murals of *Tomorrow Never Knows*. Tomorrow of course never knows, and we are the tomorrow that was supposed to know the truths of the counter-culture, of modernism and architecture, of popular utopias from Ideal Homes to Peace and Love. And we don't know. Amazing how rapidly those pipedreams faded, but more amazing that they return as kitsch. Utopianism is embarrassing, and so kitsch succeeds exactly where Greenberg thought it did – the tyrant's pretence that he shares the degraded taste of the poor saps who support him.

How intriguing then that among the lost utopias, all marked with their own hedonisms, and, with Fuller and Hundertwasser, with a growing green awareness, that just as we might be at a point when utopianism becomes survival, we abandon it as if it were only an inadequate fashion statement.

Brennan works so lightly with her materials, and her materials are so often simple and familiar things like the cute scraps of software you have kicking around your PC. Domestic, yes, but in the way that Hundertwasser's text in *Citizen Band*, *Mould Manifesto*, suggests: not just cheesy but mouldy, familiar like a witches cat, the dirt that straggles up through the gaps between the sanitised future of Kubrick's *2001*. The urban has attempted to asphalt over the dirt and the dirt rebels. For centuries our ancestors looked to posterity to judge: to witness their exploitation, suffering and slavery. And now we are that posterity, we look back and com-

plain about their dress sense. We live like billionaires, waste like billionaires, but our bliss is as tawdry as last year's broken toys. Like Benjamin, entranced by the surreal testimony of the arcades and fading memories of the once popular, Brennan observes the present as if it were already past, entranced and appalled like a child at the last Punch and Judy on the beach. The clean world of consumerism reveals its dirty secrets, but with the coyness and neotenic cuteness of manga. This is the world, shallow, shiny: despair is not an option.

At the start of *Citizen Band*, before the voice begins, there is a moment of unaccompanied sound, the noise of someone tuning a radio to a signal that evades them. What Flusser said of photography** could be extended to radio: that radio employs its producers, professionals or citizens, as functionaries charged with helping it fulfil its destiny: to make every possible radio programme, no matter how abstract or absurd. Is this a broadcast from the dead, from heirs to the ghosts who miraculously dreamt up table-tapping in the age of the telegraph? All the civil and uncivil dead cluster in our devices, waiting for their chance to speak. This is the noise of history as it chatters at the gate of the future. Brennan's gift is to care for the noise, to bring it indoors, and in caring, make it signify. Ghost radio becomes haptic architecture, a future on the brink of existence. Brennan tempts random collocations of chaotic existence into the ambit of her slightly deranged, semi-detached care. These presents and these futures emerging from the dark and formless waters of the past: is not this the image of creation?

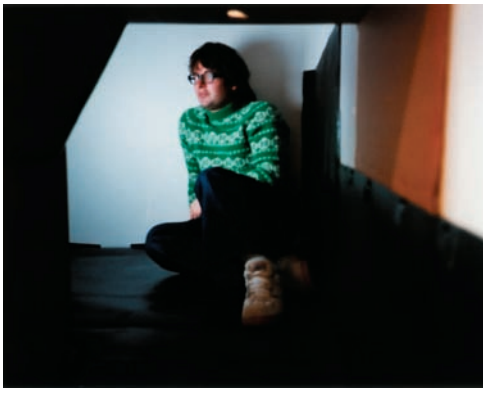
* See Vincent Mosco (2004), *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power and Cyberspace*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA.

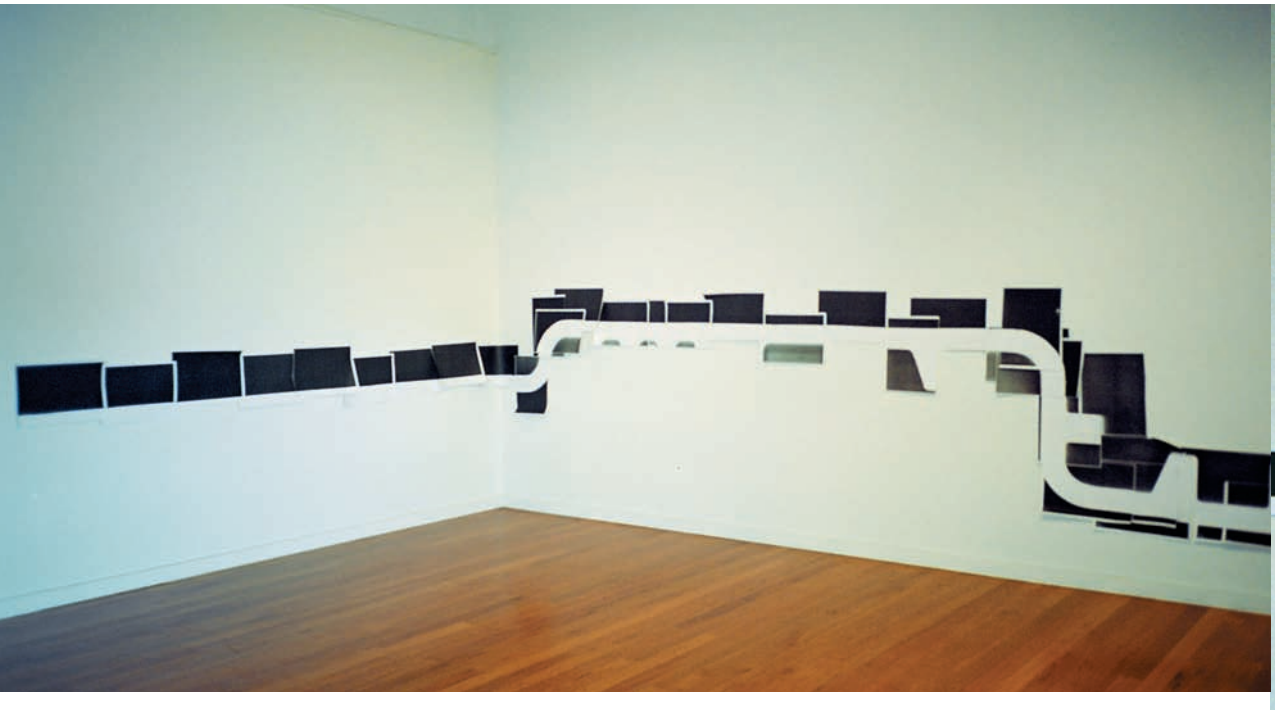
**Vilém Flusser (2000), *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, trans. Anthony Matthews, intro Hubertus Von Amelunxen, Reaktion Books, London.

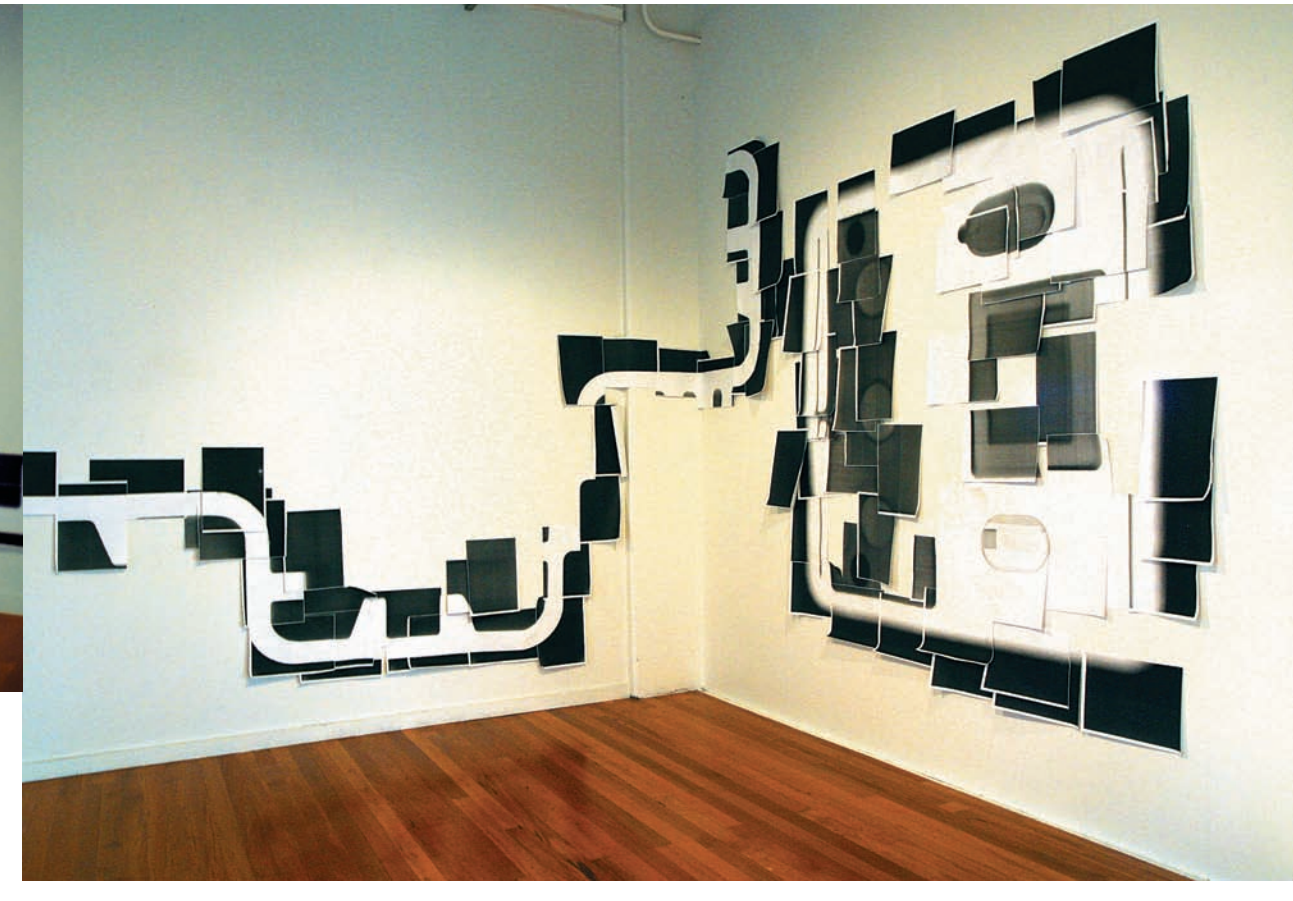
Sean Cubitt is Professor of Screen and Media Studies at Waikato University. His most recent book is *Ecomedia*.

PLATES 2003 – 2005

 2003 *Theme for Great Cities*, photocopies, cardboard packaging, video







STELLA BRENNAN
THEME FOR GREAT CITIES
2003

TEXT FROM
COMMENTS AGAINST URBANISM
RAOUL VANEIGEM
1961

URBANISM IS THE MOST CONCRETE AND PERFECT FULFILMENT OF A NIGHTMARE.

THE IDEAL URBANISM IS THE PROJECTION IN SPACE OF A SOCIAL HIERARCHY WITHOUT CONFLICT. ROADS, LAWNS, NATURAL FLOWERS AND ARTIFICIAL FORESTS LUBRICATE THE MACHINERY OF SUBJECTION AND MAKE IT ENJOYABLE. AS IT COMBINES MACHIAVELLI-ANISM WITH REINFORCED CONCRETE, URBANISM'S CONCIENCE IS CLEAR.

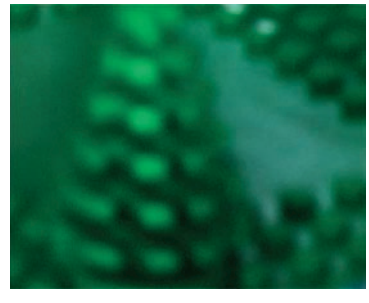
WE ARE ENTERING UPON THE REIGN OF POLICED REFINEMENT. THE ART OF REASSURANCE – URBANISM KNOWS HOW TO EXERCISE IT IN ITS PUREST FORM: THE ULTIMATE CIVILITY OF A POWER ON THE VERGE OF ASSERTING TOTAL MIND CONTROL.

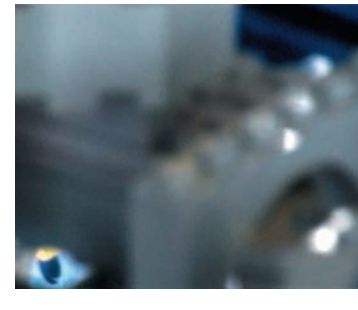
WHAT SIGNS SHOULD WE RECOGNISE AS OUR OWN? A FEW GRAFFITI, WORDS OF REJECTION OR FORBIDDEN GESTURES, HASTILYSCRAWLED, IN WHICH CULTURED PEOPLE ONLY TAKE AN INTEREST WHEN THEY APPEAR ON THE WALLS OF SOME FOSSIL CITY LIKE POMPEII. BUT OUR OWN CITIES ARE EVEN MORE FOSSILISED.

WE WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN LANDS OF KNOWLEDGE, AMID LIVING SIGNS LIKE FAMILIAR FRIENDS. THE REVOLUTION WILL ALSO BE THE PERPETUAL CREATION OF SIGNS THAT BELONG TO EVERYONE.

WHEREEVER BUREAUCRATIC CIVILISATION HAS SPREAD, THE ANARCHY OF INDIVIDUAL CONSTRUCTION HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED, AND TAKEN OVER BY THE AUTHORISED ORGANISMS OF POWER, WITH THE RESULT THAT THE BUILDING INSTINCT HAS BEEN EXTIRPATED LIKE A VICE AND ONLY BARELY SURVIVES IN CHILDREN AND PRIMITIVES AND AMONG THOSE WHO, UNABLE TO CHANGE THEIR LIVES, SPEND THEM DEMOLISHING AND REBUILDING THEIR SHACKS.

PROJECT FOR A REALISTIC URBANISM: REPLACE PIRANESI'S STAIRCASES WITH ELEVATORS, TRANSFORM TOMBS INTO OFFICE BUILDINGS, LINE THE SEWERS WITH TREES, PUT TRASH CANS IN LIVING ROOMS, STACK UP THE HOVELS, AND BUILD ALL CITIES IN THE FORM OF MUSEUMS. MAKE A PROFIT OUT OF EVERYTHING, EVEN OUT OF NOTHING.





2003 *End User* – digital prints, magnifying glasses



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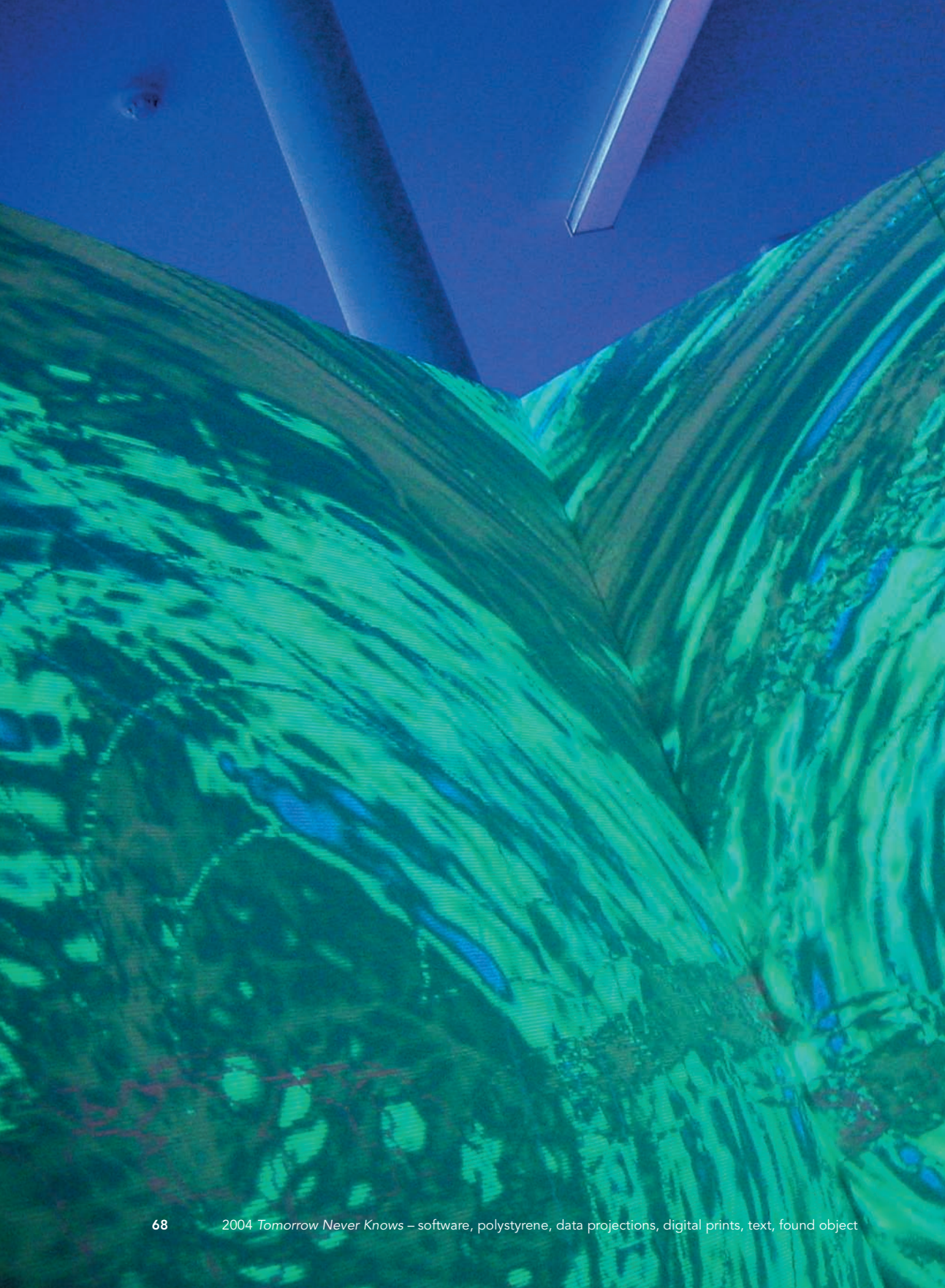
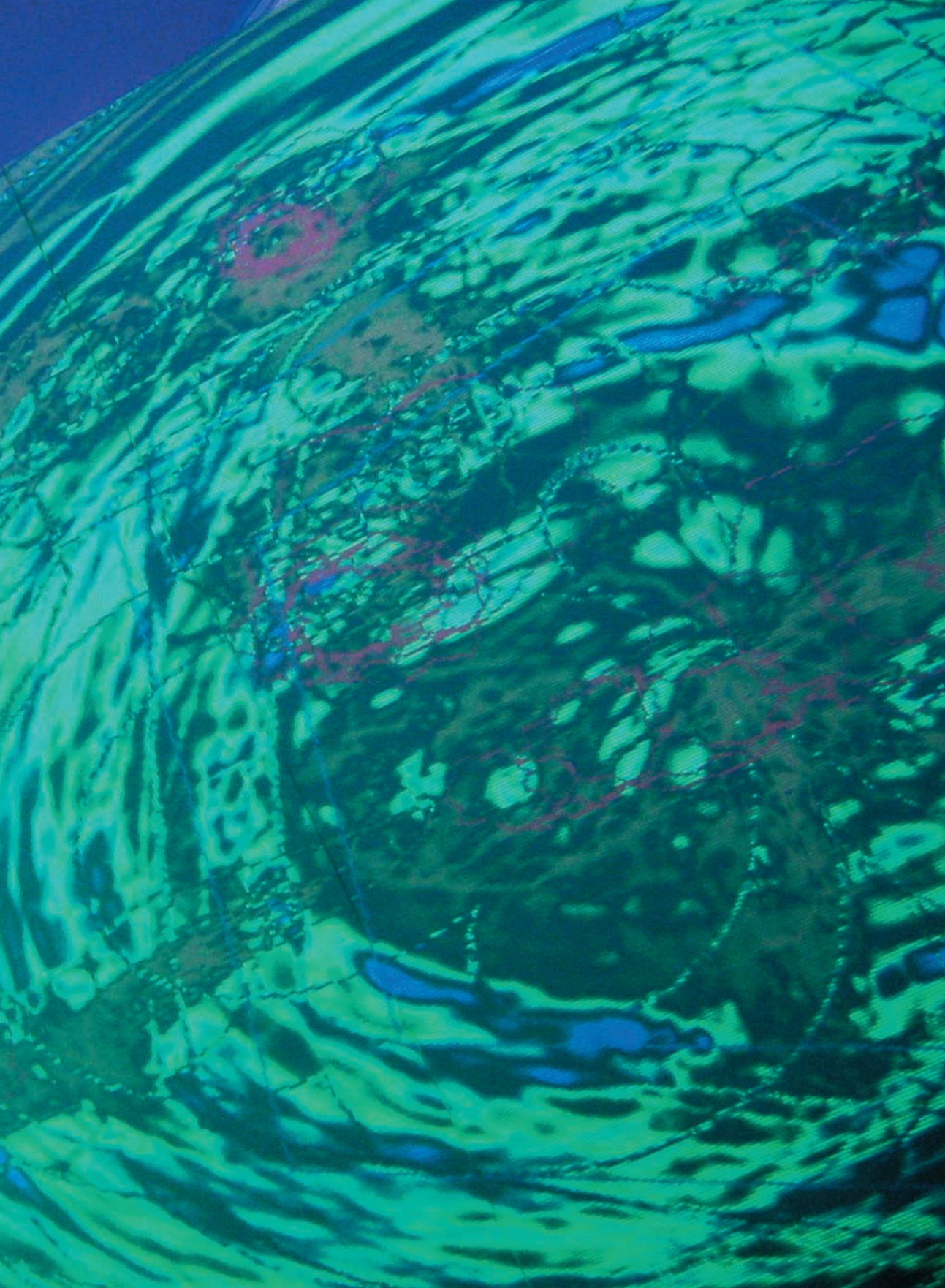
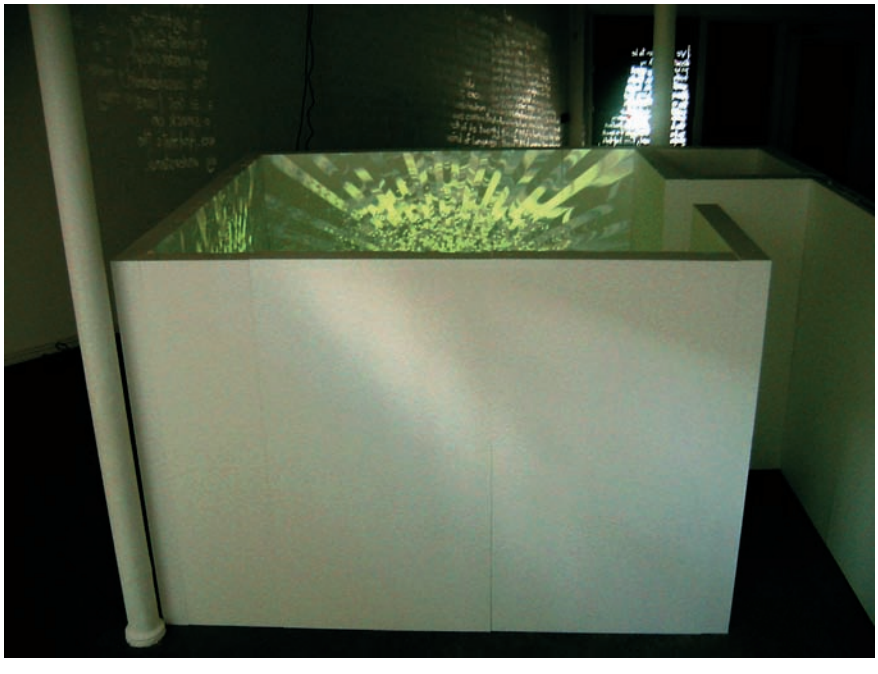
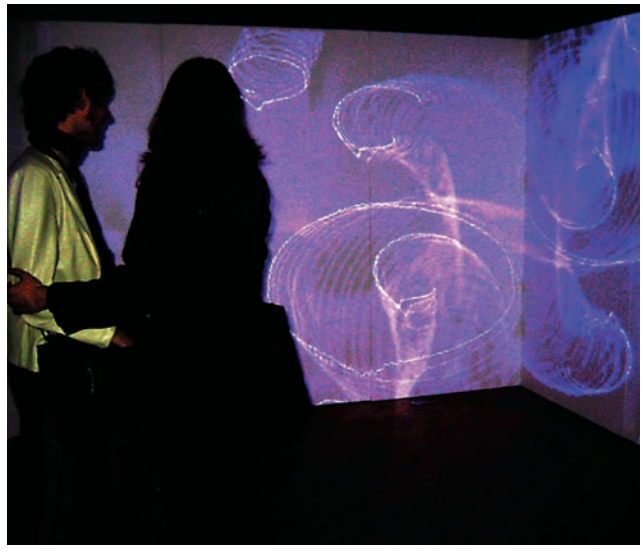
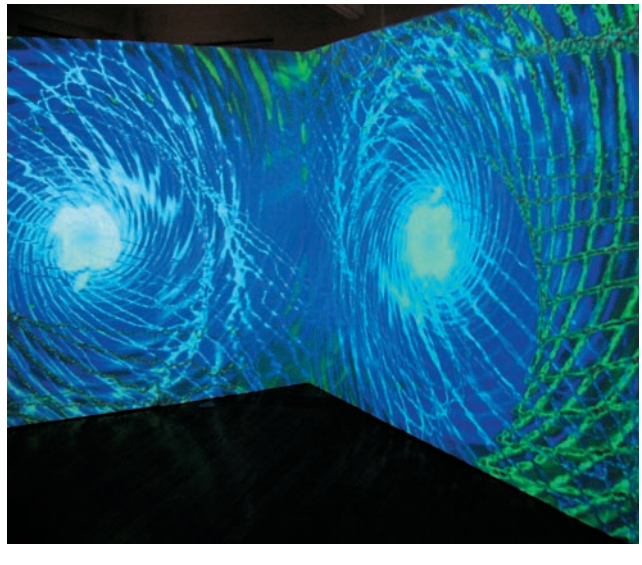


2004 *Tomorrow Never Knows* – software, polystyrene, data projections, digital prints, text, found object









2004 *Citizen Band* - 4 minute video

stella brennan
Citizen band
2004

——

text from
The Mould Manifesto
Freidensreich Hunderтwasser
1958

———

Painting and sculpture are now free, in as much as anyone may produce any sort of creation and subsequently display it. In architecture, however, this fundamental freedom does not exist, for a person must first have a diploma in order to build. why?

Everyone should be able to build, and as long as this freedom to build does not exist, the present day planned architecture cannot be considered art at all. All that has been achieved are detached and pitiable compromises by men of bad conscience who work with straight-edge rulers.

The ruler is the symbol of the new illiteracy. Today we live in a chaos of straight lines, in a jungle of straight lines. If you do not believe this, take the trouble to count the straight lines which surround you. Then you will understand, for you will never finish counting. Not all that long ago, possession of the straight line was a privilege of royalty, the wealthy, and the clever. Today every idiot carries millions of straight lines around in his pockets.

When rust sets in on a razor blade, when a wall starts to get mouldy, when moss grows in a corner of a room, rounding its geometric angles, we should be glad, because, together with the microbes and fungi, life is moving into the house, and through this process we can witness architectural changes from which we have much to learn.

The individual's desire to build something should not be deterred! Everyone should be able to build, and thus be truly responsible for the four walls in which he lives. And one must take the risk, into the bargain, that such a fantastic structure might collapse, and not shrink from the human sacrifice which this new mode demands!

The tangible and material uninhabitability of slums is preferable to the moral uninhabitability of utilitarian architecture. In the so-called slums only the human body can be oppressed, but in our modern, functional architecture, allegedly constructed for the human being, man's soul is perishing. We should adopt as the starting point for improvement the slum principle, that is, wildly, luxuriantly growing architecture.

The irresponsible vandalism of the functional architects is well known. Take Le Corbusier, who wanted to level Paris completely in order to erect his monstrous constructions. Now, in the name of justice, the constructions of Mies van der Rohe, Neutra, the bauhaus, Gropius, Johnson, Le Corbusier, Loos, and their henchmen should be torn down. they have been outdated for a generation and have become morally unbearable.

To rescue functional architecture from its moral ruin, a corrosive solution should be poured over all those glass walls, and smooth concrete surfaces, so that, finally, the mouldering process can set in.

above:
Little Birds - radios with transmitter broadcasting native New Zealand birdsong

left:
Worlds Within Worlds (background)

76 2005 *Live Stock/Glass Plant* - digital print

Stella Brennan
Born 1974, lives in Auckland

2000
Master of Fine Arts, Auckland University

Selected Exhibitions

Solo

2005
Live Stock
Starkwhite, Auckland

2004
Tomorrow Never Knows
Starkwhite, Auckland
The Physics Room Christchurch

2003
End User
Room 103, Auckland;
Calder-Lawson Gallery, Waikato University

Theme for Great Cities
Ramp Gallery, Wintec, Hamilton

2002
Another Green World
Artspace, Sydney

2001
Dell
Lightbox, Auckland

2000
The Fountain City
The Physics Room, Christchurch

Fedex
The Blue Oyster Gallery, Dunedin

1999
Anima
Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North

1998
Parallel
with Christopher Barker
The Honeymoon Suite, Dunedin

1997
Loom
Window project, Auckland Art Gallery

1996
Polar
with Fiona Amundsen
The High Street Project, Christchurch

Group

2005
Snake Oil
Auckland Art Gallery

2004
Everday Minimal
Auckland Art Gallery

Vacancy
Te Tuhi / The Mark, Manukau City

2001
Fuse
Dunedin Public Art Gallery

2000
Sister Spaces
Southern Exposure, San Francisco

In Glorious Dreams
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

1999
The Body Inscribed
George Fraser Gallery, Auckland

Scale
Artstation, Auckland

1998
Switched On
Manawatu Art Gallery

1997
Quiet Desperation
Fiat Lux, Auckland

1996
Much Enough Happened Easily or Has Become Vast Décor
23a, Auckland

1995
Reaction!
Artspace, Auckland

Curatorial Projects

2002/3
Dirty Pixels
Artspace, Auckland; Adam Art Gallery, Victoria University of Wellington; Dunedin Public Art Gallery; Waikato Museum of Art and History
with
Stella Brennan, Joyce Campbell, Michel Gondry, Sara Hughes, Tim Ryan, John Simon Jr, Martin Thompson

1999
Nostalgia for the Future
Artspace, Auckland
with
Fiona Amundsen, Stella Brennan, Julian Dashper, Mikala Dwyer, Guy Ngan, Ann Shelton, Jim Speers

Residencies

2002/3
Digital Artist in Residency
Waikato University

2001/2
Creative New Zealand Residency
Artspace, Sydney

Selected bibliography

Allan Smith
'Nostalgia for the Future'
Eyeline
Autumn/Winter 2000, pp46-47

Stella Brennan
'Alien Weather'
Art News New Zealand
Autumn 2002, p 39

Chris Lorrimer
'Pixelsurgeon'
Pulp Magazine
August 2003, p24

Andrew Paul Wood
'Past Present Future'
Urbis
Summer 2004, pp104-107

Exhibition Catalogues

1996
Mark Wills
Much Enough Happened Easily or has Become Vast Décor
23a

1998
Stella Brennan
256 Colours

1999
Donald Fraser
Anima
Manawatu Art Gallery
Palmerston North

Stella Brennan
Nostalgia for the Future
Artspace, Auckland

2000
Greg Burke and Hannah Scott
In Glorious Dreams
Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

2002
Stella Brennan and Sophie O'Brien
Another Green World
Artspace, Sydney

Stella Brennan and Chris Barker
Dirty Pixels
Artspace, Auckland

Bridie Lonie
Space Invaders
Blue Oyster Gallery, Dunedin

Emma Bugden
Sister Spaces
Southern Exposure, San Francisco

2004
Stella Brennan
Vacancy
Te Tuhi / The Mark and Auckland University of Technology

2005
Vodafone Digital Art Awards
Auckland

Robert Leonard
Snake Oil: Chartwell Acquisitions 2003-5
Auckland Art Gallery

www.stella.net.nz

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STARKWHITE

creative nz
Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa

Tuesday, 3 July 2001, 10:38am - cotton on canvas, installation view