

# *Exhibition as study*

## *A survey of Damp in the university art school*

Rosemary Forde

Master of Arts, University of Melbourne  
Bachelor of Art (Honours), Otago University

Exegesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Monash University (Curatorial Practice, Department of Fine Arts)

July 2018

© The author, 2018

I certify that I have made all reasonable efforts to secure copyright permissions for third-party content included in this thesis and have not knowingly added copyright content to my work without the owner's permission.



## Abstract

This PhD research project presents the curatorial model of the 'exhibition as study'. This methodology is one that leverages its pedagogical setting and tools, to directly address and engage small, localised audience groups. Through practice, the research has presented what I term a 'study' of the Melbourne artist group Damp (established 1995). Through this exegesis, I have used the notion of 'study' as a positioning device, siting my curatorial project in relation to its educational-institution setting, to its audience as a participatory cohort, and the artist group Damp as a subject of study.

The PhD presented the curatorial project *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21* which took place on the Monash University Caulfield campus throughout the 2016 academic year. A dispersed and episodic program, *Art holds a high place in my life* involved experiments in shared ownership and shifts between public and closed display. It featured a highly visible and evolving public art commission (*Gormenghast*, 2016 by Damp and Monash Art Projects), an identity design workshop, a semester-long study group, and several brief exhibitions throughout campus corridors, studios and temporary gallery spaces.

Rather than a monographic exhibition, the 'study' models an alternative version of the retrospective survey. The project has adapted the survey exhibition genre in a manner that addressed and engaged a primary public of students and staff in the Monash University Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (MADA). Utilising varying levels of public address and access, the project emphasised constructing close exchanges with and within small group audiences, thought of here as 'cohorts'.

This research project is both an example of, and a response to, the current context for art within the contemporary university, with Monash University at Caulfield campus providing the particular context and site as a case in point. The research project sought ways to bring curatorial activities of exhibition and public display together with the research, teaching and learning activities of a university art school. In doing so, it provides a model for curatorial programming with-and-in a university art school gallery or faculty, but which would also be transferable to many curatorial contexts that seek to cultivate a small and ongoing participatory public. The research also models a role for curatorial practice to contribute to art historical scholarship of contemporary local art practices.

## Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature



Print Name: Rosemary Forde

Date: 1 August 2018

## Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the substantial involvement of many artists, participants and colleagues, primarily the artist group Damp. My thanks to the current members of Damp – Narelle Desmond, Sharon Goodwin, Deb Kunda, James Lynch – who dedicated so much time to collaborate on the project delivered throughout 2016 and who generously opened their artistic practice to me as a subject for study, providing access to their archive, history and artistic process. The project has been enriched by the work and talent of all past and present Damp members.

My special thanks to the multidisciplinary lab, Monash Art Projects (MAP), who commissioned and in collaboration with Damp developed the work *Gormenghast* 2016. Callum Morton, Andre Bonnice and Nic Agius worked tirelessly and with enthusiasm to deliver this work. The Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA) hosted *Gormenghast* 2016 in the Ian Potter Sculpture Court, and supported the project in many ways. My particular thanks to MUMA Director, Charlotte Day.

I owe an unquantifiable debt of gratitude to my supervisor Dr Spiros Panigirakis, who has provided expert and generous guidance throughout my candidature. I have been humbled by the consistent enthusiasm and rigorous attention he has brought to my project. My candidature has been enriched by Associate Professor and Director of Curatorial Practice Tara McDowell's vision for the PhD program, as well as her expertise and supervision. I am also grateful to Dr Helen Hughes for her time stepping in as an associate supervisor during part of my candidature.

In addition to the current members of Damp, I am grateful to many artists, curators and educators who aided my research by participating in interviews, in particular Geoff Lowe and Jacqueline Riva of A Constructed World, and former Damp members Kym Maxwell and Kylie Wilkinson. Curators Triple Candie (Shelly Bancroft and Peter Nesbett), Anthony Huberman, Jenny Jaskey, Roger Buergel, Maria Kunda, Rob Blackson, and Krist Guijthuijsen each gave generously of their time and experience to speak with me about their curatorial practices. Interviews with numerous Monash staff have made important contributions to the research, particularly with Callum Morton, Robert Nelson and Alicia Renew.

This research project involved the participation and collaboration of many students and artists and I am thankful to all members of the art collective Artmeet ARI, and the student participants of Damp Camp and Damp Study Group. My thanks to the many Monash colleagues who contributed to the project, including Warren Taylor who co-facilitated the Damp Camp workshop, Priscilla Chow who oversaw occupational health and safety

standards, Michael Bullock who assisted as technician on many occasions, and Vincent Chan for his involvement with the printing of Risograph posters and his typography class's contribution to the examination exhibition. Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (MADA) staff Elena Galimberti, Ruth Bain, Christopher Day, Martin Taylor, Janet Creaney, and Rachael Fergusson, each assisted the project throughout 2016. My thanks to them and to contractors Brian Scales, Dave McDonald, Mark Bushnie, and Bill Desmond who constructed *Gormenghast* 2016.

In addition to the artists, participants and contributors to the project, I have benefitted immensely from the collegial support of my community. In particular I thank the following inspiring individuals I am grateful to know, for their ongoing conversations and engagement: Lisa Radford, Fayen d'Evie, Simon Ward, Tessa Laird and Sarah Farrar; plus my occasional writing companions, Julia Lomas, Vincent Chan and Kati Rule. My thanks to friends and family for their support and encouragement, especially Dominic Forde, Hannah Ngaei, Jennie Donehue, Nuala O'Sullivan, Jess Johnson, Emma Buchanan and JBB. This PhD is dedicated to Kathleen Forde, who made sure art would hold a high place in my life.

Damp Camp was supported by the Monash Education Academy small grants scheme. Damp Study Group was supported by the Better Teaching Better Learning Student Bursary program. *Gormenghast* 2016 was commissioned by MAP with support from Curatorial Practice, MADA and MUMA, and was hosted by MUMA in the Ian Potter Sculpture Court. The examination exhibition was supported by Curatorial Practice at MADA.

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.

# Table of contents

List of figures	iv
Introduction <i>Art holds a high place in my life</i>	1
Chapter one <i>Gormenghast and the university art school as site</i>	27
Chapter two <i>Audience as cohort</i>	55
Chapter three <i>Exhibition as study</i>	91
Conclusion <i>Objectives and guidelines</i>	120
Bibliography	129
Appendices	138



Fig 1: Damp Study Group, workshop led by Damp members. D209, Caulfield, 8 April 2016.

## List of figures

- Fig 1: Damp Study Group, workshop led by Damp members. D209, Caulfield, 8 April 2016.
- Fig 2: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast* 2016, 3 May 2016. Photo: John Gollings
- Fig 3: Damp and Geoff Lowe, *Location: Art holds a high place in my life* (detail), 1996.
- Fig 4: Members of Damp pictured in the utility room at VCA in 1996, with *Untitled* 1996.
- Fig. 5: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast* 2016, with surrounding campus construction works, 20 May 2016.
- Fig 6: Damp, *Book of Shadows* 2005-ongoing (detail), pages showing 'Monsta Plinth' drawing.
- Fig 7: Damp, *Untitled* 2007, Uplands Gallery. Photo: John Brash.
- Figs 8-10: Damp, *Untitled* 2009. 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art, 5 December 2009 – 5 April 2010.
- Fig 11: MAP architectural drawing, proposition for *Gormenghast*, 2016.
- Fig 12: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016. Photo: John Gollings.
- Fig 13: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016, with solar panels and power line attached to roof beams. 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley.
- Fig 14: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016. 20 October 2016. Photo: John Gollings.
- Fig 15: Damp, *Cheersquad*, 1997.
- Fig 16: Damp, *The Damp Audience*, 1998.
- Fig 17: Damp, *Damp Audience: The Bridge* 1998 (video still).
- Fig 18: Damp, untitled drum skin, 1998. Collection of Geoff Lowe.
- Fig 19: Damp Camp Studio Workshop, February 2016.
- Fig 20: Damp Camp Studio Workshop, engaged in a game of spaghetti arms facilitated by Damp, February 2016.
- Fig 21: Damp Study Group, 8 April 2016, featuring works from Damp, *More than a Feeling* 2001-2004. Monash University Collection.
- Fig 22: Damp Study Group installing their collaboratively made *Gormenghast flag* and *Object swap* works in *Gormenghast*, 26 May 2016.
- Figs 23-24: Sanja Devic (detail) as part of the exhibition by Artmeet ARI at *Gormenghast*, 30 July 2016. Photos: Zan Wimberley.
- Figs 25-26: Damp, *Tension: the '80s* 1996 (installation views). Installed in fine art building D2, as part of Next Wave Festival 1996.
- Fig 27: *Damp Camp*, MADA Gallery G1, February 2016 (installation view). Featuring: Damp membership poster produced by Damp Camp Studio Workshop, and rope used in timeline exercise.
- Figs 28-29: *Art holds a high place in my life (timeline)*, installed by Damp Camp Studio Workshop, in fine art building D2, February 2016.
- Figs 30-31: *Damp video: what we want movies to be and do*, MADA Gallery G134 (installation views), July - August 2016.
- Fig 32: Damp *Untitled* 1996 installed in *Gormenghast*, 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley.

Fig 33: 'Final Objectives', 18 March 2001, group notation on A2 sheet of paper. Damp's Archive.

Fig 34: Damp, *Book of Shadows* 2005-ongoing (detail), pages showing notation of 'Guidelines'.





Fig 2: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast* 2016 (3 May 2016). Photo: John Gollings

## Introduction

*Art holds a high place in my life*



Fig 3: Damp and Geoff Lowe, *Location: Art holds a high place in my life* (detail), 1996.

This research seeks a crucial role for the curatorial within the university art school, as it and I follow artistic practice into the university.<sup>1</sup> Through the research project *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21*, I have modelled a curatorial methodology that leverages the pedagogical setting and tools of the university art school it is located within. This project set out to be both pedagogic and public in its outcomes, shifting between these two modes of address at different points of the program. It also aimed to contribute to local contemporary art history, by centring the program on twenty-one-years' of work by the artist group Damp, who formed in Melbourne in 1995. In a multidisciplinary practice spanning two decades and a changing membership, Damp has addressed the relationship between art, artist and audience. As signposted in the subtitle of the project, *Damp: study of an artist at 21*, I refer to this curatorial methodology as a 'study'. It is the task of this exegesis to explicate and evaluate the study as a curatorial method, and to assess the lessons learnt through its application in this project.

This Introduction provides an overview of *Art holds a high place in my life*, a multiform program that took place on campus at Monash University between February and November 2016. It introduces the artist group Damp and details the curatorial rationale to focus attention on this artistic practice. It unpacks what is meant by 'exhibition as study' and the use of 'study' as a curatorial model and discursive framing device. The research is positioned within the context of the curatorial's relationship to the university art school, to pedagogy and to the discipline of art history, via discourse of the curatorial, the paracuratorial and para-art history (terms which are elaborated below).

My curatorial intention for this research project, to present a long-form program on the campus of Monash University's Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (MADA), that would engage that faculty community as a primary located public, was motivated in part by my prior embedded experience of the campus. From 2010-2014 I worked at Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), just as that museum opened new premises on the

---

<sup>1</sup> Much has been said about the curatorial emerging as an academic discipline internationally, but I also refer to the literal arrival of the discipline here at Monash University with a doctoral program in Curatorial Practice introduced in 2014 and a Bachelor degree in Art History and Curating in 2016.

Caulfield campus, after operating at the larger and more suburban Clayton campus since 1975.<sup>2</sup> For the first time, MUMA was now co-located with MADA, with the potential to develop a deeper, collaborative relationship. Since 2008 I also taught on a sessional basis in the Art History and Theory Department at MADA. This contact with students, as well as my work managing a program for student volunteers at MUMA, prompted me to think through the kinds of access to artists and artworks that students in a university art school desired and could benefit from. What models of art practice are they exposed to? How could their desire for increased access to artists and artworks be facilitated through curatorial means?

To begin with, I identified the faculty's existing and, in my assessment, underutilised MADA Gallery as a uniquely-sited opportunity to experiment with ways in which the activities of studio-based teaching and learning could come into productive relation with the curatorial activity of gallery display. It is a premise that has been taken up recently in art schools and universities elsewhere, and my research has involved site visits and interviews with the following comparative studies, among others. Dr Fiona Lee's PhD research *Rogue Academy: Conversational art events as a means of institutional critique* documents her projects that sought to address 'a gap between what is taught in the academy (as a site of learning), and what is going on in the field of creative practice (acknowledged as a site of research activity)'.<sup>3</sup> Lee inserted curatorial projects into the Tasmanian College of the Arts, University of Tasmania, which were dialogical, social, and pedagogical events, designed to offer 'alternative' or supplementary forms of knowledge production, particularly around socially-engaged practice.<sup>4</sup> In New York, curator Anthony Huberman founded The Artist's Institute at Hunter College in 2010, with the aim to 'think about the specificity of a curatorial and exhibition structure within a university context', attuned to the fact that it is 'a place that's about

---

<sup>2</sup> For an account of MUMA's history (formerly the Monash University Gallery) and the Monash University Collection, see: *Change: Monash University Museum of Art*, Geraldine Barlow, Max Delany, Kyla McFarlane (eds) 2010, and *Monash University Collection: Four Decades of Collecting*, Jenepher Duncan and Linda Michael (eds), 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Fiona Lee, PhD thesis, *Rogue Academy: Conversational art events as a means of institutional critique*, University of Tasmania, 2016: 6.

<sup>4</sup> Lee's curated projects included *Our Day Will Come*, 2011, a one-month alternative art school, and *The Plimsoll Inquiry*, 2013, a seven-week program located in the art school's gallery, The Plimsoll Gallery, at a moment it faced considerable financial and organisational challenges.

thinking and learning and not just a place that's about display'.<sup>5</sup> The Artist's Institute presented six-month seasons focused on individual artists, often showing only one artwork at a time, while organising discursive and pedagogical programs stemming from the artist's practice including a semester-long seminar for the Hunter College MFA program.<sup>6</sup> Huberman, who has since taken up the directorship of The Wattis Institute at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, has written of curatorial practice as a form of 'taking care' and as an act of 'drawing attention'.<sup>7</sup> His programming approach has prioritised the artist in a form of homage or 'paying tribute', by which he means, to 'pay homage to someone falls somewhere between admiring them and studying them. A tribute is neither an analysis nor just a party'.<sup>8</sup> While Lee's curated projects sought to insert additional and alternative opportunities for research and learning into the art school, Huberman's position maintains distance between the curatorial role and the academic and scholarly activities of the art school setting. However, both Lee and Huberman present curatorial projects that work on different temporal rhythms or durations than typical gallery programming, and that self-reflexively aim to supplement curriculum.

Associate Professor Tara McDowell, has also taken up this question of time in her article 'Space as Support: On Curating, Education, and Architecture', which critiques the programming of university art museums, specifically MUMA. Central to McDowell's analysis of the 'relationship between education and curating (the two primary activities that take place within a university art museum)', is the observation that 'learning is processual and takes place over time, and that university art museums should take advantage of the time commitment that their primary and most proximate audience, by which I mean students, have promised: that is, most days for about four years'.<sup>9</sup> McDowell concludes with a provocation:

---

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Huberman, cited in Vincent Honoré, 'Spaces, Study Cases: Anthony Huberman – The Artist's Institute, New York', *Cura* 13, February 2013: 50

<sup>6</sup> Since 2015 The Artist's Institute has been directed by Jenny Jaskey. In 2016 it relocated and in 2017 the program was reoriented to host several artists in each season and expanded to include writers in the program.

<sup>7</sup> See Anthony Huberman, 'Take Care', in Binna Choi, Mai Abu ElDahab, Emily Pethick (eds.) *Circular Facts*. Sternberg Press, 2011: 9-17, and 'Pay Attention' *Frieze* 172, 2015: 146-151.

<sup>8</sup> Huberman, 'Take Care', *ibid*: 13.

<sup>9</sup> Tara McDowell, 'Space as Support: On curating, education, and architecture', *Studies in Material Thinking* 12 March 2015: 3

This gift of time could lead to a rethinking of the entire exhibition format: exhibitions could become processual; they could explore a question or thought problem for an entire academic year. They could be experimental, prone to failure, provisional, risky, tentative: in other words, they could be more open.<sup>10</sup>

As I shaped my research proposal, I initially conceived of inserting episodic curatorial projects into the MADA Gallery program, which was primarily taken up with doctoral examination exhibitions, punctuated by annual Open Day and Graduation Show events. However, as plans progressed, the temporary closure of MADA Gallery was announced as part of campus capital works and redevelopments (this shift is detailed in *Chapter one: Gormenghast and the university art school as site*). This challenge, along with the broader impact of extensive construction works occurring on campus throughout my candidature, prompted a reorienting of my project: the desire for high visibility on a compromised campus, and the need for a galvanising site in an otherwise physically and temporally dispersed program, became newly significant curatorial concerns. However, the fundamental aims remained, namely: to bring pedagogical and curatorial strategies into close alignment, to cultivate a small engaged and participatory public in the form of ‘audience as cohort’, and to work with Damp’s archive of practice in forms that could reflect their open and collective processes, and allow for a closer engagement and understanding of their work over time.

It is in these ways, and as elaborated below, that I position my project *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21* as an experiment in the curatorial model of ‘exhibition as study’.

## Study

The primacy of the exhibition as form has been destabilised within the broader context of the paracuratorial, or, as Paul O’Neill describes it, the ‘curatorial constellation’.<sup>11</sup> The term ‘paracuratorial’ was first put forth and examined in an issue of *The Exhibitionist* journal, as curating that is not bound to exhibition making, but ‘encompassing, and making primary, a

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.: 19

<sup>11</sup> Paul O’Neill, ‘The Curatorial Constellation and the Paracuratorial Paradox’, *The Exhibitionist* no.6, 2012: 55-59.

range of activities that have traditionally been parenthetical or supplementary to the exhibition proper'.<sup>12</sup> The types of activities under the umbrella of the paracuratorial might include artist talks, panel discussions, publications, screenings, workshops and any number of other forms of non-exhibition based events, that would traditionally be presented as education or public programs. In a follow up piece in the same journal, O'Neill sought to problematize the term for its implied hierarchy between the exhibition (which remains primary, or 'inside') and the marginal (or 'outside') activities other than the exhibition.<sup>13</sup> Rather than positing the 'para' activities as other or auxiliary to the main event of an exhibition, O'Neill argues for parity between activities, where neither is contingent on the other, but 'a constellation of activities exists in which the exhibition can be one of many component parts'.<sup>14</sup> Both the paracuratorial and the curatorial constellation, build on the growing use of the term 'curatorial' (as differentiated from 'curating') as promoted by Maria Lind, who in turn borrows from Chantal Mouffe's parallel notion of the 'political' as a qualitative concept.<sup>15</sup>

As a neologism, paracuratorial has a precedent in the less frequently cited term 'para-art history', as detailed by Tara McDowell in her essay 'The Post-Occupational Condition'.<sup>16</sup> Para-art history has not been so robustly elaborated or debated as a discursive category, but is briefly mentioned by Miwon Kwon in her response to the *October* journal's questionnaire on 'the contemporary'.<sup>17</sup> Kwon suggests considering contemporary art history in general as a para-art history, as a self-consciously unconventional form, taking '*para* from the Greek meaning "beside", but also, used in certain combinations, meaning to be "amiss" or "irregular", denoting alterations and modifications'.<sup>18</sup> To this, Kwon adds the implication of the parasitic, to position contemporary art history as 'hanger-on, leech, freeloader, bloodsucker, sponge, bottom-feeder, mooch on the proper body of art history'.<sup>19</sup> As

---

<sup>12</sup> Jens Hoffmann and Tara McDowell, 'Reflection', *The Exhibitionist* no 4 (June 2011): 4.

<sup>13</sup> Paul O'Neill, 'The Curatorial Constellation and the Paracuratorial Paradox', *The Exhibitionist* no.6, 2012: 57.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Maria Lind, 'On the Curatorial', *Artforum* vol. 48, no. 2 (October 2009): 103.

<sup>16</sup> Tara McDowell, 'The Post-Occupational Condition', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 16:1 (2016): 22-38.

<sup>17</sup> Miwon Kwon, 'A Questionnaire on "The Contemporary": 32 Responses', *October* 130 (Fall 2009): 14-15.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.:15

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

McDowell further proposes, curatorial histories and discourse are also potential para-art histories, posing as they do 'an art history that would fall outside certain conventions of the discipline while pressuring those same conventions'.<sup>20</sup>

It is within this discursive context that I propose the curatorial model of exhibition as study, as developed through my research project *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21*. In this case, the 'exhibition' unfolded in episodic parts over the course of a year, taking multiple forms and utilising many sites on campus, and integrating pedagogical and public outcomes around one artistic practice as its subject of study. The components of this project are outlined below and documented in the appendices, but briefly, it included: the commissioning of an iterative architectural public artwork used as a site for the broader program; a lecture by the artists; a curatorial and design workshop; a semester-long study group; Damp's artworks, documentation and archival material temporarily displayed throughout studios, corridors and courtyards; and responsive collaborative works and exhibitions made by students and recent graduates. In addition, this process of *studying* an artist's practice was, at all times during the project, on display; an act of research, learning, questioning and making, made visible to a primary, highly localised audience at MADA. Through this constellation of activities – some of which were pedagogical, some archival, some generative of new work; some single-handedly directed by myself as curator, some collaborative with Damp and invited colleagues, some open to contributions and direction from audience cohorts – Damp's practice was articulated in a way that aimed to most accurately reflect their work and history in its diverse forms and multi-authored nature. Many aspects of the curatorial framework echoed Damp's practice by adapting their strategies of collaboration and inviting acts of exchange with audience groups, which at times has involved risk taking, improvisation and responsiveness. As an artist group that has often made works that exist as context-specific and performative events or in a form of social exchange that cannot be wholly recreated, it was important that the curatorial form of my project incorporated a sense of that process and experience.

---

<sup>20</sup> Tara McDowell, 'The Post-Occupational Condition', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 16:1 (2016): 24.



The etymology of 'study', as both noun and verb, comes from the Old French *estudie*, and the Latin, *studium*, 'zeal, inclination' from *studēre* 'to be diligent'.<sup>21</sup> As a verb, to 'study' is defined as to 'apply the mind to the learning or understanding of (a subject), especially by reading; to investigate or examine, as by observation, research etc'.<sup>22</sup> The verb is further defined as 'to look at minutely, scrutinize', and 'to give much careful or critical thought to'.<sup>23</sup> As a noun, study can be 'a room used for studying, reading, writing, etc', or 'a product of studying, such as a written paper or book'.<sup>24</sup> It shares its etymology with 'studio', the space of study or concentration, in art practice the site of production, and in the art school, also a site of learning and experimentation. In art, we also think of a study as a sketch, preparatory drawing or series of drawings or rough paintings, the visual notes and observations made as the artist gets to know their subject. When a museum includes artist's studies in monographic exhibitions, for example, it does so to reveal layers of experiment, practice and discovery – the working process, including mistakes and revisions, is visible.

The exhibition as study is conceived in reference to all these connotations of the term. The project *Art holds a high place in my life* can be seen as both a process of study as a verb (in which I, as curator and researcher, have studied Damp), and generative of a study as noun, in which the project itself creates a portrait, study, or sketch, of Damp. Therefore, the subtitle *Damp: study of an artist at 21* implies a portrait of Damp at the age of twenty-one, which is technically accurate (the group formed in 1995 making 2016 Damp's twenty-first anniversary) but is also a trick or joke, as the individual members of the group were, by 2016, in their forties and had been closer to twenty-one-years-old at the time Damp formed. Twenty-one is also close in age to those making up the primary audience of my project, that is, current undergraduate MADA students. In this way, the '21' in the title suggests both the longevity of over two-decades' practice and the youthful formation of an artistic identity at art school.

---

<sup>21</sup> *Collins English Dictionary: Complete and Unabridged* 6<sup>th</sup> ed., s.v. 'study'.

<sup>22</sup> *Collins English Dictionary: Complete and Unabridged* 6<sup>th</sup> ed., s.v. 'study'.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

While referencing the location of my project as taking place within an institution of learning and research, the *study* describes both the active process of attention paid to the subject, and the resulting sketch or portrait of the subject. As a *study* rather than, for example, a hagiographic retrospective or monographic exhibition, the project can be interpreted as a starting point for developing new knowledge, interpretation and critique of the subject. As such, my project is not the only possible account of Damp, but one unfinished or ongoing study-in-progress. It is one which has paid close attention, and drawn the attention of my primary audience, to Damp's body of work. However, beyond simply drawing attention or creating a 'tribute' to its subject (as in Huberman's terms), the *study* allows for critical thought to take form in response. Working in the field of critical theory and black studies, American scholars Fred Moten and Stefano Harney have proposed a conception of *study* as 'a mode of thinking with others separate from the thinking that the institution requires of you'.<sup>25</sup> This is posed as a resistance and alternative to the official knowledge production required by universities, as Moten and Harney argue in their scathing critique *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, 'policy posits curriculum against study', and, 'the conditions of academic labour have become uncondusive to study'.<sup>26</sup> Rather, they wish to adopt a practice of 'with and for', which resonates with my adoption of study as a curatorial strategy, that is, 'studying with people rather than teaching them, and when I say "for", I mean studying with people in service of a project'.<sup>27</sup> It is a model of study that curatorial academic Irit Rogoff has also referenced in her discussions of 'becoming research', in which she argues for education to be a site of deconditioning, and to 'turn away from disciplinary curricula outcomes and exams, and towards an engagement with the conditions we are living out'.<sup>28</sup>

The study is offered as one way forward for the curatorial operating within the university art school, whether in a faculty gallery or as a necessarily untethered, parasitic project such as

---

<sup>25</sup> Jack Halberstam, 'The Wild Beyond: With and For the Undercommons', in Stefano Harney & Fred Moten *The Undercommons: Fugitive planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013): 11.

<sup>26</sup> Stefano Harney & Fred Moten *The Undercommons: Fugitive planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013): 81 and 113.

<sup>27</sup> Stefano Harney in 'The General Antagonism: An Interview with Stevphen Shukaitis', in Stefano Harney & Fred Moten *The Undercommons: Fugitive planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013): 147-148.

<sup>28</sup> Irit Rogoff, 'Becoming Research: The Way We Work Now' lecture, Artspace, Sydney, 26 February 2018.

this. *Art holds a high place in my life* | *Damp: study of an artist at 21* demonstrates how the curatorial in the university art school can do things that traditional art history cannot (in terms of dealing with the contemporary), and that public institutions tend not to (in terms of audience requirements). It is in this way that the study can be seen as a form of para-art history.



Fig 4: Members of Damp pictured in the utility room at VCA in 1996, with *Untitled 1996*.  
 Back L-R: Geoff Lowe, Debbie Pridmore, Martin Burns, Simone Ewenson, Daniel Noonan, James Lynch; Middle  
 L-R: Narelle Desmond, Kylie Wilkinson; Front: L-R: Carmel Taig, Sharon Goodwin, Natasha Mullings, Karyn  
 Lindner, Terry Eichler.

## Damp

The artist group Damp was founded in 1995 in a class at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), Melbourne. The elective class fostered collaboration and was taught by the artist Geoff Lowe, himself a member of the collaborating group A Constructed World (founded with Jacqueline Riva in 1993). At this starting point, Damp consisted of sixteen members, a number which would fluctuate over the coming years and decades. Initial works by Damp, such as forming a cheer squad and performing cheers to rally morale after art school 'crit' sessions, engaged with the institutional context they found themselves in and were delivered to and for a primary audience of fellow art students.<sup>29</sup> In this and many works produced in the second half of the 1990s, Damp also modelled an audience themselves, often finding a means to merge with the audience, or to enter into a direct exchange between artist and audience.<sup>30</sup> Over two decades, their practice has continued to negotiate the relationship between art, artist and audience, the role of the individual within groups, the inside and outside of groups and institutions. Damp's interrogations of working within a peer group, and engaging with localised audiences, align with the scope of my research project, and specifically my intentions for the curatorial project presented at MADA.

In their earliest years, Damp grew to twenty and twenty-five members, and then, as students began to leave the VCA and continued to work together as Damp, membership fluctuated around fourteen, twelve, ten or eight in the years between 1998 and 2010. Writing in 2009, Jarrod Rawlins raised questions about the balance of long term Damp members and those who joined for a year or two – describing this difference between 'core' and 'transient' membership.<sup>31</sup> Rawlins, himself a transient member of Damp who participated in the group in 2001, had also represented them during his co-directorship of Uplands Gallery (2001-2011). Since 2015, and throughout the working life of my research project, Damp has consisted of four long-term members: Narelle Desmond (1995-99 and 2003-present), Sharon Goodwin (1995-2005 and 2007-present), Deb Kunda (2008-09 and 2012-present), and James Lynch (1996 and 1998-present).

---

<sup>29</sup> *Cheersquad*, 1997, video, 5mins.

<sup>30</sup> For example: *Clothing Exchange*, 1996, audiences exchanged items of clothing for polaroid photos; *The Bridge: Damp Audience*, 1998, and *We're all water*, 1999, Damp members wore T-shirts printed with 'Damp' and 'Audience'.

<sup>31</sup> Jarrod Rawlins, 'Dialectic for Damp: Polygamy and the artist collective', *Creative Aggression* no. 2 (2009): 16-23.

Traditionally speaking, art history doctoral theses were not to be written on living artists. The increasing interest in contemporary art in recent decades has seen this start to change. This is perhaps aligned with the concurrent rise of contemporary curatorial practice, in which one more often works in varying degrees of proximity, cooperation, or even collaboration, with living artists (as is further discussed in *Chapter three: Exhibition as study*). Yet even in 2009, in *October* journal's questionnaire on 'The Contemporary', art historian Richard Meyer noted with surprise that an increasing number of art history PhDs were focused on the art of today and the immediate past, that in some cases the students are the same age as the artists they are writing about, and in fact the 'history they propose to chart neatly coincides with the time of their own lives'.<sup>32</sup> While there are many members of Damp of varying ages, the group and I are of roughly the same generation and I have encountered their work over many years, within its native context, often as and when it was first shown. My first meeting with Damp's work occurred in 2000: when I moved to Christchurch to work at the Physics Room contemporary art space, Damp were in the first exhibition that I de-installed and packed for freight as an intern exhibition technician.

This first experience of Damp's work was in the group exhibition *Rubik 10: Are you experienced?* (12 July – 5 August 2000). It was curated by Rubik, a Melbourne collective including Damp member James Lynch and artists Andrew McQualter, Julia Gorman and Ricky Swallow, who organised exhibitions and published a series of low-fi books on Australian and New Zealand artists. Aside from Damp, the *Rubik 10* exhibition featured work by individual Damp members Sharon Goodwin and James Lynch, the other members of Rubik, and fellow Melbourne artist Tim McMonagle. Indicative of the self-contextualising and multi-tasking streak that Melbourne's young artists were becoming known for at this time, the Physics Room's Emma Budgen wrote of Rubik's exhibition, 'eschewing the traditional role of the artist as the angst ridden garret-dwelling individualist, Australian artists seem more prone to congregate in packs than their New Zealand equivalents'.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Richard Meyer, 'A Questionnaire on "The Contemporary": 32 Responses', *October* 130 (Fall 2009): 18.

<sup>33</sup> Emma Bugden, 'Rubik 10: Are you experienced?', *Log Illustrated* 12, 2001, accessed 10 July 2018, [http://www.physicsroom.org.nz/archive/log/archive/12/rubik\\_10/](http://www.physicsroom.org.nz/archive/log/archive/12/rubik_10/).

Damp's contribution to the exhibition included a video edit of *Punchline*, 1999, a breakthrough performative work that had occurred at Melbourne's 200 Gertrude Street (now Gertrude Contemporary) the previous year. Having installed a fairly generic 'stand-in' exhibition of found and made objects and cardboard constructed 'D-A-M-P' letters, the real work took place at the crowded exhibition opening. Here, Damp members and anonymous actors dispersed throughout the gallery began performing a series of altercations that eventually built into a full-blown brawl amongst the group in which much of the exhibition was destroyed. It was an audacious event, the awkward and eruptive nature of which is documented in the video work, and the re-telling of it by those in the audience helped spread a sense of mythologising and notoriety around Damp at the time. Almost twenty years later, *Punchline* has retained this seminal status, and has become one of Damp's most institutionally exhibited works. Impossible to restage, video documentation and a combination of remade and original props from the work have been displayed in significant group exhibitions, *Art as a Verb* at Monash University Museum of Art (2014) and the National Gallery of Victoria's survey of the 1990s, *Every Brilliant Eye: Australian Art of the 1990s* (2017).<sup>34</sup>

Reflective of collective identity and anxiety, *Punchline* performed Damp's worst nightmare: that the group would turn on themselves, suddenly unable to contain conflict and maintain a public face of solidarity and cohesion. In this work, Damp face their fears by acting them out. Also included in the *Rubik 10* exhibition at the Physics Room, was the lesser known work *One flew over the cuckoo's nest group 2*, 2000. In this video work the artists perform an amateur reading of a group therapy scene from the 1975 film set in an oppressive psychiatric hospital. Damp members read lines originally attributed to male patients and the tyrannical Nurse Ratched. With only minimal gestures toward characterisation, props and staging, Damp's re-reading and editing of the appropriated scenes emphasise absurdity and discord as a sense of panic builds around Sharon Goodwin-as-Cheswick's quest for their *own* confiscated pack of cigarettes.

---

<sup>34</sup> *Every Brilliant Eye: Australian Art of the 1990s* exhibition details; MUMA exhibition details & touring to Flinders University Museum & City Gallery, Adelaide, and Artspace, Sydney, 2015.

Kylie Wilkinson and Moya McKenna act as a double-headed version of McMurphy (famously played by Jack Nicholson in the film), who in this scene discovers some of his fellow patients are voluntarily institutionalised. This leads to a round of Damp-members-as-psychiatric-patients noting they are 'committed' or 'not committed to being here', or, 'I can leave at any time'. In an exchange that is perhaps the script's most relevant moment in relation to the group dynamic, Martin Burns performs Nurse Ratched's passive aggressive line: 'We've discussed this many times. Being with other people is very therapeutic, while brooding alone only increases the feeling of separation. You remember that.' The scene cuts to James Lynch delivering McMurphy's reply: 'Do you mean to say it's sick to want to be by yourself?'. The amateur delivery of lines and frequent breaks into laughter by the performers in Damp's rendition of these extracts, thinly veils a reflection on belonging to the group, and the constant questioning on an individual level of commitment to stay or to go, to conforming to institutional will, or rebelling, alone or together.

### *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21*

The title of this project is taken from one of Damp's first exhibitions, *Location: Art holds a high place in my life*, 1996. The exhibition consisted of an exchange of faxes between Damp, then students at VCA, and students at Hong Ik University in Seoul, South Korea. The phrase was hand-written on a work made by Damp in collaboration with lecturer Geoff Lowe (fig.3) and included in a text comprising one of the exhibited faxes. The statement 'art holds a high place in my life' emerged as a response to a group exercise in which participants had to list the most important things in their lives (such as food, sleep, love), and it became something of a slogan or aspiration for Damp at the time. A feature article on Damp by artist and writer Andrew McQualter published in *Like, Art Magazine* in 1997 took this quote as its title, suggesting how neatly the phrase was associated with the group's emerging artistic identity which focused on a merging of art and elements of everyday life, and a strategy of 'swapping sides with their audience'.<sup>35</sup> Appropriating the statement 'art holds a high place in my life' as the title of my 2016 curatorial project felt particularly apt: as it referenced one of the earliest works made by Damp; as my curatorial study aimed to engage with Damp's

---

<sup>35</sup> Andrew McQualter, 'Damp: Art holds a high place in my life', *Like, Art Magazine* no.4 (Spring 1997): 30.



ongoing life in art; and as my project took place in MADA, a faculty where students and staff have each made commitments to art and a creative life in their various disciplines.

The program *Art holds a high place in my life* | *Damp: study of an artist at 21* took place on Monash University's Caulfield campus in February-October 2016 and comprised of the following elements (please refer to Appendix 1 for comprehensive documentation of each):

### ***Gormenghast, 2016***

Damp and Monash Art Projects (MAP)

Commissioned by MAP with support from Curatorial Practice, MADA, and MUMA. Hosted by MUMA in the Ian Potter Sculpture Court.

Functioning as both a public artwork and an architectural site for other elements of the program, *Gormenghast, 2016* was designed by MAP (Callum Morton, Andre Bonnice, Nicholas Agius) and built by Brian Scales, Dave McDonald and Mark Bushnie (with staircase by Bill Desmond) in April 2016. Progressive additions and alterations were made by Damp throughout the year until the work was dismantled in the last week of October, 2016.

The work was developed as a response to the unavailability of the MADA Gallery as a site for my curatorial project, and to provide a consistently visible element of the project that was otherwise temporally and physically dispersed amidst a campus under construction. I initiated the concept of commissioning Damp to develop an architecturally-scaled artwork on campus that would serve as a multipurpose space for the study and display of Damp's own body of work. This idea drew on previous works by Damp including *Untitled, 2009* (figs. 8-10), a room-sized plinth built for the 2009 Asia Pacific Triennial (APT), which operated as a cubby house, archival repository, social and meeting place within the exhibition. This concept also appealed to MAP's practice and research interests in art in the public sphere. MAP is one of seven interdisciplinary research 'Labs' within MADA, and at the time of this project, was led by then Head of Fine Art Callum Morton. Fuelled by shared interests in developing an unconventional public artwork as a site, MAP offered to commission and assist with the development of the work, to which Damp responded by

suggesting a collaboration between the two groups. The work was titled by Damp, in reference to the series of fantasy novels by Mervyn Peake set in the castle and earldom of Gormenghast.<sup>36</sup>

### **Damp Camp Studio Workshop**

11-12, 14-16 and 19 February 2016

MADA Gallery and design studios, building G

Fourteen MADA students participated in a five-day collaborative workshop responding to a curatorial and communication design brief for the program *Art holds a high place in my life* | *Damp: study of an artist at 21*. The workshop was co-convened with Warren Taylor, lecturer in Communication Design, with a half-day session facilitated by Damp. Outcomes of the workshop fed into the larger program *Art holds a high place in my life*, as the *Damp Camp* exhibition, *Art holds a high place in my life (timeline)*, and multiple pieces of design collateral such as a risograph-printed poster series and signage used throughout the program.

### ***Damp Camp***

22 February – 4 March 2016

MADA Gallery

This exhibition presented provisional identity designs developed at Damp Camp Studio Workshop. Three interdisciplinary teams of MADA students worked together to propose identity concepts to be applied across posters, signage, wayfinding and exhibition design. The exhibition also represented the collaborative process as it unfolded across the five-day workshop, and launched the visual identity for *Art holds a high place in my life*.

### ***Art holds a high place in my life (timeline)***

29 February – 11 March 2016

Corridor of building D, level 2 (D2)

---

<sup>36</sup> The series by Mervyn Peake includes *Titus Groan*, 1946, *Gormenghast*, 1950, and *Titus Alone*, 1959.

This timeline, developed by the Damp Camp Studio Workshop, presented a chronology of Damp's practice from 1995 to 2016 through documentation of key works and a poster listing the names of all past and present members. The timeline referenced *Tension: the '80s*, 1996 (figs. 25-26), a work by Damp installed in the very same corridor twenty years prior as part of Next Wave Festival 1996. *Tension: the '80s* reproduced pages from a special issue of the art magazine *Tension* that documented a decade of Australian art and artists. Damp, young art students at the time, inserted objects and memorabilia from their own lives alongside the icons of art and art history they had studied through magazines and at art school at the VCA.

### **MADA Artforum: Damp and Rosemary Forde**

2 March 2016

Lecture theatre G1.04

All four current members of Damp, plus myself, presented an introductory lecture to the faculty staff and students as part of the MADA Artforum weekly lunchtime lecture series. Taking place in week one of semester one, this lecture coincided with the *Damp Camp* exhibition and *Art holds a high place in my life (timeline)* installation. The lecture was a key opportunity to introduce the program to the faculty community at large, preview the forthcoming *Gormenghast* public artwork, and announce an open call for participation in the *Damp Study Group*. After my introduction, Damp members spoke in turn, each presenting various aspects of their practice focusing on key works. While the overall program eventually included multiple interpretations, responses and re-contextualisations of Damp's practice (my own, MAP's, the participating students' in Damp Camp and Damp Study Group, Artmeet ARI's, MUMA's, and MADA's), this lecture privileged the artists' own voices.

### **Damp Study Group**

Damp Study Group was a collaborative study group of fourteen undergraduate MADA students who responded to an open invitation to participate in the non-assessed extra-curricular project. Six seminar sessions were held, each focused on a different aspect of Damp's practice, with particular artworks presented each week. Damp led the first week as a

workshop on 'desire', and the following weeks were facilitated by myself, with student participants taking turns to lead discussion each week in response to particular Damp artworks. Seminar topics included: Desire: what we want and what we'll do for it; Site and context; Value, transformation, authenticity; Art and audience; Conflict: it's a world full of hurt; Group Group: collective thinking and process.

Alongside the seminars, I presented selected works from Damp's oeuvre relating to each weekly 'curriculum' topic. Works were displayed for the duration of that week in informal settings of the studio space seminars were held in or *Gormenghast* (as weather and conditions permitted). In many cases I was able to display original works of art that remain in Damp's archive, and in other cases showed documentation, and provided the Study Group with pertinent archival material (catalogues, reviews, ephemera) as readings. This enabled a highly engaged and close access to several of Damp's works over the course of the semester, for the Study Group as a participatory cohort. Works on display were also visible to the wider MADA public each week, but without the level of intimacy and discourse accessible to the Study Group.

Based on the weekly seminars and ongoing discussions, Damp Study Group developed a series of works together including the collaborative *Gormenghast Flag* and *Object Swap* project which were exhibited in *Gormenghast*. As their final project in semester two, the group presented the exhibition *All that we desire[d]*. Installed in and around *Gormenghast*, this collaborative curatorial project conceived by Damp Study Group included works by several participants and invited guests responding to the idea of desire at the age of twenty-one.

### **Artmeet ARI**

25 July – 7 August 2016

*Gormenghast* and the Ian Potter Sculpture Court

The collective Artmeet ARI was founded in 2014 by final year MADA students, and operated as a site-less artist-run initiative in Melbourne and its surrounding suburbs. Originally consisting of twenty-eight members, the group was organised by eleven members in 2016. I

invited Artmeet to engage with Damp's practice, my project and the curatorial framework, by developing an exhibition to take place in and around *Gormenghast*. This was driven by my desire to connect the project with a younger generation of artists and recent MADA graduates, and invite their response to Damp's work, as a group that had formed with similar motivations

The group responded by creating a series of collaborative sculptures installed throughout the courtyard and gardens surrounding *Gormenghast*, and by inviting a solo project by artist Sanja Devic installed on the upper level of *Gormenghast*.

***Damp Video: What we want movies to be and do***

25 July – 7 August 2016

MADA Gallery (temporary location, G134)

I curated and installed this exhibition at the beginning of semester two, coinciding with Artmeet ARI's exhibition at *Gormenghast*. Not strictly a video show, the exhibition brought together works by Damp that built on elements of theatre and film, such as narrative, physical gesture, tableaux, costumes and playfulness. It included photographs, works on paper, a comprehensive selection of Damp video works and video documentation of events and performances, and an installation of the video *Chain Reaction*, 2004, projected on a makeshift screen constructed on a painting easel and shown alongside a series of drawings by the same name. My installation of this exhibition maintained an 'art school aesthetic' by utilising display furniture and equipment readily available in the MADA studios, sitting monitors on top of paint-splattered and scuffed plinths and benches.

In addition to the above components, the project and *Gormenghast* were utilised in various formal and informal ways by campus constituencies. Notably, MUMA ran an elaborate education program throughout 2016 that targeted high school art classes and engaged members of Damp and MAP to deliver workshops on their practice and in response to *Gormenghast*. In a more parasitic use of *Gormenghast*, MUMA installed solar panels on the roof of the artwork to provide the solar power required for the exhibition *Nicholas Mangan:*

*Limits to Growth* (MUMA, 20 July – 17 September 2016). Several studio units throughout MADA ran tutorials and class exercises and assignments in response to *Gormenghast* and the exhibition *Damp Video: What we want movies to be and do*.

## Chapter outline

Each chapter of the exegesis interrogates a key aspect of the *study* as curatorial method as applied through the research project *Art holds a high place in my life*.

*Chapter one: Gormenghast and the university art school as site* examines the university art school as a site for the production of art, curatorial activity and study, drawing on Danny Butt's observation that the contemporary university art school has become 'not only a key site for analysis and verification, but a key institution of artistic production'.<sup>37</sup> Here, I discuss *Gormenghast*, 2016, a temporary architectural work made in collaboration by Damp and MAP (Monash Art Projects), as an investigation into what *kind* of site the university is for artistic production, seeking to find its parameters and conditions. *Gormenghast* was commissioned as a flagship work and intended to function as a site that would house the rest of the program. Presciently named by Damp for the 'fantasy of manners' genre novels by Mervyn Peake, the curatorial impetus for an architectural public artwork was in response to unexpected logistical challenges posed by the university, and in turn the work itself created many more challenges for the larger project.<sup>38</sup> The development of the work, difficulties encountered, and the successes and failures of *Gormenghast* as both a work and as a site, are detailed in the chapter as revelatory of a conditional and at times dysfunctional relationship of art to/in the university art school as a site of production and study.

*Chapter two: Audience as cohort* applies the critical framework of *study* to the pedagogic modes of curatorial address adopted throughout the research project *Art holds a high place in my life*,

---

<sup>37</sup> Danny Butt, *Artistic Research in the Future Academy* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2017): 63

<sup>38</sup> The author and artist Mervyn Peake wrote three novels located in the castle-state of 'Gormenghast'. It is a setting which swirls with bureaucracy and outdated ritual. The novels feature a dysfunctional family, malicious interlocutors and a sub-population known as 'The Bright Carvers' who are essentially an encampment of artists living in a shanty town of makeshift hovels precariously attached to the exterior wall of the castle and working on sculpted figures year-round. Peake had served in WW2, studied at the Royal Academy, and later was institutionalised due to mental illness and poor health, dying prematurely.

in which I conceived of the audience as 'cohort'. This chapter narrates the formation of Damp in 1995 as itself a pedagogical project, and details aspects of Damp's practice which have interrogated the exchange between artist and audience, and works in which the group has itself modelled an audience. *Audience as cohort* draws on existing discourse of art-as-pedagogy in relation to audience, and curatorial models that have aimed to engage small localised audience groups. The chapter evaluates the curatorial positioning of audience as cohort, through analysis of the projects Damp Camp (a workshop and exhibition), Damp Study Group (a seminar series which led to collaboratively made artworks and exhibition), and an exhibition by Artmeet ARI (a collective of recent MADA graduates formed in 2014) made in response to, and sited in and around, *Gormenghast*.

*Chapter three: Exhibition as study* turns to the overarching curatorial model of study deployed in *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21* as an alternative form of the survey exhibition. It introduces the question of critical distance as a source of tension between art history and curatorial scholarship, and argues for the value in the curatorial's contribution as para-art history, particularly as it pertains to contemporary practice and to local art histories. The chapter outlines a brief history and critical discussion of the monographic survey exhibition genre, and recent curatorial strategies that have aimed to disrupt or critique that genre. My use of the timeline as a repeated motif, presented at the beginning of the program and re-edited in an expanded form for the examination exhibition, is discussed in relation to Damp's artwork *Tension: the '80s*, 1996, presented through the corridors of the fine art building at Caulfield as part of the Next Wave Festival 1996, and as calling attention to the many layers of archival research, inaccuracies of memory, and mythologising of artistic biographies that curatorial practice contends and colludes with. The chapter makes an argument for the exhibition as study and this research project as a form of para-art history, as seen in the totality of the project presented in 2016, the exegesis, and the examination exhibition.

The curatorial project *Art holds a high place in my life* took place against the following odds: a disappearing gallery; a partially lost archive; an artistic identity authored and dispersed unevenly amongst seventy-six individual members past and present and encompassing two

decades of youth and aging, friendships, conflict, love and loss; key artworks that exist only in documentation and memory; and a dependence on the support and approval of a cumbersome and internally conflicted institution that at times sought to both limit and exploit the project. The exegesis conclusion, *Objectives and guidelines*, brings together a list of 'lessons learnt' through the research project, presented as notes-to-self or practical objectives as a way forward for the curatorial in the university art school. With a nod to Damp's longstanding practice of writing 'guidelines and objectives' for working together, I offer a how-to for the curatorial model of the exhibition as study.







Fig 6: Damp, *Book of Shadows* 2005-ongoing (detail), pages showing 'Monsta Plinth' drawing.



Fig 7: Damp, *Untitled* 2007, Uplands Gallery. Photo: John Brash.



Figs 8-10: Damp, *Untitled* 2009. 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art, 5 December 2009 – 5 April 2010.



## Chapter one

### *Gormenghast and the university art school as site*



Fig. 5: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast* 2016, with surrounding campus construction works, 20 May 2016.

Gormenghast, that is, the main massing of the original stone, taken by itself would have displayed a certain ponderous architectural quality were it possible to have ignored the circumfusion of those mean dwellings that swarmed like an epidemic around its outer walls. They sprawled over the sloping earth, each one half way over its neighbour until, held back by the castle ramparts, the innermost of these hovels laid hold on the great walls, clamping themselves thereto like limpets to a rock. These dwellings, by ancient law, were granted this chill intimacy with the stronghold that loomed above them. Over their irregular roofs would fall throughout the seasons the shadows of time-eaten buttresses, of broken and lofty turrets, and, most enormous of all, the shadow of the Tower of Flints. This tower, patched unevenly with black ivy, arose like a mutilated finger from among the fists of knuckled masonry and pointed blasphemously at heaven. At night the owls made of it an echoing throat: by day it stood voiceless and cast its long shadow.

– Mervyn Peake, *Titus Groan* 1946

*Gormenghast*, a temporary and evolving public sculpture, stands in a paved and gardened campus courtyard, encircled by a glass-walled museum, a concrete block library, faculty buildings and a raised footbridge. The work, built of timber and ply, and painted swimming pool-blue, is a square construction, open on three sides, with an external staircase leading to a second-floor platform. With its upper level balcony, the structure in its initial phase most closely resembles a viewing deck or stage. Yet it is a viewing deck without a view, positioned with its back turned to the landscaped garden which might otherwise provide a relaxing vista and some shade. Instead, it faces into the midday sun and towards the brutalist library building that is suffering extreme deconstruction, inaccessible, shrouded in construction mesh and scaffolding.

This architectural sculpture is planted in the Ian Potter Sculpture Court (IPSC), outside the entrance to Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA) on the University's Caulfield campus in April, 2016. Its columns sit on concrete feet on steel plates, so as to rest atop the

IPSC pavers without causing them damage, and without requiring in-ground foundations. The platform in its pristine state, with unfussy form and clean modernist lines, an almost Lego-like symmetry and structural simplicity, perfectly mimics its digitally drawn architectural plans. This *Gormenghast* is both declarative and anticipatory. It is as yet unweathered, unscuffed, unadorned by additions and renovations and salvaged furnishings. It is unpeopled, unused.

Over time, quickly and continually until its removal at the end of October that year, it becomes very much weathered, scuffed, adorned, renovated, peopled, and used.<sup>39</sup>

As noted in the *Introduction* to this exegesis, *Gormenghast*, 2016, by Damp and MAP (Monash Art Projects), was both a commissioned artwork and a key site for the broader curatorial project *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21*. This chapter contextualises the genesis, process and duration of *Gormenghast*, as a work, as a site, and as an experiment in the collaborative production of a work within the university. This work is detailed not only for the purpose of documentation, but is presented as a case study that is illustrative of the conditions for art and the curatorial in the university art school. Likewise, the particular situation of the MADA faculty and Monash University is outlined in this chapter as an indicative example of the contemporary university art school. The very specific, localised experience of *Gormenghast* and its relation to MADA is instrumentalised in the chapter to reveal the conditions for producing and presenting art in, and with, the university.

---

<sup>39</sup> In the coming weeks and months, cantilevered doors are added as moveable walls below, almost enclosing the ground floor space. A window is boxed in above a lean-to bar. Discarded plastic classroom chairs are arranged on the upper level. A bench seat made of recycled picket-fencing is added. Dust and leaves gather in and around the ground floor through autumn and winter. A steel welded turret is hoisted on to the uppermost point of the structure. An unwired chandelier is hung under the staircase. The upstairs flooring is faded and dirtied with weather and the scuff marks of furniture and footprints. Timber beams are added across the top like a pergola. Solar panels are attached to the pergola beams, an umbilical cord of wrapped power cables strung overhead connect the makeshift structure to building F for a couple of months. The door to the upper deck is taken off its hinges and placed absurdly overhead. Saffron fabric is draped around the upper level. Giant letters cut from brightly painted ply, spell out D-A-M-P and wrap two sides of the structure.

The overarching ambition of this research project, as stated in the *Introduction*, is to seek a crucial role for the curatorial within the university, one that can be both pedagogical and public in its outcomes, and that contributes to knowledge in the form of a 'para-art history'. *Chapter One* begins this investigation by examining the conditions for art and curatorial activity, and study, within the university art school. In his critical history of art schools, a key text for my research, Danny Butt demonstrates that the contemporary university art school has become 'not only a key site for analysis and verification, but a key institution of artistic production'.<sup>40</sup> Building on this significant assertion, this chapter asks, then, what kind of institution is this? What are the conditions, limits and opportunities, for artistic production within the university art school? And further, what is or could be the curatorial role in this complex institutional schema?<sup>41</sup>

The chapter follows this line of investigation by starting with the role of the faculty gallery, providing a brief history of MADA Gallery as an example, and presenting its position, temporary closure and relocation, as symbolic of the priorities and politics of space on campus.<sup>42</sup> The chapter goes on to position the specific history of the faculty at Monash within the discursive context of the contemporary university as market-driven corporation and 'in crisis', reliant on precarious academic labour and inculcating students into debt. The 'educational turn' in art and curatorial practice is introduced in this chapter in direct relation to this context of university in crisis: as both a response to it, and as a factor in the university becoming a site for artistic production.

The chapter then turns to a selection of recent curatorial approaches to operating in the university, with attention to the particular demands and opportunities of time and space that this context entails. 'The Plimsoll Inquiry' led by Fiona Lee and Maria Kunda at the Tasmanian College of the Arts in Hobart (2013-2015), The Artist's Institute at Hunter College

---

<sup>40</sup> Danny Butt, *Artistic Research in the Future Academy* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2017): 63

<sup>41</sup> Butt's comments do not specifically focus on curatorial practice, but he does recommend the university art school increase its efforts in providing opportunity for the public presentation of artistic practice through, for example, faculty galleries. Danny Butt, 'The Art School and the University: Research, Knowledge, and Creative Practices' PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 2011: 226.

<sup>42</sup> While I have not positioned this research project within the discourse of site-specificity and institutional critique, the project is self-consciously aware of being situated within the university art school and has engaged with that particular setting conceptually as well as practically.

in New York (2010-ongoing), and the project *On Campus* curated by Raimundas Malašauskas at Monash University in 2017, are examined here in terms of their engagement with the university as a site. These curatorial works are also discussed in comparative terms to this research project and its model of 'study' in relation to the university.

Finally, the chapter returns to the processes and results of *Gormenghast*, a work that tested the university as a site of artistic production, and in doing so, became a performance of the institution itself as a conditional, uneven and at times dysfunctional site for artistic production.

### **The faculty gallery**

This research began with an obvious starting point, by asking, what is (has been or could be) the role of the faculty gallery? However, this question quickly expanded and diverted, as the complex conditions for the art school within the fabric of the university became prevalent. In the case of MADA Gallery, which was initially the intended site for this curatorial practice research, the gallery was unexpectedly closed during the development and duration of the project, amidst larger campus redevelopment works. The fact that the decision to close MADA Gallery came so quickly and had little repercussion, is indicative of the lack of purchase its programming had at that time. A brief history of the faculty gallery at MADA follows, in order to understand how it came to hold such little value. The positioning of the gallery and its eventual relocation on campus is also discussed here, in terms of what this can reveal about the priorities and politics of space on campus.

Monash University, which had acquired the Caulfield campus via a merger with the Chisholm Institute of Technology in 1990, launched the Faculty of Art and Design in 1999 with a major new building by award-winning architects Denton Corker Marshall (DCM).<sup>43</sup> This new nine-million-dollar facility marked an expansion and significant commitment to Art and Design – one of ten faculties in the university and five that are present at Caulfield. Under the direction of foundation dean Professor John Redmond, the former Monash

---

<sup>43</sup> The building attracted two awards for Denton Corker Marshall, the 1999 RIAA Victorian Architecture Awards Award of Merit (Institutional – New) and the 1999 RIAA National Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Buildings Commendation.



University College of Art and Design was upgraded from a 'sub-faculty' to faculty in 1998, with the building works undertaken at the same time.

Crucially, a new Faculty Gallery was established in tandem with the faculty and housed in pride of place at the front entrance of the DCM building. The significance of this symbolic positioning of the gallery as central to faculty life was underscored by Professor Redmond's comments on the occasion of the official opening of the building:

The building allows us to do many things that weren't possible in the old accommodation... It's a bit like teaching drama and not having a theatre. If you don't have a gallery, you don't have the means of drawing the external culture into the faculty, or the highly visible means of expressing your vision.<sup>44</sup>

These words resonated nearly two decades later during the development of this research project, as uncertainty and ambivalence surrounded the gallery.

Announced in May 2015, the temporary closure and eventual relocation of MADA Gallery was to make way for SensiLab, an interdisciplinary visualisation and prototyping hub led by the Faculty of Information Technology. Plans to locate SensiLab at the entrance of building G in 2016 were designed to lend the new hub a highly visible and prominent position on campus. In the context of a university in an aggressive phase of renovating and expanding its campuses, decisions relating to space and visibility are easily read as symbolically potent. The real estate capital bestowed upon the Faculty Gallery (as it was known then), and by extension the Faculty of Art and Design, in 1999, was supplanted in 2015-16 by the university's privileging of SensiLab and technological innovation. Such a move is a reflection of the university as corporation, driven by a matrix of entrepreneurial, marketing and financial incentives. More specifically, projects operating through SensiLab have significant Australia Research Council (ARC) funding, meaning the Lab can pay its own way in the

---

<sup>44</sup> Professor John Redmond, 'The art of designing the future', *Monash Magazine* no.4, 1999. Monash University Archives, accessed 1 May 2016, <http://www.monash.edu/pubs/monmag/issue4-99/item-06.html>

context of academic capitalism.<sup>45</sup> The system in which the university charges each faculty rent for the spaces they occupy, is noted in Gerald Raunig's critique *Factories of Knowledge: Industries of Creativity* (2013), as resulting in 'a new quality of subservient deterritorialization'.<sup>46</sup> While the MADA Gallery and the mounting of PhD exhibitions is certainly not a strong revenue-generator, an economic concern is not the only factor that has contributed to the diminishment in role and prestige that MADA Gallery faced.

In the intervening years since the Gallery opened, the Faculty's Higher Degree Research (HDR) program had launched in earnest, enrolling a large cohort of Masters and PhD candidates. The faculty expanded to become the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture in 2008. Foundation Professor of Architecture, Shane Murray, replaced Professor Redmond as Dean in 2010. Also in 2010, MUMA relocated to its current renovated ground floor location at Caulfield amongst the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture's campus footprint. Finally, in 2012 the Faculty was rebranded as 'MADA', Monash Art Design & Architecture, with an identity developed by then Practice Professor in Design, John Warwicker. Together, these changes are indicative of the ambition and pace of change within the faculty since its establishment in 1999. Two of these developments in particular, namely the growth of the HDR program and the relocation of MUMA, were to have very significant impact on the role, structure and expectations of MADA Gallery.

With the faculty's growing HDR intake, the MADA Gallery had to accommodate an increasing number of PhD examination exhibitions, which had ramifications on the Gallery's ability to curate its program. Alicia Renew (Gallery Manager, 2009-2013) recalls, for example, that in 2009 twenty PhD examination exhibitions were scheduled, accounting for ten months of the Gallery's calendar. However, due to the unpredictable nature of PhD candidature and completion dates, only five of the exhibitions eventuated, leaving the Gallery with months of

---

<sup>45</sup> Professor Jon McCormack of the Faculty of Information Technology and Director of SensiLab is a recipient of an ARC Future Fellowship with project funds attached. 'Jon McCormack: Monash Faculty of IT's new Future Fellowship Recipient', Monash University 'News and Events', 6 June 2017, accessed 10 July 2018, <https://www.monash.edu/it/about-us/news-and-events/latest/articles/2017/jon-mccormack-monash-i.ts-new-future-fellowship-recipient>.

<sup>46</sup> Gerald Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge: Industries of Creativity* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2013): 39.

un-programmed space to fill quickly and under pressure.<sup>47</sup> From 2013 until its temporary closure and relocation in 2016-17, MADA Gallery was administered by the Graduate Research Office, signalling an almost exclusive function of the gallery to host examination shows. While such exhibitions should be cause for celebration, they were not generally publicised or widely attended, and were often only open for three or four days within a weekly turnaround. As such, the Gallery was not performing any role as a space for connection within the faculty community, nor drawing external culture into the program. As former Head of Fine Art, Professor Callum Morton observed, with MADA Gallery not running a curated program, 'it's like you lost one end of the campus for engaging the community outside and engaging the community inside [the faculty]'.<sup>48</sup> This meant the disappearance of one of a very few platforms for shared space and time within the faculty, and the erosion of opportunity to develop a sense of scholarly community – between and among departments, undergraduate year levels, postgraduates and faculty.<sup>49</sup>

The lack of ambition and resourcing of the Gallery can also be seen in relation to its close proximity to MUMA. As custodian of the Monash University Collection, founded in 1961, and an exhibiting history since 1975, MUMA's re-establishment in new and expanded facilities at Caulfield in 2010 signalled strong support and commitment from the university. Organisationally, MUMA reports directly to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor (although this structure has changed many times in its history). As such, MUMA is an entity separate from any faculty. However, the museum's natural affinities and ties to MADA are formalised by the Dean sitting in the role of Chair of the MUMA Committee. MUMA's programming of four exhibition seasons per year, provides the valuable opportunity for faculty to take classes into the museum and respond to artworks and exhibitions as primary resources. In the faculty's eyes this creates less of a need or desire for MADA Gallery to fulfil that pedagogical role – as Janet Creaney states, 'there's no sense competing'.<sup>50</sup> MUMA also brings external arts audiences and industry awareness to the campus, with far greater support and resources

---

<sup>47</sup> Alicia Renew, interview with the author, 27 October 2014.

<sup>48</sup> Callum Morton, interview with the author, 13 November 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Other platforms for shared space and time include the annual Open Day, end-of-year Graduation show, and MFA show, and the weekly Artforum lunchtime lecture series during semester.

<sup>50</sup> Janet Creaney, interview with the author, 27 October 2014.

than MADA Gallery ever had. As Morton notes, 'MUMA is so good in that space and there's such commitment to MUMA in the university'.<sup>51</sup> In other words, some of the aspirational functions that MADA Gallery may have served have been assumed by MUMA. However, this assumes MUMA's program could fulfil *all* the faculty's needs and desires, as well as meeting its university-wide and public responsibilities, and does not show much imagination for conceiving of an alternative curatorial approach for the smaller gallery, embedded within and responsible only to its own faculty. Yet without curatorial staff or a strong foothold within the structure of the faculty (even less so within the university), the spacious and well-appointed double gallery space, so often visibly empty, had become both a soft target for closure and a real estate asset to leverage.<sup>52</sup>

Contrarily, throughout 2016 and the duration of *Art holds a high place in my life*, SensiLab had not yet appeared in the building. After a rush in 2015 to cancel programming plans (including those associated with this research project) and renovate a studio space to temporarily house the gallery (in room G1.34), for most of 2016, at least one if not two, and sometimes three, galleries stood empty. During this time, establishing an alternative site for this research project to manifest, required an urgent approach to fundraising, development and building, and stretched the workload capacity of many individuals. With limited availability of key personnel and resources, work on the project was fragmented, delayed and reliant on the goodwill and enthusiasm of those involved, including the artists and the architectural team at MAP. This frustrating circumstance is mentioned not as a personal grievance, but as illustrative of the university operating at once as a corporation – driven by industry and branding opportunities; and as a bureaucracy – processes rife with inefficiency and a lack of information. The result of these operational modes colliding is often dysfunctionality. As Jan Verwoert critiques:

The essential companion for understanding the structural logic of institutions as traditional as the university continues to be Kafka's writing. Arguably, the belief that universities should be at the forefront of our newborn knowledge society (a notion premised on illusions similar to those of the communications industry) has only

---

<sup>51</sup> Callum Morton, interview with the author, 13 November 2014.

<sup>52</sup> By vacating the space required for SensiLab, studio spaces throughout MADA buildings were also refurbished through capital works.

increased the power of the Kafkaesque bureaucratic apparatus inside the university, which today seems dead set on the commodification of education through its permanent evaluation.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Jan Verwoert, 'Control I'm Here: A call for the free use of the means of producing communication, in curating and in general', in Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (eds.), *Curating and the Educational Turn* (London, Amsterdam: Open Editions / de Appel, 2010): 28.



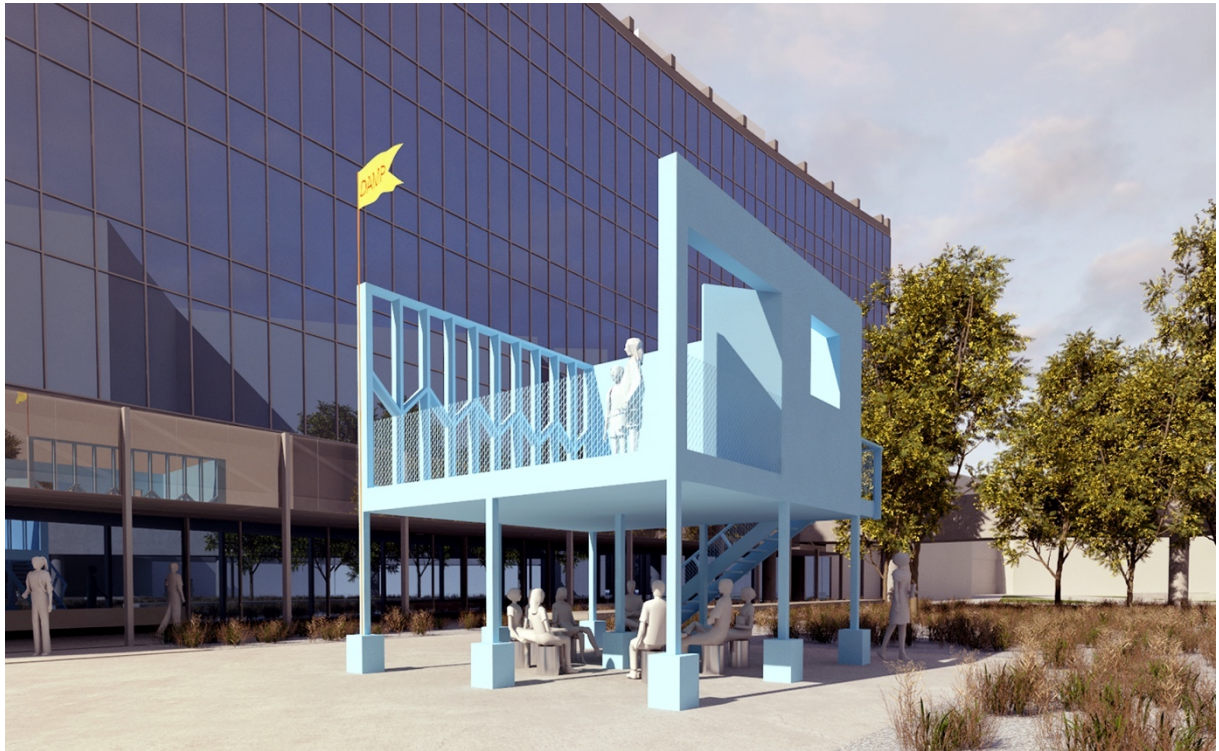


Fig 11: MAP architectural drawing, proposition for *Gormenghast*, 2016.



Fig 12: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016. Photo: John Gollings.

## Education in crisis, university as corporation

For decades, the university has been described as being ‘in ruins’, marching towards a corporate model of ‘excellence’, driven by market forces rather than research, cultural or social functions.<sup>54</sup> Recent philosophical discourse presented by AJ Bartlett and Justin Clemens in their book *What is Education?*, describes the current conditions of education as being in ‘crisis’ and ‘corrupt’.<sup>55</sup> Against this discursive context of crisis, a brief history of policy shifts in Australian higher education is outlined in this chapter section, to contextualise the otherwise highly local and specific case study of MADA, the faculty gallery and *Gormenghast*. As a university that amalgamated a technical college to eventually become the Faculty of Art and Design in 1997, Monash University is an illustrative case in point of effects of the Dawkins Reforms of the late 1980s and 1990s.<sup>56</sup>

In *What is Education?*, Bartlett and Clemens respond to the ubiquitous description of education ‘in crisis’ with a philosophical history of education and a call to arms that one must always take up the challenge of the corruption of education. They return to Plato’s *Laws*, in which education is described as ‘an asset of incalculable value’ only when it is combined with virtue – ‘if it ever becomes corrupt, but can be put right again, this is a lifelong task which everyone should undertake to the limit of his strength’.<sup>57</sup> It is a task the authors clearly see as necessary today, as they argue now more than at any other time, ‘education is reduced to being the training ground for good state subjects, as so many policy and curriculum documents, no less than course descriptions, now excitedly attest’.<sup>58</sup>

Monash University, as modern and global enterprise, is in a phase of rebranding and building, part way into a 20-year masterplan for the Caulfield campus (2011-2030). From the upper deck platform of *Gormenghast*, the view vacillated between the solidity and constancy of the university’s built environment, and a constant mess of activity, redevelopment and

---

<sup>54</sup> Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Harvard University Press, 1996.

<sup>55</sup> AJ Bartlett and Justin Clemens (eds.) *What is Education?* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

<sup>56</sup> The experience of the art students involved in Damp while the group was forming at art school in 1995, is also tied to this history as they are members of the first generation of artists to study post-Dawkins-reforms. Their emergence as a pedagogical project and their collective and collaborative strategies, are discussed in *Chapter Two* as a response to the individualistic, competitive tone of an increasingly market-driven education.

<sup>57</sup> AJ Bartlett and Justin Clemens (eds.) *What is Education?* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017): 6.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*: 20.

construction. Beyond the courtyard and looming above, a seven-floor brick and concrete education block bears the signage 'Monash University Caulfield Campus' in an outdated 1990s' version of the university logotype. A site that has served as an art school in one form or another since 1922, the campus displays its history and many layers of institutional reinvention through its buildings, architecture and branding. These visual strata serve as reminders of the institution's frequent tendency to reposition its identity over time, reflecting the image and values it wishes to project.

University of Sydney academic Ruth Barcan situates such embodied branding within her analysis of the contemporary university as a palimpsest that operates simultaneously as scholarly community, bureaucracy, and corporation. In her 2013 book *Academic Life and Labour in the New University: Hope and Other Choices*, Barcan backgrounds current conditions at universities in Australia and the United Kingdom as having been driven by three big shifts: massification, marketisation and internationalisation.<sup>59</sup> Monash embodies and reflects these developments in its current Strategic Plan, with its four strategic goals to be: Excellent, International, Enterprising and Inclusive.<sup>60</sup>

With growth from an elite to a mass system for higher education taking hold in Australia post-World War II and into the 1960s, it was already embedded by the time Monash University was founded in 1958. The massification of universities in Australia during this period was driven by principles of 'increasing participation and democratisation', as well as an egalitarian concern for access and inclusion.<sup>61</sup> The Murray Report in 1957, for example, stated that universities should be 'financed sufficiently to enable them to accept all qualified applicants'.<sup>62</sup> Yet student numbers have increased exponentially since this time. In the UK, the participation rate of the student age group in tertiary education went from 9% in 1960 to

---

<sup>59</sup> Ruth Barcan, *Academic Life and Labour in the New University: Hope and Other Choices* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2013).

<sup>60</sup> Monash University, 'Focus Monash, Strategic Plan 2015-2020', 13. Accessed 1 May 2016 [http://www.monash.edu/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/169744/strategic-plan-print-version.pdf](http://www.monash.edu/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/169744/strategic-plan-print-version.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Ruth Barcan, *Academic Life and Labour in the New University: Hope and Other Choices* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2013): 35

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



60% in 2000.<sup>63</sup> And in Australia, the 2008 Bradley Review of Higher Education recommended a target for 40% of all 25-34 year-olds to obtain a bachelor degree or higher by 2025.<sup>64</sup> Clearly such growth must be accompanied by the requisite increases to funding and resources, or entail major changes to the institutional model. The resulting changes, Barcan persuasively argues, have created an institutional identity crisis and placed the burden on individual university staff to 'hold it all together' in the face of multiple conflicting demands.<sup>65</sup>

Increasing levels of access to higher education has been a driving force in changes to the university sector in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Europe, and North America. The Dawkins reforms introduced during the Hawke Government in the late 1980s sought to prepare Australia for the 'knowledge economy' and grow levels of participation in higher education. One impact of the reforms was the amalgamation of hundreds of adult education colleges with major universities, as was the case for Monash University's merger with the Chisholm Institute of Technology at Caulfield in 1990. Cynically, such mergers merely altered statistics by upgrading qualifications and thereby 'granted thousands of people degrees overnight'.<sup>66</sup> Dawkins also introduced fees and the HECS system (Higher Education Contributions Scheme) of student loans, and established the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) system for journal rankings and other evaluations of research quality.

Lauren Bliss describes these reforms as 'representative of the shift of the university from public institution to corporation'.<sup>67</sup> Since the 1990s further reforms have continued moving universities in this direction, with Australian university fees currently deregulated with a maximum ceiling on increases, and proposals to remove these caps circulating in the 2015 Federal Budget. Higher education has become an increasingly large financial investment,

---

<sup>63</sup> Danny Butt, 'The Art School and the University: Research, Knowledge, and Creative Practices' PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 2011: 86.

<sup>64</sup> Ruth Barcan, *Academic Life and Labour in the New University: Hope and Other Choices* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2013): 39.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid: 13.

<sup>66</sup> Lauren Bliss, 'The University in the Age of Witchcraft', *un Magazine* 7.1, 2013, accessed 5 July 2015: <http://unprojects.org.au/magazine/issues/issue-7-1/the-university-in-the-age-of-witchcraft/>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

which repositions students as consumers and is open to a global market. Describing a comparable situation in the United Kingdom, Bishop notes this has only intensified since the 2008 global financial crisis, at which point academic benchmarks shifted from a corporate notion of 'excellence' to a bottom line of market success, becoming what she describes as 'academic capitalism'; 'if the content attracts students, and therefore income, it is justified'.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, in his critique of the university, Butt makes the disheartening assertion that, 'we could now describe the investment agenda of higher education as the profitable production of individual hope', students will be inducted into "'stress, worry and pressure" as the normative mode of life'.<sup>69</sup>

The 2008 Bradley Report aimed to boost participation for lower socio-economic groups and increase the number of bachelor level graduates in Australia and continued to question 'the conventional scholarly elite of the university system'.<sup>70</sup> Now, decades in to this continued drive to democratise and increase access to higher education, we can see the results in the increased participation of women, non-white people and working classes in the university, but also the emergence of the most indebted generation in history, with no dependable jobs to escape debt.<sup>71</sup>

As Brad Buckley and John Conomos point out, the Bradley Report did not address the problems facing art schools post their amalgamation into universities during the Dawkins Reforms. And, by continuing to increase the number of bachelor level graduates in Australia, the trickle on effect has been a trend of qualification inflation. Writing in 2008, academics Pearson, Evans and Macauley observed the 'massification of undergraduate education internationally in recent decades has been followed by major growth at the doctoral level with pressures for change in doctoral education'.<sup>72</sup> The introduction and rapid expansion of studio PhDs at MADA and internationally, is part of this broader growth in doctoral level

---

<sup>68</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship* (London, New York: Verso, 2012): 268.

<sup>69</sup> Danny Butt, *Artistic Research in the Future Academy* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2017): 37.

<sup>70</sup> Brad Buckley & John Conomos, *Rethinking the contemporary art school: The artist, the PhD, and the academy* (The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2009): 4.

<sup>71</sup> Malcolm Harris, 'Bad Education' (Brooklyn: n+1 Foundation, September 2011).

<sup>72</sup> Margot Pearson, Terry Evans, Peter Macauley, 'Growth and diversity in doctoral education: assessing the Australian experience' *Higher Education* vol. 55 no. 3 (March 2008): 357.

education. James Elkins notes that over two-hundred institutions globally now award the degree of the studio-art PhD, and that the structure of the various programs vary widely. Indeed, his analysis of the artists' PhD is deeply sceptical. Among his listed 'fourteen reasons to mistrust the PhD', Elkins points to the increasing 'academization of art', and, like Buckley and Conomos, links this to economic factors – that the PhD is expensive, is driven by money, and exacerbates issues of class and privilege.<sup>73</sup> Elkins' other worries around the PhD relate to questions of what constitutes artistic research and artistic knowledge, and how this is to be assessed – similar concerns as those raised about art being taught at university in the first place, as Danny Butt (who has done much work to clarify artistic applications of knowledge and research within the contemporary university) points out.<sup>74</sup> Butt raises an interesting connection to broader contemporary practice, noting that the expansion of the studio PhD is 'sponsored by the university to a large extent, as the university becomes, through the "educational turn" not only a key site for analysis and verification, but a key institution of artistic production'.<sup>75</sup> Curator and former director of the Beaux-Arts de Paris, Nicolas Bourriaud has argued that, 'even if the educational turn has not produced a significant upset in art schools, it has allowed for a change in the world of curating and art institutions, introducing processes of knowledge-sharing while orienting diverse forms of knowledge towards the protocols of education and dissemination'.<sup>76</sup> The example of Bourriaud's frustrated tenure at Beaux-Arts is indicative of how recalcitrant art school institutions can be when it comes to change. Even if not unwilling to embrace the logic and influence of the external art world's shifting priorities, university art schools necessarily take time to make changes related to structure, curriculum or learning culture. Arguably, the impetus of the educational turn was not to bring about change (or 'significant upset') in art schools, but more directly about changing the public's encounter with art in museums. For example, the reach of the educational turn in art and curatorial practice can be seen in the expansion of

---

<sup>73</sup> James Elkins, *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art* (Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, 2014).

<sup>74</sup> Butt, *Artistic Research in the Future Academy* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2017): 80.

<sup>75</sup> Butt, *Artistic Research in the Future Academy* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2017): 63.

<sup>76</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Revisiting the Educational Turn (How I tried to Renovate an Art School)', *Art Review* (November 2015), accessed 10 July 2018, [https://artreview.com/features/november\\_2015\\_feature\\_nicolas\\_bourriaud\\_educational\\_turn/](https://artreview.com/features/november_2015_feature_nicolas_bourriaud_educational_turn/).

education and academic programs in museums.<sup>77</sup> Butt's description of the university as a site for artistic production notwithstanding, the question remains, what role can the curatorial take – both as an emerging discipline and an embedded practice – within the university art school?

### Curating in the university

Fiona Lee describes the increasing occurrence of artists, galleries and museums taking on educational and pedagogical functions as 'partly a response to this increasing bureaucracy in tertiary art education'.<sup>78</sup> Her own projects at the University of Tasmania's Plimsoll Gallery in Hobart in 2013-15, responded to what she describes as 'concerns of a neoliberal drive to market education', and to the specific problems for the Gallery whereby in 2013 it had faced significantly reduced public funding and threat of closure from the university.<sup>79</sup> The projects presented here focused on social and discursive practice, in part to engage the faculty community in co-production, but also to address a lack of socially engaged art within art school curriculum and formal pedagogy that Lee has identified in her research.<sup>80</sup> The project *Our Day Will Come*, for example, comprised a four-week alternative school led by artist and academic Paul O'Neill and involving a number of visiting and local artist as participants in a series of structured events programmed across the month.

*Our Day Will Come* was presented as part of the larger program *Iteration Again* which involved thirteen public art projects across Tasmania, under the curatorial direction of David Cross (17 September – 15 October 2011).<sup>81</sup> Situated in a caravan stationed in the courtyard of the Tasmanian School of Art, *Our Day Will Come* operated as a free school with weekly curriculum topics and daily programs for four weeks. Its location and relation to the School of Art have obvious resonances with *Gormenghast*, 2016, a public artwork in a campus courtyard that also acted as a site for components of my project. While O'Neill's caravan

---

<sup>77</sup> However, it is possible to see the ripple effect of this returning to the university art school through the academic programming and co-teaching opportunities that university art museums such as MUMA enthusiastically seek with their academic neighbours.

<sup>78</sup> Fiona Lee, PhD thesis, *Rogue Academy: Conversational art events as a means of institutional critique*, University of Tasmania, 2016: 4.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid: 6.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> David Cross (ed), *Iteration Again* (Hobart, Brooklyn: CAST/Punctum Books, 2011).

acted as a 'school within a school', and sought to question assumptions and norms of pedagogy, *Gormenghast* was primarily an evolving public artwork, year-long project marking Damp's presence on campus. *Our Day Will Come* acted as a platform for discourse and developed a temporary community of participants through shared debate and strategies of hospitality (such as weekly Free School Dinners).

Anthony Huberman has described The Artist's Institute at Hunter College in New York, as an opportunity to think about art 'from the perspective of an institution that's about thinking and learning. And therefore, how can you be a public curatorial space that, ingrained in what you do, is this commitment to thinking and learning, because we're part of a school'.<sup>82</sup> The schedule of The Artist's Institute was designed to fit the semester context, organised around two seasons per year, with each six-month season focused on one 'anchor' artist.<sup>83</sup> Exhibitions changed over the season, involving other artists, a seminar program for Hunter College graduate students, and multiple discursive programming events, in response to and in conversation with the work of the anchor artist. Using strategies of repetition and the cumulative exhibition of an artist's work over time, were designed to slow and extend the duration of attention given to the anchor artist.

Curated by Malašauskas, *On Campus* took place at Monash University in February 2017 over two days and across the Caulfield and Clayton campuses, as part of MUMA's program. For a small invited audience of forty participants, the experience relied on a shared attention and focus, albeit with no obligation or outcomes expected. The two-day program involved a mix of structured time with delivered lectures, guided movement, a bus trip between campuses, and unprogrammed time following a group hypnosis session and discussion. *On Campus* treated the university as a conceptual site – a site of teaching and learning, of research in many forms, of expertise presented in varying manners and in disparate, disconnected voices. In this sense it offered a partial portrait of, or portal into, the university, allowing space and time for a range of expressions of knowledge, including those of art and artists.

---

<sup>82</sup> Anthony Huberman, interview with the author, 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Anchor artists have included Robert Filliou, Jimmie Durham, Rosemarie Trockel, Haim Steinbach, Thomas Bayrle, Pierre Huyghe and Carolee Schneemann.

Discourse on the university art school tends to spawn many metaphors. Curator and academic Ute Meta Bauer has described the university system as a 'temporary refuge for those who want to sustain a more critical and discursive practice'.<sup>84</sup> Verwoert has continued the notion of refuge, accepting that sites of education can provide 'protected zones of learning and research... to freely exchange ideas and to generate emancipatory experiences'.<sup>85</sup> Elkins describes art schools as 'marginalised in university life', which is echoed by Buckley and Conomos' claim that the 'collapsing of art schools into smaller and smaller units within larger departments so that the art school culture or ecosystem is effectively diminished or diluted and then finally lost has been apparent across Australia'.<sup>86</sup> In a recent example, the Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) has been subsumed into the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in the University of Sydney and by 2020 will relocate to the University's main campus.<sup>87</sup> Although as Robert Nelson points out, art history departments have often been the ones to perish, noting that in university culture many departments are vulnerable.<sup>88</sup> As for the experience at MADA, Callum Morton explains, 'I don't think the art school quite fits the institution. It really doesn't. It's an applied arts technical school inside the fabric of the university. [...] So in a way you're sort of a fake'.<sup>89</sup>

Rather than a refuge or fake, an alternative concept for operating within the university comes not from the discourse of art, but from critical theory and practice of the black radical tradition put forth by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten. Harney and Moten argue that any relation to the university should be one of criminality or fugitivity, arguing the subversive intellectual should 'sneak into the university' to 'abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of'.<sup>90</sup> It is a parasitic relation to

---

<sup>84</sup> Ute Meta Bauer, 'Under Pressure', in Steven Henry Madoff (ed.), *Art School (Propositions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century)* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2009).

<sup>85</sup> Jan Verwoert, 'Control I'm Here: A call for the free use of the means of producing communication, in curating and in general', in Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (eds.), *Curating and the Educational Turn* (London, Amsterdam: Open Editions / de Appel, 2010): 28.

<sup>86</sup> Brad Buckley and John Conomos (eds), *Rethinking the contemporary art school: The Artist, the PhD, and the Academy* (The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2009): 5.

<sup>87</sup> Andrew Taylor, 'Sydney University unveils plan for the Sydney College of the Arts', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 2017, accessed 10 July 2018, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-university-unveils-plan-for-the-sydney-college-of-the-arts-20170529-gwfdj7.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Nelson, in interview with the author, 23 April 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Callum Morton, in interview with the author, 13 November 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Stefano Harney & Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013): 26.

the university that seeks to utilise its resources while resisting its pressures. While *Gormenghast*, 2016, may have looked something like a makeshift gypsy encampment in relation to the museum and surrounding university, it was approved, funded and built through official administrative processes. Yet, perhaps through the work's dispersed authorship and co-commissioning, its stretching of resources, and its non-declarative processual form, it can be seen to have remained 'in but not of' the university proper, as detailed in the following.

### ***Gormenghast*, 2016**

The curatorial impetus for *Gormenghast* was a response to the logistical challenge of presenting a dispersed and episodic program in the midst of a campus under construction, which was due to the sudden closure of the MADA Gallery. Given these disruptive physical conditions – that the faculty had no gallery available to occupy and that the campus was a building site – a shift in approach to how the program could be located on campus was necessary. Visibility, coherence and semi-permanence took on greater significance in conceiving of the program's relation to time and space than had previously been a concern. This challenge led to the concept of a commissioned architectural artwork that could act as a temporary site and primary location or hub for the program.

This concept drew on previous works by Damp that have taken an architectural and utilitarian form. In *Untitled*, 2007 (exhibited at Uplands Gallery, South Yarra), Damp up-scaled the museum plinth to a room-sized platform accessible by an internal ladder and trap door, where they held weekly group meetings for the duration of the exhibition. This concept was expanded to a fully functional two-level cubby house with internal staircase, displaying artworks and archival material and hosting a schedule of community groups meetings and activities in *Untitled*, 2009, exhibited in the Asia Pacific Triennial. Working from these precedents, I invited Damp to develop a work that could act as a 'pop-up' site on campus to house, locate, and host the pedagogical and public activities that would form *Art holds a high place in my life* throughout 2016.

In response to the site and context of MADA at Monash University's Caulfield campus, Damp suggested a collaboration with MAP, as a means to engage with the university in the process and development of the work. In so doing, Damp established a push-and-pull of responsibility and authorship between themselves and the institution as represented by MAP. Through this process, MAP, led by the Head of Fine Art (Callum Morton), acted in the dual role of both collaborator and, as a source of funding support for the project, the lead commissioning body. This unconventional situation resulted in a work that displayed its collaborative components as an evolving patchwork of materials and architectural additions.

Damp's broader artistic practice can be seen as primarily an investigation of shared responsibility – both through their internal collaboration and their investigations of audiences, publics and communities. My curatorial aspirations for the work included bringing this sense of shared responsibility and ownership to MADA and MUMA – to involve the faculty, students, and the museum around the collaborative work.<sup>91</sup> *Gormenghast* tested this process and demonstrated not only a great deal of goodwill, capacity and collegiality, but also certain limitations and challenges for the model within the university. My hypothesis that all parties invested in the collaboratively achieved *Gormenghast* would therefore care equally for the work proved somewhat naïve. Reflecting on his controversial directorship at Beaux-Arts de Paris (2011-15), Nicolas Bourriaud has said of the institution, 'as it turned out, everybody wanted to keep their particular components isolated in order to maintain their area of authority.'<sup>92</sup> (In his time at Beaux-Arts, Bourriaud had aimed to bring a 'curatorial energy' to the school, forging connections to create a 'synergy between all the elements that made up the school: its exhibition spaces, its collections, its publishing house and the studios the students worked in, led by an artist'.<sup>93</sup> He met resistance from academic staff and was criticised for creating an 'art centre' and aligning the school too closely to the art market.)

---

<sup>91</sup> Funding for *Gormenghast* reflects this collaborative structure to some extent: MAP secured research funds towards the project and the Curatorial Practice program had made funds available for candidate projects through a proposal process. MUMA did not contribute financially but acted as 'hosts' of the work, as it was located within the Ian Potter Sculpture Court, the museum's curated space for public sculpture.

<sup>92</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Revisiting the Educational Turn (How I tried to Renovate an Art School)', *Art Review* (November 2015), accessed 10 July 2018,

[https://artreview.com/features/november\\_2015\\_feature\\_nicolas\\_bourriaud\\_educational\\_turn/](https://artreview.com/features/november_2015_feature_nicolas_bourriaud_educational_turn/).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.



The collaboration between DAMP and MAP took form as a two-stage process in which each group was responsible for their own half of the project. MAP designed and managed the build of a simple but carefully engineered structural framework, providing the outline of a building for Damp to build onto, adapt, embellish and complete. The work became a dialogue between MAP and Damp, whereby MAP (as part of the university) offered a physical platform for Damp to respond to. It also offered myself, as curator, a physical form as a focal point and gathering space for the 'study', in a sense putting the process of research on display in the centre of the faculty. The two-phase construction strategy was proposed by MAP and warmly embraced by Damp, as a means to represent the working methods and research interests of both collaborative practices. It was also synchronous with my intentions for *Art holds a high place in my life* to provide a curatorial framework that would invite and facilitate participation and contributions from members of the faculty community (this point is discussed in *Chapter Two: Audience as cohort*).

As a sculptural public work, *Gormenghast* was evolving, provisional and perpetually 'unfinished'. The initial form was built entirely on site in March–April 2016, the work was continually transformed over the following months, and eventually dismantled in late October. That this process was always on display to the campus community and visitors, made visible the work-in-progress – from the careful construction of MAP's initial structure conducted by registered builders, to the improvised additions using recycled materials by Damp. Damp's accretive workshops occurred several times throughout the year, on an irregular schedule as time and opportunity permitted. This ongoing construction may have seemed at times a performative work, and, certainly when working outdoors over the cold winter, something of an endurance piece. It also mirrored the ongoing cycle of construction and demolition occurring on campus in close proximity to the work.

Even though *Gormenghast* was double-storied, rigorously engineered, brightly coloured and over five meters high, the outsized cubby-house was much lower and more domestic in scale than the neighbouring buildings that gazed down upon it – C and B blocks, the footbridge linking these across to the fine art studios in building E, classrooms and architecture studios

above MUMA in building F, upper levels of the library building under demolition. (Just as well no 'Earl of Gormenghast' was there to see it, lest he go mad at the sight of a library in ruins.<sup>94</sup>) In scale, and in its provisional nature, *Gormenghast* was in fact more comparable to the network of temporary construction site-sheds that had been installed for the preceding months and remained throughout 2016, snaking around and between the library and building G (which houses faculty administration, design studios, and is the main entrance to the faculty).

Appendix 2 to this exegesis includes the budget and construction plan, as-built plans, and original project brief pertaining to *Gormenghast*. Even a glancing read of the documents will reveal significant anomalies between the project brief and the work that eventuated, as well as a budget overspend and timeline blowout that occurred during the initial build of the architectural structure. Most significantly, the funds raised for the project were spent on the initial build and painting of the MAP-designed open structure, meaning there was no budget towards Damp's 'DIY' cladding and additions. Starting with a modest budget and short lead times to begin with, given the work was only conceived in the second half of 2015 after receiving notification that MADA Gallery would be unavailable, such difficulties were not entirely unexpected. Working to the availability of contractors and the structural engineer, as well as the workloads of MAP and Damp members, stretched limited resources for the project, which had taken on a flexible but no less ambitious form in the plan developed by the two collaborating groups.

The collaboration began with an initial project brief listing required and optional features, prepared by Damp for MAP as a means to begin the development process. This initial brief incorporated my needs for the work to function as a location and site that could be used for a variety of pedagogical and public outcomes. This part of the concept was only ever partially realised. *Gormenghast* was never fully enclosed as a room that could offer any kind of warmth, security or functionality as either a studio or gallery. Instead, the dynamic and unconventional space was open to the elements. Rather than solving the problem of where to

---

<sup>94</sup> In the novel *Titus Groan*, the titular hero's father Lord Sepulchrave, the 76th Earl of Gormenghast, is driven mad when his beloved castle library is destroyed in a fire.

locate the project after the closing of MADA Gallery, the nature of *Gormenghast's* design produced a new set of logistical challenges for the broader project, *Art holds a high place in my life*.

Nevertheless, over the year, *Gormenghast* was utilised by the project in the following ways: selected Damp artworks that could withstand the elements were displayed in and around *Gormenghast*; Damp Study Group weekly meetings took place at *Gormenghast* as weather allowed and the study group installed works on site; *Gormenghast* hosted an Artmeet ARI exhibition and performance, and several one-off uses by classes from design and fine art studio programs. MUMA coordinated a parallel education program for schools which also involved a number of workshops presented by Damp, and one by MAP, in which students made their own *Gormenghast* models.

Taking form as a platform or stage, *Gormenghast* became a performance of its own making. All that took place and could be displayed within it, also became a performance of the project. Indeed, *Gormenghast* was ultimately a performance of the institution, with all its dysfunction and unevenness, and competing agendas of the palimpsest corporation, bureaucracy and scholarly community. The power relation between the work and institution was heightened in July–September, midway through the duration of the work, when MUMA installed solar panels on top of *Gormenghast* to power a work by Nicholas Mangan in his solo exhibition *Limits to Growth* taking place inside the museum. Weight-bearing timber ceiling beams were installed on *Gormenghast* and eight solar panels attached on top. Several meters of wrapped cables connected the solar panels to the museum, entering the building above the covered walkway. During this time *Gormenghast* effectively functioned as a supersized battery, powering the conceptual mechanisms of another artist's work, much as a plinth or piece of exhibition apparatus. Despite this parasitical relationship, *Gormenghast's* physical attachment to the museum building would more likely have read visually as an umbilical cord, a means for the well-resourced museum extending support to the informal work camped outside their front door.

MUMA's addition of the solar panels had not been planned in this way. The work was to include the full construction of a roof, which would have provided shelter to the top floor of *Gormenghast* and would have meant the exchange was a symbiotic one, with each artwork enabling the other. MUMA invited Damp to provide a proposed design for the construction, which was drawn by architect member Deb Kunda, and after a series of economizing alterations, a very basic roof design was agreed upon. However, days before the building work was to commence, the museum stripped back the plan to accommodate only the timber beams necessary to uphold the solar panels, forgoing the roofing entirely. The museum cited budget constraints in this decision. This late change shifted the negotiated solution from one that was based on mutual support and exchange, to one that placed one artwork at the service of another.

In Mervyn Peake's novels, the outsider community of the 'Bright Carvers' (or 'Outer Dwellers') spend their days carving small brightly painted wooden figures. In a cruel annual ritual, the carvings are taken into the castle grounds to be judged by the Earl of Gormenghast – three would be chosen to enter the Hall of Bright Carvings, while the rest were burnt. As a parody or symbol of the artist's life and marginal position in society, Peake's Bright Carvers live in poverty with the 'sole passion' of producing these sculptures. They are harshly competitive with one another and exist peripherally but contingently in relation to the Castle. Perhaps *Gormenghast* was misnamed. Rather than recalling the 'Gormenghast' castle of Peake's novels, the creation by Damp and MAP sat outside the walls of the institution proper, much like the makeshift homes of the Bright Carvers, 'clamped onto the outer walls' of the castle, under the shadow of the tower, 'granted this chill intimacy with the stronghold that loomed above them'.<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Mervyn Peake, *Titus Groan*, (London: Vintage Books, 1998, first published 1946): 6.



Fig 13: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016, with solar panels and power line attached to roof beams. 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley.



Fig 14: Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016. 20 October 2016. Photo: John Gollings.





## Chapter two

### *Audience as cohort*



Fig 15: Damp, Cheersquad, 1997





Fig 16: Damp, *The Damp Audience*, 1998



Fig 17: Damp, *Damp Audience: The Bridge* 1998 (video still).

Voice (off-screen): Okay, who do you think is the audience for this?

Damp (shouting): The birds!!

This chapter focuses on three instances of working with ‘audience as cohort’ in my program *Art holds a high place in my life*: two primarily pedagogical projects, *Damp Camp* (a workshop with exhibition and design outcomes) and *Damp Study Group* (a seminar series with collaborative artwork and exhibition outcomes), and an exhibition project with Artmeet ARI. These projects embodied the curatorial model of the ‘study’ by working with small groups of students as the primary and participatory audience, introducing the idea of ‘audience as cohort’. Through these projects in particular, *Art holds a high place in my life* or the ‘exhibition as study’ moved between moments of pedagogical and public outcomes. These shifts involved limiting public access to the program at times for a focus on the intimacy and shared space of the cohort. This chapter discusses this approach to public access and conceiving of the primary audience as a participatory cohort contributing to the curated project. It does this against the backdrop of the so-called ‘educational turn’ in curatorial practice, particularly as it pertains to audience; and through discussion of Damp’s formation as a group at art school in 1995 as both a pedagogical art project, and a group which at times enacted its own model of an audience.

My decision to engage and work with small cohorts through the model of ‘exhibition as study’, was motivated by a desire to engage students in the project through pedagogical processes that are appropriate to the learning and studio activities of the university art school. This follows curator Anthony Huberman’s suggestion that curating in the academy should be more closely aligned with the ‘thinking and learning’ that goes on in those institutions, to which I have added the practical ‘making’ of work to reflect the studio-based learning at MADA. It also picks up on experiments with participatory, contributing, audience groups by curator Roger Buerger, particularly his initiative of a ‘Learning Council’ developed for the 2012 Busan Biennale which is examined in the chapter.

Working with small cohorts was particularly applicable in a program presenting Damp’s work and practice, which is not necessarily available or suited to an exhibition format, but could be accessed in multiple ways through group workshops and seminars. Part of the curatorial challenge was how to re-present a history of works that has sometimes involved traditional art objects but also props, people, exchanges or situations, some of which have

been documented, others of which remain in the form of memory and ephemera. Curatorial practice has often met such challenges through strategies of recreating performance work, or presentations of archival material.<sup>96</sup> However, there are additional emerging discussions about how to adequately survey social practice, raised for example in Dominic Willsdon's account of working towards a museum retrospective of the artist Suzanne Lacy;<sup>97</sup> or in Pablo Helguera's line of inquiry into 'how pedagogy could work as a tool to the implementation and understanding of the series of works that nowadays is denominated "social practice"'.<sup>98</sup> Curatorial approaches to historicising contemporary art and the survey exhibition genre are more fully expanded in *Chapter three: exhibition as study*, but are mentioned here in so far as it is relevant to the modes of public address deployed in the projects *Damp Camp* and *Damp Study Group*.

My decision to work with small 'cohort' audiences is also positioned in contrast to the tendency of public art institutions to attempt to attract mass audiences and address the broadest general public. When Damp began working as a group, the concept of audience was an overarching concern in their practice. However, at that time, their line of inquiry into audience (variously being an audience; finding and expanding audiences; or seeking ways to connect or exchange with audiences) was motivated by the feeling that there was *no* audience for contemporary art in Australia in the mid-1990s.<sup>99</sup> In the two decades since Damp first asked the question, 'who do you think is the audience for this?' in their work *Damp Audience: The Bridge* (1998), or began to perform the role of a celebratory audience themselves in the work *Cheersquad* (1997), the audience for contemporary art has seen exponential growth. A focus on access and accessibility to art, driven by public art institutions, has arguably seen a

---

<sup>96</sup> For an analysis of recent re-presentations in art and curatorial practice, see: Martha Buskirk, Amelia Jones, and Caroline A. Jones, 'The Year in "Re-"' , *Artforum* (December 2013): 127-130.

<sup>97</sup> Dominic Willsdon, 'Where are we and what time is it? On beginning to curate Suzanne Lacy', *A blade of grass* website, 20 December 2017. <http://www.abladeofgrass.org/fertile-ground/time-beginning-curate-suzanne-lacy/>

<sup>98</sup> Pablo Helguera, *Pedagogy in the expanded field*, 2011: 284.

<sup>99</sup> This perception is evidenced in an artist statement accompanying their work for *CiPVI The Bridge* in 1998, Damp described the audience as 'a black hole'; and Geoff Lowe discussing the genesis of this same work recalled, 'The whole idea was that there was no audience in Australia. There was this big international conceptual art event and the problem was that you had all these people making things but there was no audience.'

move towards 'populism as a curatorial logic', as art historian Rex Butler has recently described.<sup>100</sup>

Butler is certainly not the only art historian or critic wary of the thriving popularity and populism of contemporary art in the public sphere. In his critique of the 'Young British Artists' during the contemporary art boom of the 1990s, for example, art historian Julian Stallabrass argued that the movement 'led to a wide public being successfully courted but not seriously addressed'.<sup>101</sup> He has continued to highlight and disparage contemporary art's drive towards spectacle and 'endless novelties' in the digital age.<sup>102</sup> An emphasis on the 'new' and 'now' can be seen in the programming of many Melbourne institutions (including MADA's branding of graduate shows as *MADA Now*, or the annual *NEW* exhibition series at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art which ran from 2003-2016). It is a point that Butler continues in his critique of the exhibition *Melbourne Now* at the National Gallery of Victoria (22 November 2013 – 23 March 2014). Butler suggests that 'populism is virtually synonymous with the contemporary', that it is the most obvious characteristic of our dominant category of the present.<sup>103</sup> Other than being of the present 'now', with the requisite self-defining contemporaneity of contemporary art, the exhibition in Butler's summation had 'absolutely nothing to say, about art or anything else'.<sup>104</sup> Regardless of one's opinion of the critical content of *Melbourne Now*, it is representative of public gallery programming that aims at audience reach and has set attendance records for contemporary art. *Melbourne Now* attracted 753,000 visitors, the largest component of the NGV's total attendance figures of just over two million in that twelve-month period.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Rex Butler, 'Modernism: more popular than populism. The public sphere and contemporary art', *Broadsheet* 43 no.4 (Dec 2014): 23.

<sup>101</sup> Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite* (Verso, 1999): 11.

<sup>102</sup> Julian Stallabrass, 'Elite art in an age of populism', Alexander Dumbadze & Suzanne Hudson (eds), *Contemporary Art 1989 to the Present* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013): 43

<sup>103</sup> Rex Butler, 'Modernism: more popular than populism. The public sphere and contemporary art', *Broadsheet* 43 no.4 (Dec 2014): 22.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*: 23.

<sup>105</sup> Council of Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia, *NGV Annual Report 2013/14*: 9, accessed 10 July 2018, [http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/695038/NGV\\_AR\\_2013\\_14\\_ONLINE.pdf](http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/695038/NGV_AR_2013_14_ONLINE.pdf).

As discussed in *Chapter one: Gormenghast and the university art school as site*, the emphasis on increased participation in Australian higher education which ramped up in the 1990s, has been concurrent with this same democratising drive of government funding for the arts, and public art institutions, to draw in mass audiences. In her definitive essay 'Turning', Irit Rogoff takes a passing swipe at the populism of the Tate Modern as an 'entertainment machine', and goes on to declare, 'I want to think about education not through the endless demands that are foisted on both culture and education to be *accessible*, to provide a simple entry point to complex ideas' (Rogoff's emphasis).<sup>106</sup> Rather, she continues, 'I want to think of education in terms of the places to which we have *access*', highlighting the nuanced but crucial turn from being *accessible* to having *access*, in which in the latter, one has 'the ability to formulate one's own questions'.<sup>107</sup> This distinction is pertinent to my analysis of projects in which I aimed to share high levels of access to Damp's work with cohorts of participants, and in so doing de-prioritised broader accessibility. It also has relevance to the manner in which Damp formed as a group of art students in a class that emphasised enabling each of the participating students to 'speak' openly, as is detailed in the following. Damp's history is examined here as an exemplar of the *cohort* and *study*, enacted within the art school but beyond the frame of curriculum.

### **Damp's formation**

Damp is the unexpectedly long-lasting result of a class project. The sixteen art students that would later in 1995 become known as Damp, were initially 'grouped' together that year in an elective unit run by lecturer Geoff Lowe on Monday nights at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA).<sup>108</sup> Although officially a 'drawing' unit, the two-hour weekly class focused on collaborative methods, a mode of practice that Lowe was already known for. An Australian painter, Lowe had previously taught at VCA in the 1980s and returned to the school in 1993.

---

<sup>106</sup> Irit Rogoff 'Turning', *e-flux journal* (November 2008): 7

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*: 8

<sup>108</sup> In 1995 Damp consisted of sixteen VCA students taught by Geoff Lowe: Helen Anderson, Martin Burns, Chad Chatterton, Bruce Craig, Narelle Desmond, Sharon Goodwin, Matthew Grace, Elizabeth van Herwaarden, Jan Johnston, Amanda Kasey, Stephanie Potts, Elissa Sadgrove, Melita Rowston, Jude Worters, Brad Westmoreland and Kylie Wilkinson; and their first public exhibition was held at Platform, a slightly leaky and dark window space in the subway underpass of Flinders Street Station, with member Brad Westmoreland coining the name Damp for the occasion.

Additionally, since the mid-1980s Lowe had begun facilitating workshops and collaborating with several groups as part of his artistic practice.<sup>109</sup> In 1992, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) produced the exhibition *Geoff Lowe: Collaborations 1980–1992*, surveying his work made with other artists and with amateur groups, including Sunnyside Up (which began with a group of four psychologists) and Rosebud.<sup>110</sup> In the catalogue to this exhibition, Lowe discusses his work with amateurs and groups, as well as his frustration with art schools, asserting that ‘artists are taught to alienate themselves at art school’.<sup>111</sup> Lowe goes on to critique the idea of the trained artist – armed with technique and driven by either fear or desire to become a competitive professional – as delimiting and isolating. His work with non-artists and groups were, by contrast, attempts at moving beyond this isolation and the problem of ‘artist as source’ and art as ‘confessional’. This is the philosophy that Lowe brought to his teaching practice at the VCA in the mid-1990s.

For Damp member James Lynch, Lowe’s Monday night workshops were, for the first time, what he thought art school was supposed to be like: ‘everyone was being heard and one’s own voice and experience had an equal importance to others’ and to those figures who were already in positions of power’.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, Kylie Wilkinson (Damp member 1995–2000 and 2009) describes the peculiarity of Lowe’s approach against the backdrop of the rest of her art school experience: where other teachers kept a more professional distance, Lowe brought ‘honesty and angst’.<sup>113</sup> According to Wilkinson, the workshops were experiments in working quickly, and in helping each other to work. The collective approach pushed the question: as classmates and artists, are you competing against each other? Sharon Goodwin’s contribution to the summer 1996–97 issue of *Artfan* (edited and published by A Constructed World), titled ‘Art School Mama’, sums up the irony of this situation:

---

<sup>109</sup> Geoff Lowe, interview with the author, 5 May 2015.

<sup>110</sup> Rosebud began in 1983 and ran for ten years with a changing group of participants, who were interested in ‘their own personal development and exploring the realm of expressing themselves through drawing and painting’. Tony Andreatta, ‘A Short History of Rosebud’, *Artfan* 8 (Summer 1998): 29.

<sup>111</sup> Geoff Lowe, *Collaborations 1980–1990* exhibition catalogue, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 1992: 10.

<sup>112</sup> James Lynch, unpublished MFA: 29.

<sup>113</sup> Kylie Wilkinson, in interview with the author, 21 February 2017.

Sitting in the packed Auditorium on my first day as a tertiary art student, I first heard the phrase that I would hear many times at that institution; “Only one out of every eight of you will be practicing in 10 years from now”. It seemed from then on that phrase was in the collective consciousness of the school. Art students are my best friends, but they are also my foes through competition, envy, and snobbery. I was told that this was necessary for our survival.<sup>114</sup>

In his MFA exegesis, Lynch prefaces his own discussion about the beginnings of Damp with similar observations on the individualism and competitiveness emphasised not only in art school, but also in culture, economics and education in 1990s Australia. The national political backdrop against which Lynch introduces Damp’s emergence at the VCA, is the early 1990s recession and following period of privatisation of the public sphere.<sup>115</sup> For Lynch, this context, coupled with what he describes as a time when the ‘collective’ was largely repressed in mass culture, logically led to artists trying to ‘reclaim the notion of what constitutes “shared” or collective spaces as their own’.<sup>116</sup> While Lynch presents a distinctly personal and local narrative, discourse on collective art practices in the mid-1990s echo this conscious move to counter the modernist notion of individualism.<sup>117</sup>

Art historian Claire Bishop has traced the resurgence of collective and participatory art practices in the 1990s to a historical trajectory from the 1920s Dadaists to 1960s interactive and social art forms (citing projects by Martha Rosler and Allen Ruppersberg, for example). Noting significant precedents and parallel developments in both experimental education (Paolo Friere, Jacques Rancière) and theatre (Bertolt Brecht, Antonin Artaud), Bishop argues that the contemporary applications of participation and collaboration in art are no more ‘intrinsically political or oppositional’ than any other media as perhaps they once were.<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Sharon Goodwin, *Artfan* 6 (Summer 1996-97): 25

<sup>115</sup> James Lynch, unpublished MFA: 24.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Such as Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics* (France: Les presses du réel, 2002). (First published in the French in 1998).

<sup>118</sup> Claire Bishop, ‘Introduction//Viewers as Producers’, *Participation* (London and Cambridge: Whitechapel and MIT Press, 2006): 12.

However, she does acknowledge the emphasis on community and activation of the subject in contemporary practice as continuing a drive to provide an alternative to the 'alienating and isolating effects of capitalism' in common with their historical precursors.<sup>119</sup> The Melbourne curator and writer Stuart Koop has more provocatively compared artists working collaboratively to the radical grouping of the terrorist cell, in which the artists' 'communitarian spirit is seen to undermine the individualistic bases of capitalist democracy in a much milder form of insurrection'.<sup>120</sup> While Koop's is a hyperbolic analogy, a performance of 'mild' insurrections can be seen through Damp's practice in works that draw on the theatre of protest (such as *More than a Feeling*, 2001) and numerous works that celebrate the communitarian over capitalist individualism (from *Damp Audience (The Bridge)*, 1998 and *We're all Water*, 1998, to *Cesello Freddo*, 2013-ongoing).<sup>121</sup>

Writing at the time of Damp's formation in 1995, American art historian Suzi Gablik posed what she calls 'connective aesthetics' – emerging practices based in dialogue and service – against modernism's great belief in the 'unique and separate self'.<sup>122</sup> Referring to artists such as Suzanne Lacy and Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Gablik wrote of a repositioning of art that undermined the traditionally 'spectatorial distance of the audience', concluding that 'Connective aesthetics strikes at the root of this alienation by dissolving the mechanical division between self and world that has prevailed during the modern epoch.'<sup>123</sup> It is this emphasis on collaboration as a tactic against alienation and individualism, that Damp took up in multiple forms – both internally to the group, and outwardly in exchange with audiences.

---

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Stuart Koop, 'Eros and Agape', *Group Group Show* exhibition catalogue, 2008: 6.

<sup>121</sup> Damp *More than a Feeling*, 2001 consists of protest-style placards bearing slogans of everyday wishes and desires garnered from passersby outside the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide; *Damp Audience (The Bridge)*, 1998 involved Damp members acting as support crew and roving audience to other exhibiting artists in the landmark public art event *Construction in Process VI: The Bridge*; *We're all Water*, 1998 was a performance at the opening of .. exhibition at the Centre of Contemporary Photography in Melbourne, in which 100 participants donned red 'Damp Audience' T-shirts and sang an amended version of Yoko Ono's 1972 lyrically universalist song of the same name; *Cesello Freddo*, 2013-ongoing, sees Damp gradually chisel a carrara marble bust and disperse the fragments amongst audience members.

<sup>122</sup> Suzi Gablik, 'Connective Aesthetics: art after individualism' in Suzanne Lacy (ed), *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995): 75-86.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid: 86.



In Melbourne at this time, art students and the young members of Damp were emerging into an art community that was in a phase of prolific self-organising and grouping, and with that, professionalisation. In 1994 VCA graduate David Rosetzky had founded 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Artists and Writers Space in Fitzroy with a group of fifteen artists and writers, while Damp members and peers were involved in setting up artist-run initiatives and shared studio spaces in the city, including Grey Area in the Port Phillip Arcade, and later TCB Art Inc.<sup>124</sup> In their essay detailing the history and impact of Australian artist-run initiatives, critics Tessa Dwyer and Daniel Palmer claimed that ‘for a variety of reasons, Melbourne became the capital of artist-run galleries in the 1990s’.<sup>125</sup> As curator and writer Charlotte Day commented in 2000, the very existence of Melbourne’s many artist-run initiatives ‘affirmed the value of art practice during a time in which the bottom line has ostensibly ruled’.<sup>126</sup> The notion of creating the context for contemporary practice through a ‘DIY’ approach to networks, discourse and community, was particularly valued by artists and art students in Melbourne at the time of Damp’s emergence, and provided a framework for the group of art students to consider working together.

Initially for Damp, being and working together did not necessarily mean making collaborative work. An early focus for Damp while at art school, was simply on ways the collective could support individual research. Work was brought in for feedback, ideas were shared, discussions were non-hierarchical and workshops often playful or improvised. While this kind of group feedback and discussion is by no means uncommon teaching practice in art schools, there were elements of Lowe’s pedagogical approach to the workshops that did break with convention. Speaking in 2015, Lowe recalls difficulties around his work at VCA and concerns from other staff about his non-hierarchical approach that encouraged open

---

<sup>124</sup> TCB was founded in 1998 by Damp members Blair Trethowan, Sharon Goodwin and Thomas Deverall. Originally located in the Port Phillip Arcade it relocated to Waratah Place in Chinatown where it shared spaces with Trethowan and Jarrod Rawlins’ commercial enterprise, Uplands Gallery from 2001-2006, and then continued as sole-occupant of that space until closing in 2017. See Din Heagney (ed.), *Making Space*: 101-102.

<sup>125</sup> Tessa Dwyer and Daniel Palmer, ‘Doing it for themselves: artist run alternatives and contemporary Australian art’, in Din Heagney (ed.), *Making Space: Artist-Run Initiatives in Victoria* (Melbourne: VIA-N, 2007):14.

<sup>126</sup> Charlotte Day, ‘Culture Club: artist-initiated activity in Melbourne’, *Good Thinking: words and pictures on contemporary Melbourne art*, (Melbourne: 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 2000): 13.

discussion among students and the conflicting feelings that would arise around ownership of works made collaboratively.<sup>127</sup>

Beginning as individual students who happened to be gathered together in a particular class, a sense of a group identity for Damp emerged gradually. When recalling this experience, Wilkinson described the feeling of Damp forming as like being in a band.<sup>128</sup> This analogy implies the kind of grouped identity that takes time, creative risk, trust and fun, to build, but that is also precarious, in flux, and open to conflict. Lowe's open, non-hierarchical approach to teaching was informed not only by his collaborative work with artists and non-artists but also his experience with group psychotherapy techniques.<sup>129</sup> Outside of his work at the VCA, Lowe had been working with groups in collaboration with psychotherapist Sid Forsey. Techniques common to group therapy psychodrama, involving role-play and re-enactment, were adapted into Lowe and Forsey's group art workshops. Some of the resulting 'tableaux vivant' images would become the basis for artworks – credited either to the group, or to Lowe with the group as collaborators. This process of tableau making, whereby the group direct and embody pictorial scenes, became an important methodology that Lowe would later introduce to Damp.

In Lowe's application of participatory and collaborative methods to both his art making and teaching, the two practices began to tangle, intertwine and crossover. In 1990 Lowe had even co-founded an experimental school of sorts: the Centre for a Constructed World was described at the time as an 'interdisciplinary and interactive school focusing on contemporary art'.<sup>130</sup> Clearly, the boundaries between Lowe's pedagogical and artistic practices were fluid. With this framework underpinning the Monday night workshops taught at VCA in 1995, the group project 'Damp' can be seen, at this nascent point as a work in the

---

<sup>127</sup> Geoff Lowe, interview with the author, 5 May 2015.

<sup>128</sup> Kylie Wilkinson, interview with the author, 21 February 2017.

<sup>129</sup> Geoff Lowe, *Collaborations 1980-1990* exhibition catalogue, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 1992: 12.

<sup>130</sup> This project was co-founded by Naomi Cass, Geoff Lowe, Kevin Murray and Elizabeth Newman, and acted as a 'flexible umbrella' for a range of activities in 1990–1992/3. In 1993 Jacqueline Riva and Lowe co-founded the magazine *Artfan* which is generally seen as the first project of 'A Constructed World' in its better known and continuing form, that of a joint partnership between Riva and Lowe.

category of 'art as pedagogy', or at least, as an outcome or by-product of Lowe's pedagogical art practice.

Given this framework, the relationships between the student-artists, teacher-artist Geoff Lowe, and the institution of VCA, were not always clear. In her article, 'Damp: the longest relationship I ever had', curator Hannah Mathews refers to 'an early tussle with the VCA about the group's "ownership"' after which the group gained independence.<sup>131</sup> This may have related to the fact that Lowe continued to run the elective workshop focused on collaboration at VCA, with subsequent cohorts of students forming groups each semester; however, none continued with the longevity of Damp outside of the institution.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Lowe's early role in relation to Damp as teacher and facilitator, prompts questions about authorship or ownership of the group and their work. For example, considering works made in the Damp workshops in these early years reveals an uncertainty and in some cases ambivalence about attribution. This is most clearly (or indeed, murkily) illustrated by the example of a series of works made on drum skins between 1995–99, including the work that my project *Art holds a high place in my life* is titled for.

One of a series of works made using commercially available clear plastic drum skins (produced for use on a standard kick drum of a drumkit) as a base for paintings, *Art holds a high place in my life*, 1996, was shown at VCA alongside a row of faxes as part of a fax-exchange exhibition *Location: Art holds a high place in my life* with Hong Ik University in Seoul. The work features a small photograph image of a road with passing bus and car pasted onto the clear plastic round drum skin film, small green trees painted either side of the photograph, and the titular phrase (with exclamation mark) slightly illegible, handwritten in silver ink in the lower half of the work (fig. 3). A selection of five drum skin works was shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Sydney, in the exhibition *Geoff Lowe: A Constructed World, Contemporary Art Archive 6* curated by Sue Cramer in 1997, which mixed together categories of art and archive, object and document, as well as a sometimes indistinct mix of artist and amateur, individual and collaborative authorships.

---

<sup>131</sup> Hannah Mathews, 'Damp: the longest relationship I ever had', *Broadsheet* 38.4 2009: 259.

<sup>132</sup> Other groups included Crack of Noon in 1997-98, and PocoNoco in 1998. Geoff Lowe, in interview, May 2015.

Using purchased drum skins as a canvas to paint, or add to, was a method that Lowe brought to the group, and the works could most simply be considered as co-authored by Lowe and Damp, although in each specific case a different form of collaboration may have been enacted. In the catalogue to the MCA exhibition, Cramer's essay distinguishes between Geoff Lowe's individual practice and ACW's collective practice which she describes as having 'developed as a remarkably flexible umbrella concept, or philosophy, which has been applied to a range of activities that seek to include multiple voices in the making and showing of art, and in the development of its audience'.<sup>133</sup> Cramer further notes that the exhibition can be seen 'both as a project under the collective banner of A Constructed World and as a solo exhibition' and that 'it is now difficult to make any clear separation between Lowe's own individual practice and the wider collaborative project of A Constructed World'.<sup>134</sup> Given this account, the drum skin works could alternatively be considered as co-authored by ACW and Damp, as Lowe's practice was progressively sublimating into his collaborative project.

In the context of the Contemporary Art Archive (CAA) exhibition (one of a series at the MCA that Cramer writes 'brought to light material by artists that is often little known and left out of conventional histories and collections'<sup>135</sup>), '5 painted drum skins' are listed in the catalogue's 'Objects List' (which appears in place of the more traditional 'list of works'). The full catalogue listing reads:

5 painted drum skins. DAMP project: clothing exchange; clothing event with Vedova Mazzei; Etoile Nasrallah's Wedding Project; Clothing Sculpture RMIT: first DAMP.

Artists other than Lowe (or ACW) are listed more explicitly in other catalogue entries, such as: '6 amateur paintings: 2 by Rosebud (*Good and Bad*, 1994)'. In comparison, the entry for the painted drum skins is less explicit in terms of who the artist of each piece is, or if they are

---

<sup>133</sup> Sue Cramer, 'Ecology, Religion, Rock & Roll', *Geoff Lowe: A Constructed World Contemporary Art Archive 6*, exhibition catalogue, MCA 1997: unpaginated.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

indeed artworks.<sup>136</sup> At any rate, Cramer and the MCA's Contemporary Art Archive (CAA) exhibitions did not conform to definitive hierarchies of material and form: 'repudiating the idea of the masterpiece as the artist's singular and most important statement, the CAA seeks to provide a more contextual understanding of art practice by drawing connections between the diverse aspects of an artist's practice'.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, questions around the role of authorship were intentionally provoked by Lowe when teaching at VCA, and by Lowe and Riva when practicing as ACW. As Riva has recalled, this was 'particularly relevant in an art school context where individualism is so important – to the point where, in some of these collaborative classes, the works that were made with students were left on the floor after the class because no-one felt they owned them'.<sup>138</sup> This ambivalence toward ownership at the time of a work's making, could reveal a reticence or conflicting attitudes toward collaboration amongst the student-artists, and an uncertainty or tentativeness around Damp's identity as an artistic entity. However, other projects by Damp during the same time period took on more declarative forms of group identity, demonstrated in the work *Cheersquad*, 1997.

### *Cheersquad*, 1997

In this short video work, Damp members perform a cheerleader chant with red pompoms and wearing uniform black 'Damp' T-shirts. The work developed in response to the culture of art school critique sessions, or a feeling of low morale at the VCA, with Damp responding with performance of encouragement and 'cheering on' each other and fellow students. As a cheer squad, Damp cast themselves simultaneously as an art group and an (exaggerated) audience for other artist-students. By embodying this fantasy of a receptive, cheering audience, Damp externalised and perhaps assuaged some common anxieties associated with making work and making work public. A hint of 1990s characteristic cynicism or irony is present in Damp's adoption of screen-printed black uniforms as a kind of 'slacker' version of

---

<sup>136</sup> Given this ambiguity, it is possible to see these objects as works by Geoff Lowe (or ACW), making 'DAMP project: clothing exchange', for example, the title. However, as 'DAMP project: clothing exchange' is not italicised, it does not read as an artwork title, rather a descriptor. In which case, it could be that the objects are more accurately part of Lowe/ACW's archive of material, a form of documentation of, for example, the 'DAMP project: clothing exchange'.

<sup>137</sup> Sue Cramer, 'Ecology, Religion, Rock & Roll', *Geoff Lowe: A Constructed World Contemporary Art Archive 6*, exhibition catalogue, MCA 1997: unpaginated.

<sup>138</sup> Jacqueline Riva, in email correspondence with the author, 27 October 2016.

competitive or professional cheerleaders.<sup>139</sup> Yet the T-shirts began to identify Damp as a group, or more specifically, a team, borrowing from the spectacle of the sports arena in a sports-obsessed city. The work comically performs a less glamorous but no less enthusiastic version of the kind of adulation and crowd reaction that is usually reserved for elite athletes, to the efforts of fine art students.

In later years, Damp would use professional cheerleaders alongside protest-style painted placards, to amplify the everyday desires of audience members.<sup>140</sup> But in their original version of *Cheersquad*, which was contained to the studios at the VCA, the group effectively turned being an audience into a work, or the act of spectating into spectacle. While exaggerating the reception of art via supportive cheers, Damp had also begun to stake a group identity with this work. Not only did cheerleaders reappear in later Damp works, the group continued to assert their 'team' or collective identity by producing multiple versions of Damp T-shirts in following years, some with 'Damp cheer squad' or 'Damp audience' as the printed text. As this more explicitly identifiable and collaborative conception of Damp began to emerge, the group's works often contained an element of service or support, a sense of collegiality, and a strong interest in the role of the audience that would continue to motivate Damp's practice for years to come. These aspects are apparent in the video work *Damp Audience: The Bridge*, 1998, which compiles actions and exchanges between Damp and other artists made during the Melbourne iteration of the travelling series of international art exhibitions 'Construction in Process' (CiP).<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>139</sup> Coincidentally, in Boston in 1997, a group of students at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts formed the 'Art School Cheerleaders'. This group used cheerleading as a medium for commentary and protest – performing at rallies against government funding cuts to the arts, for example. See: Tony Marciano, 'A new tactic for rousing and razzing arts crowd', *The New York Times*, 3 August 1997, accessed 10 July 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/03/education/a-new-tactic-for-rousing-and-razzing-arts-crowd.html>.

<sup>140</sup> For example in the exhibitions *More than a feeling*, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, 2001, and *Drama is conflict*, Linden Centre of Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2003.

<sup>141</sup> Damp, *Damp Audience* (The Bridge), 1998, video, 5:24mins. This work was shown in the exhibition *Damp Video: What we want movies to be and do* at MADA Gallery (temporary exhibition venue G1.34) 25 July – 7 August 2016, as part of *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21*.

### *Damp Audience: The Bridge, 1998*

In 1998, *Construction in Process VI: The Bridge*, a major itinerant international festival of art took place in Melbourne across ten days in March. Initiated in Poland by artist Ryszard Wasko in 1981, the Melbourne event was organised by local artists Richard Thomas, Katherine Armstrong and Gail Davidson.<sup>142</sup> Involving more than 100 Australian and international artists, the exhibition was dispersed at sites throughout Melbourne, particularly in the industrial city edge western suburbs with its hub located at the Footscray Community Arts Centre, *CiP VI* included site-specific public works by established artists such as Agnes Denes, Tom Bills, and Gu Dexin.

In their work for the project, Damp assumed a service role, acting as audience and support crew for the other artists and works in the exhibition. Travelling in a 'Damp' branded van, wearing a uniform of red T-shirts printed with the words 'Damp' across the front and 'Audience' on the reverse, the group expressed something of a team on a field trip, taking the Damp minibus from location to location with supplies of food and refreshments and extra T-shirts to share. What they sought was connection, not only with art and artists, but also with audience. At each location, they posed the question to each artist, 'who do you think is the audience for this?'. The 5:24 minute video work compiles these question and answer exchanges. At the end of the video, the off-camera voice of Geoff Lowe asks again, 'okay, who do you think is the audience for this?', and Damp, gathered on a pier answer collectively, shouting across the water, 'the birds!!'.

This work strikes to the heart of Damp's early practice as well as their, and A Constructed World's, ongoing interrogation of strategies for entering into an exchange between artist and audience. In the artist's text in the exhibition catalogue, Damp wrote:

DAMP's project for CiPVI The Bridge consisted of a mobile work over four days in which DAMP negotiated being both an art group and an audience for art. The aim was to provide support and encouragement to artists and art making in the difficult

---

<sup>142</sup> See: Richard Thomas and Ryszard Wasko, *The Bridge: Construction in Process VI* (Sydney: Craftsman House and G+B Arts International, 2000).

conditions of polluted, industrial, and isolated public site. This work reflected DAMP's ongoing interest in exploring the spaces between art and audiences. [...]

We want to make a group that works as our own model of an audience; the audience seems like a black hole, but what we want is to get our hands dirty and make contact with others. We want fame and money, but what we really want is a willing and active exchange that doesn't leave the viewer only upset, angry, insulted, thinking it's a crock of shit. By not using art, we move closer to a genuine exchange, like trying on clothes for a photograph. We are also an audience looking that finds someone who stops wanting to understand and instantly does.<sup>143</sup>

While it is described in the text as a 'DAMP's project', the work was listed as *The DAMP audience*, by Damp and A Constructed World. At this point Damp were recent graduates, with original members having left VCA at the end of 1996 and 1997. Throughout 1998, members of Damp each contributed small membership fees which covered the use of a meeting room at the Linden Centre of Contemporary Art in St Kilda, and paid Geoff Lowe to continue to facilitate group meetings run on twelve week blocks akin to a semester program.<sup>144</sup> By doing so, the group maintained their structure and commitment as graduates having left behind the resources of shared time and space that were provided at art school.<sup>145</sup> The contrast of Damp's work, in which the group itself was the medium performing a service and a kind of audience research, to the large-scale land art projects by more established artists in *CiPVI*, such as Agnes Denes' *A Forest for Australia*, 1998, was vast.<sup>146</sup> Lowe recalls of the event 'we were somewhere and everyone was goofing about, this guy, a novelist came up

---

<sup>143</sup> Damp, artist statement in *The Bridge: Construction in Process VI* (Sydney: Craftsman House and G+B Arts International, 2000): 54

<sup>144</sup> James Lynch, correspondence with the author, 17 July 2018.

<sup>145</sup> This evolving association between teacher and graduates is unusual in its blurring of mentorship and collaboration. A somewhat comparative situation might be seen in the case of Tim Rollins and the K.O.S (Kids of Survival), as the artist-teacher began working with students in an educational setting which evolved into an ongoing collaboration with a shifting list of K.O.S members. However, the paradigmatic difference between working with teenagers within a high school literacy program in the Bronx as Rollins did, and working with young adults in the context of an art school as Lowe did, means the comparison does not carry far.

<sup>146</sup> Rachel Buchanan, 'Agnes Denes' public sculpture neglected', *The Age* 30 November 2014, accessed 10 July 2018: <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/agnes-denes-public-sculpture-neglected-20141125-11kaxu.html>



and said “so what, painting’s dead is it?””.<sup>147</sup> This collision of art practices and generations can be seen in terms of emerging strands of practice and discourse in the 1990s around relational aesthetics, new genre public art, and dialogical art.

In later years, having moved beyond the initial auspices of the VCA and more gradually distancing from Lowe and ACW, Damp’s practice continued to operate on one level as a model of audience. Damp as a collaborative group, and also a cohort of peers, have remained their own first audience. The process of developing objectives and guidelines for being and working together which was emphasised in their formative years continued to occupy and inform their practice. Methods such as the tableaux, and long-term projects such as the *Book of Shadows* are examples in which Damp are working primarily for an audience of themselves, with limited access available to secondary audiences. While *The Book of Shadows* have been exhibited at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces in 2010, they exist primarily as a shared work and resource recording ideas in note or drawn form, creating a group memory for Damp themselves. As Harriet Morgan has written, the two-volumes of *The Book of Shadows* ‘speak of past, present and future, and most importantly, are yet to be completely filled’.<sup>148</sup> This work expresses something of the working processes, dreams and proposals (some of which come to fruition and some that remain unrealised), that are otherwise known and shared only within the group.

I have detailed Damp’s early years, their experiences as a group forming in an art school class and beginning to establish their artistic identity through a line of inquiry into art and audience, at times enacting the role of audience themselves. Damp began as a cohort and became their own form of audience, sustaining their practice through structure and individual commitment to the group. A key question in developing my research project, was how Damp’s collaborative and cohort-building practices could inform my curatorial methodology and, indeed, the form of the ‘exhibition’ as study. While education programs play an increasingly significant role in museums, galleries and biennales, they are not often embedded in the curatorial methodology or final form of an exhibition. One curatorial case

---

<sup>147</sup> Geoff Lowe, interview with the author, 5 May 2015.

<sup>148</sup> Harriet Morgan, ‘Remember the past and revel in the future’, Damp, *The Book of Shadows* exhibition catalogue, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, 2010, unpaginated.

study of which this can be said, is Roger Buergel's artistic direction of the Busan Biennale, 2012. Central to Buergel's process was the establishment of a 'Learning Council', a diverse cohort of willing participants, who committed to a long-form program of learning and sharing knowledge, before, during and after the biennale itself. This group of Busan citizens in effect became both collaborators and primary audience of the biennale. Buergel's opening up and sharing the curatorial process in this way, structured around a collaborative study program and small group of committed participants, has commonalities with my approach to the 'audience as cohort' and is examined below.



Fig 18: Damp, untitled drum skin, 1998. Collection of Geoff Lowe.

## Roger Buergel's 'Learning Council'

German curator Roger Buergel has demonstrated an ongoing interest in collaboration, education, and working with audiences in his practice. He curated a seminar series and number of exhibitions under the program theme of *The Government* between 1998 and 2005. Installing one iteration of this series in Miami in 2004, Buergel had an experience that significantly reoriented his working processes to involve and engage audiences in the development of a project, rather than to think of the public only at the end point of delivery and reception.<sup>149</sup> While working with technicians to install a piece by Argentinian art and activist collective Tucumán Arde, Buergel began 'explaining' the work to the technician. However, the technician became emotional as he began to recognise people he knew depicted in the work, himself having lived experience as a South American exile living in Miami. This prompted Buergel to reconsider, 'who am I to explain things and to whom, before I know to whom I'm actually speaking? And then it became obvious to me that I needed to involve people in those processes'.<sup>150</sup> Following this realisation, *Documenta 12* (2007) directed by Buergel with curator Ruth Noack, aimed to draw on local experience by establishing an Advisory Board of forty Kassel citizens.<sup>151</sup> Taking this process further for the 2012 Busan Biennale *Garden of Learning*, Buergel established a 'Learning Council' of local citizens from the early planning stages of the Biennale, one year before the exhibition was presented.

The Learning Council of self-nominated citizens was recruited through an open call for participation advertised throughout the mid-size coastal city of Busan, South Korea. 300 expressions of interest were received and approximately 150 people attended the first meeting at the Busan Museum of Art's auditorium. Over time the number of participants reduced to a core group of 80 members throughout the planning process, and approximately 50 remaining involved by the end of the biennale exhibition period (outnumbering the number of artists in the biennale). The Learning Council members met together with Buergel,

---

<sup>149</sup> The exhibition was *How do we want to be governed? (Figure and Ground)*, curated by Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack, Miami Art Central, 30 November 2004 – 30 January 2005.

<sup>150</sup> Buergel, in interview with the author, 14 May 2015.

<sup>151</sup> Dominic Eichler, 'Documenta 12 2007', *Frieze* 104 (Jan-Feb 2007), accessed 10 July 2018 <https://frieze.com/article/documenta-12-2007>.

biennale staff and artists, and were remunerated for their time. A significant level of commitment was required, with 50 meetings recorded over the duration of the project.

Establishing the Learning Council was Buergel's strategy to address his own 'relative ignorance' – of Korea, Busan, and its people.<sup>152</sup> Buergel has elaborated on this position, noting that the challenge for him to curate such an exhibition in South Korea was to discover, 'what would it mean for me to try out my way of working in a cultural environment that I cannot control?' In recruiting participants for the Learning Council, he presented himself as 'helpless' and in need of people to help him. Working from this position of ignorance or helplessness, Buergel corralled a group of unconnected Busan citizens to contribute, support, and debate his exhibition from its conception through to its delivery and dissemination. In this tactic, his work echoes the non-hierarchical and emancipated models of pedagogy and spectatorship put forth by Jacques Rancière. In particular, the language echoes that of Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, in which the nineteenth century French professor Joseph Jacotot enables his Flemish students to learn together, without sharing a common language with them.<sup>153</sup> The Rancièrian principle of 'equality of intelligences' seems to have been applied to the structure of the Learning Council, which enabled self-education and exchange. Based on this shared learning, Council meetings began with questions such as 'what is Korean', 'what is important to Busan', as well as more specific questions about the desire for the biennale.

While Buergel retained the curatorial power over matters such as the selection of artists, the Learning Council's most significant influence was to direct the biennale towards the scale of a modest museum show, housed mostly within the somewhat neglected Busan Museum of Art (BMA), featuring only 41 artists (far less than in previous iterations). This decision was made by the Learning Council 'as a way of reinforcing the dignity of public institutions in the face of both market forces and populist demands'.<sup>154</sup> In this way, *Garden of Learning* acts as a

---

<sup>152</sup> Roger M. Buergel, *Garden of Learning* blog, posted September 2012, accessed 15 April 2014 <http://gardenoflearning.info/blog/exhibitions-2/garden-of-learning/intro/>.

<sup>153</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

<sup>154</sup> Busan Biennale, 'Garden of Learning Press Kit' (2012): 3.

resistance to the demand for access and as a counter to the expectations of biennial-style exhibitions, more often geared toward spectacle and large scale. In a city undergoing rapid modernization and expansion, the Learning Council decided to wrap the exterior of the BMA building in construction scaffolding and fabric, with the same materials also utilized in the exhibition design inside. The scale of the exhibition and a spacious installation design perhaps also respond to the immediate environment and context of display, as the BMA is dwarfed on either side by an oversized convention centre and a large department store.<sup>155</sup>

As well as veiling the biennale venue itself, the theme of construction and references to labour conditions appears in several works within the exhibition. A floor installation by Hyosook Sung filled the threshold of the museum's entrance with dozens of pairs of worn-out shoes. *Requiem, Three in the Morning* (2012) consisted of used and discarded worker's boots arranged roughly in circles inside the entrance, colourful paper flowers scattered amongst them.<sup>156</sup> The decorative flowers traditionally used in mourning ceremonies were made by workers at Busan's oldest shipyard – one with a recent and extreme history of strikes and protest. The shoes were also cast-offs donated by the shipyard workers. Flower-making workshops took place in groups at the labour union office of the shipyard, creating a distinctive context for discussion and sharing among collaborators and workers.

Reviewing the biennale, David Joselit has written that while exhibition visitors could experience the results of such collaborations and the Learning Council discussions indirectly, 'the project's most lasting effects are not directed to the amorphous diaspora of the art world: The enduring legacy will probably be local'.<sup>157</sup> Joselit describes Buergel's method as having, in effect, 'cultivated a small public out of which an exhibition grew'.<sup>158</sup> For a group that gathered together with no selection criteria other than having responded to an open-call, to influence and change the shape of the institution it engages with, even if the effect is temporary, is an impressive reversal and equaliser. As a curator, Buergel sees his method of

---

<sup>155</sup> Roger Buergel, *Garden of Learning* exh. cat. Busan Biennale Organizing Committee (2012): 17.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid: 133.

<sup>157</sup> David Joselit, '2012 Busan Biennale', *Artforum International* (December 2012): 267.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

relinquishing a degree of control to the public 'means you are on an equal level with the artist. It is all about negotiation'.<sup>159</sup> When asked whether his role as curator, in the case of the Busan Biennale, required an abdication or assertion of his authorial voice, Buergel replied:

I think it's in between, a kind of oscillation. Sometimes it needs your voice. And also, I mean, there are some situations where people like to be taken by the hand, and sometimes you are superfluous, and then it depends on your personality. I'm usually happy to disappear if I have the chance.<sup>160</sup>

Added to this approach, is the contributing factor that Buergel does not speak the Korean language, and therefore relied on his assistant as a translator through the many hours of Council meeting. As such, he has emphasised that much of the process remained 'more or less incomprehensible to me', further distancing a traditional notion of authorship.<sup>161</sup> By allowing for much of the project to develop and occur within closed social groups, the Learning Council cultivated within its core members a sense of responsibility and perhaps ownership toward the biennale; many went on to act as docents and guides for the exhibition, mediating the works for a broader audience and public. For some participants in the Learning Council this established a precedent of working closely with the Biennale and the BMA, its main venue, which was not continued beyond Buergel's iteration of the Biennale. Of the Learning Council members I interviewed in Busan, many were disappointed and felt let down after the close of the exhibition.<sup>162</sup> Without the ongoing structure facilitated by working towards the Biennale, the group did not continue to work together as many had hoped. Participants expressed a frustration of returning to the role of a passive audience for the museum rather than having the opportunity to engage and contribute.

Rather than attempting to establish an audience through the Learning Council, Buergel sees the need and impact of his method as having created 'a discourse that enabled people to talk about the experience'.<sup>163</sup> Providing a structure, opening a dialogue from the position of

---

<sup>159</sup> Cited in Valerie Connor, 'Roger M. Buergel: Correspondences' *Circa* 133 (Autumn 2005): 44

<sup>160</sup> Roger Buergel, in interview with the author, 14 May 2015.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Sae Hee Park, in interview with the author, 5 December 2015.

<sup>163</sup> Roger Buergel, in interview with the author, 14 May 2015.

ignorance, and the clumsy necessity of translation, all enabled the conditions for speech and discourse, or as Buerger puts it, 'an atmosphere where it was possible to talk'.<sup>164</sup> This outcome of open and emancipated dialogue (even if temporary and limited to the duration of the Biennale), echoes Lowe and ACW's aims when working as facilitators for Damp, to 'work so everyone could speak, basically, so you could get a body of knowledge'.<sup>165</sup> In this respect, both the Busan Learning Council and the processes structuring Damp's formation, can be seen to enact Rogoff's call to create situations of access in education and culture that enables 'the ability to formulate one's own questions'.<sup>166</sup> Both projects also resonate with Rancière's writings which critique outmoded forms of education based on transmission and inequality between student and teacher.

### **'Closing the door'**

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière describes the process in which education based on inequality transmits to the student 'the knowledge of his incapacity. In this way, progressive instruction is the endless verification of its starting point: inequality. That endless verification of inequality is... the process of stultification'.<sup>167</sup> This theoretical position has permeated not only experimental pedagogy, but also art and curatorial practice, admittedly, almost to the point of saturation.<sup>168</sup> However, its application via education academic Goele Cornelissen to the public role of teaching and drawing attention to a subject, is particularly resonant to my strategies of engaging small audience groups as cohorts within the curatorial model of study.

Using the allegorical tale of Jacotot, the so-called ignorant schoolmaster, Rancière makes a case for the power of shared attention to the 'material thing in common' as the source of verification of knowledge. In Jacotot's case, that material thing in common was one bilingual

---

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Geoff Lowe, in interview with the author, 5 May 2015.

<sup>166</sup> Irit Rogoff 'Turning', *e-flux journal* (November 2008): 8.

<sup>167</sup> Jacques Rancière, 'The Emancipated Spectator', *Artforum International* 45, no.7 (March 2007): 271-280.

<sup>168</sup> Tirdad Zolghadr makes a punchline of Rancière's ubiquitous presence within certain strands of art discourse: 'You sit in a circle because it's less formal, someone quotes Barthes, someone criticises 'relational aesthetics' and then you all agree on reading Rancière's *Ignorant Schoolmaster* by next week'. Tirdad Zolghadr, 'The angry middle aged: romance and the possibilities of adult education in the art world', in Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (eds), *Curating and The Educational Turn* (London and Amsterdam: Oped Editions / de Appel, 2010): 162.

novel, through which his Flemish students began to speak and write in French without relying on his 'mediating intelligence' as a teacher.<sup>169</sup> Cornelissen's reading of Rancière utilises the ignorant schoolmaster as a means to 'rethink and repractice the public dimension of education'.<sup>170</sup> For Jacotot, attention is 'the act that makes an intelligence proceed under the absolute constraint of a will'.<sup>171</sup> Cornelissen expands, it is the 'result of rigorous effort to look carefully, to be in the presence of facts, and to answer a triple question: What do I see? What do I think? What do I say?'.<sup>172</sup> Cornelissen highlights the symbolically 'closed door' in pedagogical practice as a means of creating space to draw attention to a subject. It is attention to a thing in common, that invites students to 'look, to think and to speak', and it is this attention that creates an equal space – 'a public space where the master no longer assumes the position of the gatekeeper'.<sup>173</sup> To achieve this, Cornelissen extracts, 'the master only needs to keep the door closed', by which she means, 'to be attentive and to ask for attention, to open up the opportunity to separate what one sees, thinks and says from the social order'.<sup>174</sup> It is a pedagogical position that argues for the value in generating knowledge through enabling shared attention, in which the teacher Jacotot (or indeed Lowe, ACW, or in a curatorial context, Buerger) provide the structure and conditions for attentiveness, based on equality.

These principles of 'closing the door' can be seen in my own curatorial method of *study*, particularly through the *Damp Camp Studio Workshop*, *Damp Study Group* and a project by Artmeet ARI, in each of which a small cohort were enabled to bring their attention to Damp's practice as the material thing in common. In these projects, which are further outlined below, my own role was largely in presenting objects (artworks, documentation or archival material) and creating the structure for ongoing and repeated occasions of group encounters with Damp's work. This enabled the three cohorts to develop their own responses and engagements with the work (both individually and in negotiation as a group). Each project involved critique and questioning of Damp's practice in various ways (in group discussion

---

<sup>169</sup> Goel Cornelissen, 'The public role of teaching: to keep the door closed', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* Vol 42, nos 5-6 (2010): 526.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid: 525.

<sup>171</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991): 25

<sup>172</sup> Goel Cornelissen: 532.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid: 534.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.



and in artwork and exhibition form), and each had direct input within my curatorial program (for example, Damp Camp directed the visual identity of the program, Damp Study Group and Artmeet ARI both generated new artworks and exhibitions installed in and around *Gormenghast*).

In her book *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*, Claire Bishop asks, 'how do you bring a classroom to life as if it were a work of art?'.<sup>175</sup> Through the curatorial model of exhibition as study, my interest lies in a reversal of this question: how do you activate an exhibition's audience as if it were in a classroom? That is, I have sought to bring the close attention and shared focus of the (ideal) classroom, of education, of the act of collective study, to bear on Damp's practice. This was done most directly through the projects Damp Study Group and Damp Camp, both of which worked with small participatory audiences as 'cohorts', made up of self-selecting MADA students.

### **Damp Camp and Damp Study Group**

Damp Camp Studio Workshop was the first project to take place as part of the program *Art holds a high place in my life*.<sup>176</sup> It consisted of an interdisciplinary workshop held over five days in February 2016, outside of teaching time, prior to semester one commencing. The studio workshop was conducted by myself in collaboration with Warren Taylor, lecturer in Communication Design, with a half-day workshop session presented by Damp. The studio workshop was open to MADA undergraduate students, limited to sixteen participants with an equal balance of participants drawn from across the three faculty departments of art, design and architecture. The studio workshop set participants a curatorial and design identity brief, with the objective of developing two collectively produced outcomes: (1) to produce an overarching visual identity for the project *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21*, to include experimental signage, way-finding, posters, and other devices that could be reproducible throughout the year-long program, and; (2) to design and

---

<sup>175</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012). See chapter 9, 'Pedagogic Projects: "How do you bring a classroom to life as if it were a work of art?"': 241-274.

<sup>176</sup> Please refer to Appendix 3.1 for documents pertaining to Damp Camp, including a list of participants; an information sheet sent to MADA students to solicit participants; the funding application, project outline and project report submitted to the Monash Education Academy Small Grants Scheme.

install a timeline display representing a chronology of Damp's art practice, from 1995 to 2016. The process and outcomes of the studio workshop were also displayed in the exhibition *Damp Camp* (22 February – 4 March) in the existing but soon to be closed MADA Gallery, while the *Art holds a high place in my life (timeline)* was installed throughout the level two corridor of the fine art building D2 (29 February – 11 March).

Through this workshop and its outcomes, the self-selecting cohort of participating students were both the first audience for the 2016 project *Art holds a high place in my life* and contributors to it. Over the course of the workshop, I discussed my plans and intentions for the project which the students responded to by developing elements of communication and exhibition design. The most successful and visible of these was a series of posters that could be over-printed to announce individual exhibitions and events throughout the year, a moveable signage structure that was situated outside *Gormenghast* introducing the project, and screen-printed 'Damp Camp' T-shirts for each participant. Through their participation in this workshop, this cohort already held knowledge about the program, about *Gormenghast* and about Damp's practice, as the project unfolded on campus to a broader audience. It was my hope that these students, drawn from all three departments of the MADA faculty, would carry (or wear, via the Damp Camp T-shirts) this 'insider' knowledge with them, potentially disseminating their understanding of the work informally amongst their respective peer groups over the course of the year. The Damp Camp cohort in effect had a stake in the project before the 'exhibition' as such had even begun. In this way, the cohort could act in a similar, though less formal way, as the Busan Learning Council members, who took on a sense of responsibility toward Buerger's biennale, and acted as guides to the exhibition once it opened.

While the 'material thing in common' for the Damp Camp cohort to respond to was as much my curatorial framework as it was Damp's practice, for *Damp Study Group* I more closely drew attention to the artists' work. In *Damp Study Group* I created the space, time and structure that enabled a group of self-selecting students to repeatedly turn their attention to Damp's practice together. In doing so, over time this cohort was able to look closely, to think

and to speak freely, rather than passively receive a pre-determined curatorial interpretation or description of the work.

Damp Study Group met on Friday afternoons in semester one. The group came together in response to an open invitation to all undergraduate MADA students to participate in the study and curatorial project. Six seminar sessions were held, each focused on a different aspect of Damp's practice, and crucially, a selection of Damp artworks (or documentation where original works were not available) were presented each week. Having worked through Damp's archive through my research I had grouped works into six loose categories which I thought of as 'curriculum topics' for the purposes of the Study Group. The seminar topics took their titles from Damp works or exhibitions and included: Desire: what we want and what we'll do for it; Site and context; Value, transformation, authenticity; Art and audience; Conflict: it's a world full of hurt; Group Group: collective thinking and process.<sup>177</sup> Damp led the first week as a workshop on 'desire', during which they introduced their practice, facilitated some 'ice-breaker' exercises, and took the cohort through a workshop of making tableaux images (which were photographed and included in the Damp Study Group exhibition catalogue later in the program).

In the following weeks, I facilitated the Study Group seminars, but each week two participants would also prepare something to lead discussion on one selected Damp artwork. Following on from Damp's work *Tension: the 80s*, 1996, which had been a key reference point for Damp Camp and the *Art holds a high place in my life (timeline)*, I asked the cohort to each bring an item representative of their life in the year their Damp artwork was made. This reprised Damp's tactic in *Tension: the 80s* in which they connected items from their lives to artworks celebrated in the special issue of *Tension* magazine documenting 1980s Australian art. Based on these seminars and ongoing discussions, Damp Study Group developed a series of works together including the collaborative *Gormenghast Flag* and *Object Swap* project. The exhibition *All that we desire[d]* curated by Damp Study Group and installed in *Gormenghast* closed the series, and presented works by several participants and guests

---

<sup>177</sup> Please refer to appendix 3.2 for a list of artworks and texts allocated to each seminar topic.

around the idea of desire at the age of twenty-one, a concept collectively developed by the group.

### **Artmeet ARI**

While this was not a pedagogical project in the sense that Damp Camp and Damp Study Group were, the project by Artmeet ARI was another instance of inviting a group to bring their attention to Damp and to my curatorial framework. Artmeet ARI is a group of artists that had formed in 2014 while in their final year as students in the Fine Art department at MADA, and continued to work together since graduating, throughout 2015 and 2016.<sup>178</sup>

Describing themselves as a collective artist-run initiative, Artmeet did not operate from a gallery space but produced projects in a range of locations - often unconventional sites such as a masonic temple, a public park, or a vacant parking lot. Unlike Damp Camp or Damp Study Group, I was not involved in bringing individuals together to form a group, rather, Artmeet were a pre-existing group with their own collective identity, shared history and established working process. This, coupled with the fact that the group members were not students but recent graduates leading busy lives independent of the university art school, led to a less hands-on intensive working relationship between Artmeet and myself. Rather, I was able to provide them with resources and discussion on Damp's practice, while leaving the invitation to contribute an exhibition within my program very open.

I was interested in the commonalities between Artmeet and Damp's formation as art collectives that grew out of their respective art school cohorts, nineteen years apart. Both groups demonstrated concerns with sociability, community, and the public's encounter with art, yet both found an alternative form of working together other than the common model of a Melbourne artist-run space. It was from this vantage point that I was interested in drawing Artmeet's attention toward Damp's history and practice, and to open my program to their response, in whatever form that might take.

---

<sup>178</sup> At the time of the project in 2016, Artmeet ARI consisted of twelve members: Jordan Mitchell-Fletcher, Gemma Crocetti, Rachel Schenberg, Hana Earles, Kon Kyrizakis, Natasha Manners, Robert Domanski, Emily Chen, Eve Pawlik, Grace Thomson, and Jacqueline Stojanovic.

Just as Damp have often created an opportunity for audiences to engage with and, through participation, complete their works, my approach was to create a curatorial framework (the 2016 program *Art holds a high place in my life* and *Gormenghast* as its location) that offered the opportunity for audiences to contribute and insert themselves into the program and into the role of curator. The audience cohorts that were Damp Camp, Damp Study Group and Artmeet ARI each generated aspects of the program. The Damp Camp cohort created an ongoing visual identity for the program through posters and signage; Damp Study Group created collaborative works that were displayed in *Gormenghast*, made a series of tableaux vivant images developed in a workshop with Damp, and collectively curated an exhibition at *Gormenghast* titled *All that we desire[d]* to close our time of working together; and Artmeet ARI installed an exhibition of collectively produced sculptures in and around *Gormenghast* and throughout the surrounding Ian Potter Sculpture Court, as well as curating a solo project by the artist Sanja Devic, who presented a fabric-based installation draping the upper level of *Gormenghast*. It is through these resulting artworks, exhibitions, and design pieces, that I would suggest one could evaluate the projects and the curatorial strategy of working with an audience as cohort within the context of exhibition as study.

## Conclusion

Having discussed Damp's early history as a cohort of students at VCA in this chapter, I would argue that the structure and framework for working together provided by Geoff Lowe as their teacher (and later ACW as facilitators) was crucial to their formation of a group identity and continuing independent artistic practice. The time spent establishing objectives and guidelines (which Lowe brought to Damp from his experience with psychotherapy groups) prioritised how to spend time together over what work to make for an exhibition, because otherwise, 'you're just fighting about whether it should be blue or it should be red'.<sup>179</sup> Developing these guidelines and objectives, together with shared methods, undoubtedly aided Damp's longevity and ability to retain a surprisingly coherent artistic practice given the group has been made up by over seventy individuals through a membership that ebbed and flowed, particularly over the first sixteen years of their practice.

---

<sup>179</sup> Geoff Lowe, interview with the author, 5 May 2015.

Longevity may not have been a goal for Damp, nor necessarily a measure of success, but it is certainly testament to the idea of fostering community and a peer group as one of the most valuable outcomes of an art school education, a claim that Callum Morton (speaking as head of Fine Art at MADA) holds to:

With art schools, the key is community. Any person who ever went to art school, the thing they got the most out of, I would imagine, is the way they forged community links from art school out into the world. [...] In my experience, I'm still with the community of artists I went to art school with, twenty years or more. [...] Essentially, community helps you sustain practice, I reckon that's the hardest thing, sustaining practice through time. So community gives you a kind of shot at that.<sup>180</sup>

In her text on the educational turn, Rogoff also focuses on the creation of community as an aspiration:

At its best, education forms collectivities – many fleeting collectivities that ebb and flow, converge and fall apart. These are small ontological communities propelled by desire and curiosity, cemented together by the kind of empowerment that comes from intellectual challenge.<sup>181</sup>

By presenting Damp to MADA students via the long-durational, processual, and close proximity format afforded by the 'exhibition as study', I have drawn attention to a model of collaborative practice and sustained collectivity that emerged from an art school workshop. I enabled small groups of self-selecting audience 'cohorts' to bring their collective attentiveness to Damp's practice by creating the necessary conditions of time, space and structure. My own lack of design skills empowered the Damp Camp cohort to lead their own projects and respond autonomously to the conceptual framework of my curatorial brief and their new-found familiarity with Damp's practice. My invitation to Artmeet ARI provided the structure and opportunity for them to engage and respond to Damp's work and my project as an

---

<sup>180</sup> Callum Morton, interview with the author, 13 November 2014.

<sup>181</sup> Rogoff, 'Turning', *e-flux journal* (November 2008): 6.

independent cohort. Their formulation of a question in response took the form of a series of sculptures and a temporary amendment to *Gormenghast*. In Damp Study Group, bringing the same group of people weekly across a semester to look at and discuss work by Damp, generated a form of collective critique and analysis. This was a forum in which my role was to 'close the door', drawing shared attention to Damp's work as the 'material thing in common' and to create the conditions in which everyone could talk. Each of these projects working with cohorts have enacted the curatorial model of study, focused collectively on Damp as the subject of study. Additionally, through these projects, I have echoed Damp's own working processes in the act of presenting their work, as well as referencing Lowe and ACW's pedagogical methods.





Fig 19: Damp Camp Studio Workshop, February 2016.



Fig 20: Damp Camp Studio Workshop, engaged in a game of spaghetti arms facilitated by Damp, February 2016.







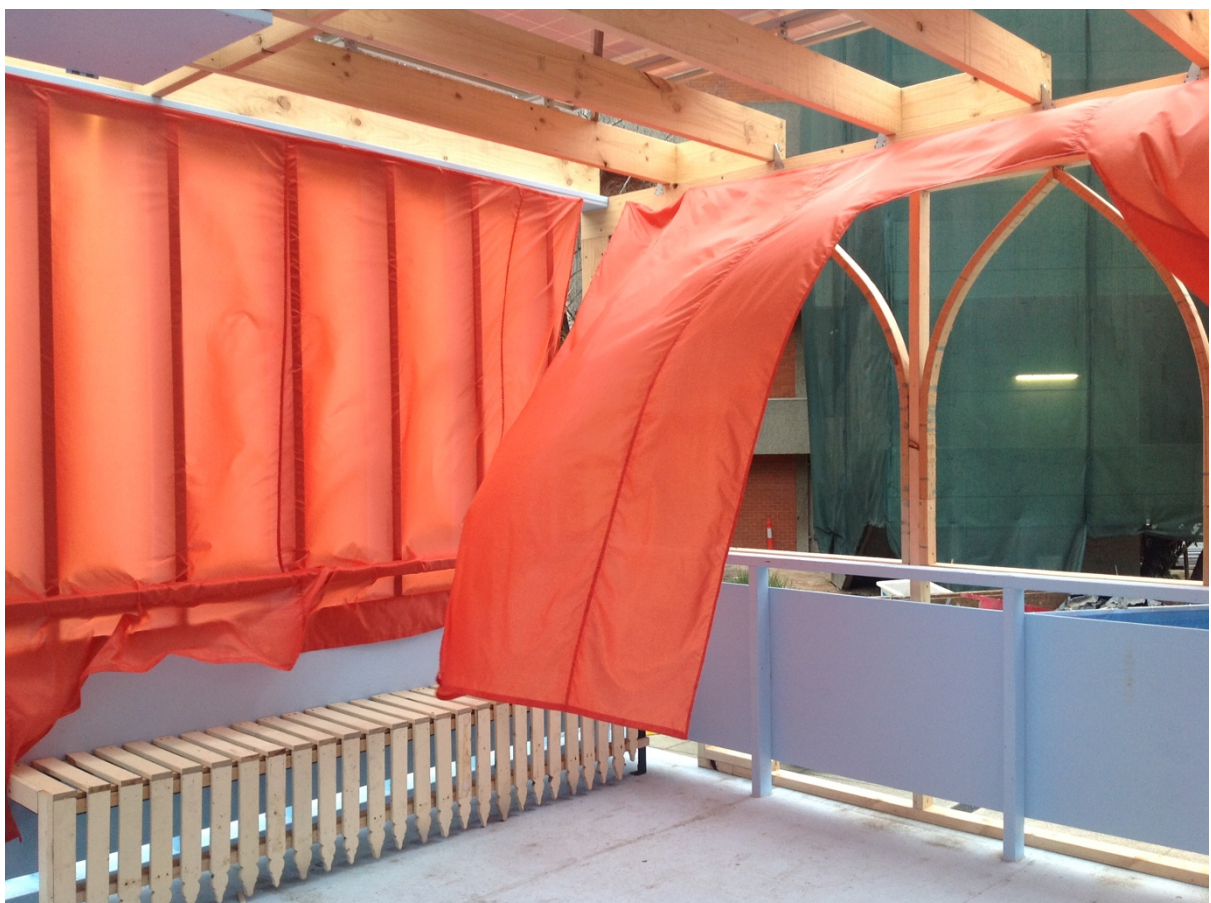


Fig 23-24: Sanja Devic (detail) as part of the exhibition by Artmeet ARI at *Gormenghast*, 30 July 2016.  
Photos: Zan Wimberley.



## Chapter three

### *Exhibition as study*





Fig 25-26: *Damp, Tension: the '80s* 1996 (installation views). Installed in fine art building D2, as part of Next Wave Festival 1996.



Fig 27: *Damp Camp*, MADA Gallery G1, February 2016 (installation view). Featuring: Damp membership poster produced by Damp Camp Studio Workshop, and rope used in timeline exercise.





Fig 28-29: Art holds a high place in my life (timeline), installed by Damp Camp Studio Workshop, in fine art building D2, February 2016.





Fig 30-31: *Damp video: what we want movies to be and do*, MADA Gallery G134 (installation views), July - August 2016.



In a short provocative text, Australian art historian Anne Marsh recently decried the ‘scholarly neglect of our visual culture’, specifically calling out the scarcity of doctoral theses addressing Australian art and artists. Marsh points to a lack of publishing – noting that there are ‘thousands of monographs and essays’ to be written about Australian art practice.<sup>182</sup> This concern about the challenges to writing and publishing on contemporary Australian art is one that I share, and I have often wondered why local artists are not more attractive subjects of study to my student peers in art history departments. Yet, in her summary of a cultural cringe that persists in scholarship as some kind of colonial inheritance, despite a prolific and intellectually sophisticated art culture, Marsh seems to ignore a whole category of scholarly contributions to the narratives of Australian art history: those that are curatorial. While she largely credits (or blames?) museums and galleries with expanding the audience for contemporary art, her passing mention of what could be considered curatorial scholarship is dismissive – in this regard Marsh acknowledges only the catalogues that may accompany exhibitions. Further, Marsh minimises the impact and value of said catalogues, commenting, ‘but catalogues and journals are only widely accessible to those with an affiliation to a university library’.<sup>183</sup> (PhD theses must surely be even less accessible to the non-academic reader, but Marsh does not mention this.) By this assessment, curatorial work is either aligned with the marketing departments of blockbuster culture or the commercial imperatives of the private sector and global art fair circuit. Exhibition catalogues may be the worthy byproducts of this system, but they will be specialist and inaccessible.

As an academic, it is natural that Marsh looks to the university for both the source and solutions to these problems. Her assessment of the burgeoning Australian higher education system is accurate: there has been ‘exponential growth in the visual arts Masters and Doctoral programs in our art schools’, and a concurrent ‘rapid shrinkage in art history and visual culture studies in the universities’.<sup>184</sup> Framed this way we are presented with a paradox – production of contemporary art is increasing while scholarship of it is decreasing.

---

<sup>182</sup> Anne Marsh, ‘Provocation’, *A+A Online*, accessed 15 June 2017, <http://www.artandaustralia.com/online/disquisitions/provocation>

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Anne Marsh, ‘Provocation’, *A+A Online*, accessed 15 June 2017, <http://www.artandaustralia.com/online/disquisitions/provocation>

But again, Marsh glosses over the complicating factor of the curatorial. She does not concede or draw a link to the (sometimes simultaneous) emergence and increase of Curatorial Studies or Curatorial Practice programs in Australian universities.<sup>185</sup>

If Marsh wants to delineate art history performed in the university as separate and greater than that undertaken as part of curatorial work, she is not alone, nor is this a new debate. The 1999 conference and resulting publication *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University* aired tensions between the two branches of the discipline in the UK, USA and Germany.<sup>186</sup> In these arguments, museums have been broadly seen to have embraced ‘the values and technique of mass entertainment, moving in a direction that is a threat not only to scholarly values but to the integrity of museum practice itself’.<sup>187</sup> Such line of thought seems to have given license to Marsh and others to disregard the field of curatorial work as scholarship, in total. However, given the ‘rapid shrinkage’ of art history departments (a trajectory not unrelated to populist changes in the museum sector), and the concurrent rise of curatorial departments, I would argue that a closer, more generative, examination of the relationship would be in the best interests of both art history and the curatorial; and ultimately, beneficial for the discourse on art. Particularly when it comes to dealing with contemporary art – that other great disrupter of the discipline of art history.

Established as a discipline in the mid-nineteenth century, art history discourse was broadly based on the autonomy of aesthetic form, privileging the artist as an ‘active originary force’ over considerations of the reception or context of the work. Grant Kester points out, contemporary art causes a threat to traditional art historical discourse, through its ‘unregulated and multiple claims of interpretive authority’; the artist is present to dispute or challenge the historian’s assessment, as is the contemporary viewer. This has undermined both the art historian’s ‘hermeneutic monopoly’, and the idea that art history could be defined by ‘a capacity for critical detachment, or a more objective, less interested,

---

<sup>185</sup> Monash University provides a recent case in point, where a new undergraduate degree in Art History and Curating introduced in 2016 saw a significant rise in interest from new students.

<sup>186</sup> Charles W. Haxthausen (ed.) *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University* (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in association with Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>187</sup> Charles W. Haxthausen, ‘Beyond “the two art histories”’, *Journal of Art Historiography* no. 11 (2014): 8.

relationship to its object of study'.<sup>188</sup> While generally seen as part and parcel with the rise of the curator as art world figure since the 1990s, the quickly burgeoning field of exhibition histories can be seen as one development attempting to account for these challenges and expand art history's view to incorporate the contemporary context and reception of artworks, acknowledging the contributing agency of curators, institutions and viewers.

Thankfully, a handful of Australian art historians have begun to identify the relationship of curatorial work and art history as a necessary field for examination. Journal articles authored collaboratively by Catherine Speck, Joanna Mendelsohn and Catherine De Lorenzo have traced the impact of curated exhibitions on shifting the narratives of Australian art history.<sup>189</sup> The authors contend that curated exhibitions (and accompanying catalogues) have been able to innovate and respond to shifts in society and art practice more quickly than art history and, as such, have been a generative and influential factor on art historical scholarship. The examples they raise, from the 1970s onward, provide evidence for curatorial work having incorporated Aboriginal art into the mainstream of the Australian visual art narrative; extended the definition of art to include photography, craft and other non-traditional media; brought minorities into the cultural fold; and began to more comprehensively address the work of female artists, all prior to the discipline of art history expanding and progressing to do the same.<sup>190</sup>

Similar ground is covered by Jonathan Holmes, who, with a research team at the University of Tasmania, is investigating the part played by solo survey exhibitions in the history of Australian art since the mid-1970s.<sup>191</sup> Holmes outlines the prevalence and significance of surveys of Australian artists at State galleries through three curated exhibition series': the *Link* series at the Art Gallery of South Australia from 1971, *Project* series at the Art Gallery of New South Wales from 1975, and the *Survey* series at the National Gallery of Victoria from

---

<sup>188</sup> Grant Kester, 'A Questionnaire on "The Contemporary": 32 Responses', *October* 130 (Fall 2009): 8.

<sup>189</sup> De Lorenzo, Mendelsohn, Speck, '1968-2008: Curated exhibitions and Australian art history', *Journal of Art Historiography* no.4 June 2011; and Speck & Mendelsohn, 'The 1970s: Curators Framing the Avant-Garde in Writing and Rewriting Art History', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2017): 97-112.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*: 14.

<sup>191</sup> Jonathan Holmes, 'Going Solo: a report on survey exhibitions in Australian public museums in the 1970s' unpublished conference paper, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania, 2003.

1978. Holmes argues that the 'critical engagement with the art surveyed and the catalogues produced have remained important historical documents twenty or more years later'. Yet, he also notes that this 'level of scholarly curatorial attention to individual Australian artists would be, however, short-lived' – as programming in the State galleries turned to thematic group exhibitions and blockbuster touring shows from the 1980s on.<sup>192</sup>

These detailed case studies reveal a valuable degree of critical engagement with changes in art (in the thematic exhibitions discussed by Speck *et al*) and with individual art practices (in the survey shows Holmes details), both through the exhibitions themselves and the accompanying catalogues. This scholarship can be seen as part of the growing and increasingly influential field of study of exhibition history. Yet the dismissal or overlooking of curatorial scholarship by academics persists, extending to a younger generation of art historians such as Amelia Barikin (who also works as a curator) undermining the scholarly value of exhibition catalogues.<sup>193</sup>

In the book *Three Reflections on Contemporary Art History*, Barikin writes about the need for temporal distance and the challenge this poses to contemporary art history. She thoroughly examines art history's relationship to the contemporary through this lens, and advocates a speculative rethinking of time as a response to the problem. However, in her discussion of the forms in which contemporary art historical scholarship is made public, she, like Marsh, is dismissive of exhibition catalogues. Barikin describes a 'set of economic and institutional challenges' in producing catalogues that aim at a general audience as rendering them uncritical and therefore not useful for 'building contemporary art history'.<sup>194</sup> Ultimately, Barikin draws the difficulty back to a question of critical distance, noting that contemporary art history research generally involves interviews, emails, and studio visits with artists. As

---

<sup>192</sup> Jonathan Holmes, 'Going Solo: a report on survey exhibitions in Australian public museums in the 1970s' unpublished conference paper, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania, 2003: 6.

<sup>193</sup> As a curator Barikin has produced exemplary scholarly exhibitions and catalogues, and she has also contributed significant texts on contemporary art to non-academic publications, so her position is somewhat undercut by her own practice.

<sup>194</sup> Amelia Barikin, 'Zombie History: Contemporary Art in the Jungles of Cosmic Time', *Three Reflections on Contemporary Art History*, Nicholas Croggon & Helen Hughes (editors). Discipline in association with emaj, 2014: 79-98.

Barikin notes, the 'difficulty here lies in both gaining access to such sources, and having the academic freedom to critique them independently'.<sup>195</sup> Yet, as Barikin concedes, this problem applies equally to the academic monograph or PhD thesis, as it does to the exhibition catalogue.

While the question of access versus distance to one's subject is a legitimate concern regarding the freedom to critique independently, it seems certain that this is a balancing act not only for curators but also for art historians addressing contemporary art (not to mention one that art critics have long debated). It can also be seen as part of the conditions of working in a small art eco-system, everyone is already in close proximity. As American curator and art historian Johanna Burton comments, 'sometimes so-called critical distance draws a very firm line between past and present'.<sup>196</sup> The fact that, as Marsh points out, economic and cultural circumstances do not encourage Australian postgraduate students to research Australian artists, is itself evidence that the university is not immune to limitations and biases. Indeed, as seen in Chapter one, we know that nothing in the contemporary corporatised university comes without constraints and imperatives, after all, the tertiary education system has faced the same process of democratisation (and massification) of access that public art museums have embraced. With this in mind, categorising and demarcating the varying degrees of critical independence between forms of art scholarship seems like territorial quibbling. Surely an adequate workaround is already in play – the critical reading of individual texts, whether they be academic monographs, museum catalogues, or art criticism. Otherwise, we return to a position where, not so long ago, dissertations on living artists were all but prohibited.<sup>197</sup>

When it comes to the challenges faced by art history and curatorial disciplines to account for 'the contemporary', it makes sense to ask how can the two fields inform each other, particularly as the curatorial has entered the academy. How can curators and art historians alike, find a position that leverages the close access to artists that characterises contemporary research (studio visits, access to archives, interviews), and at the same time allows for

---

<sup>195</sup> Ibid: 91.

<sup>196</sup> Johanna Burton, 'A Questionnaire on "The Contemporary": 32 Responses', *October 130* (Fall 2009): 24.

<sup>197</sup> Joshua Shannon, 'A Questionnaire on "The Contemporary": 32 Responses', *October 130* (Fall 2009): 16

independent analysis and critique? How can art history utilise the abundance of curatorial work that already addresses local art practices and histories – to address Marsh’s concern for Australian visual culture and to generate the ‘building blocks’ for larger narratives that Barikin desires? Conversely, what can the bowerbird-like emerging discipline of the curatorial learn from art history’s visual analysis and attention to the object?

In his contribution to the *The Two Art Histories*, cultural historian Ivan Gaskell distinguished the two fields in simple terms: ‘While the university scholar uses reproductions and descriptions, albeit often in the light of direct experience of the works reproduced, to create interpretations in teaching and publications, the museum scholar uses works of art themselves to create visual discourse – which may be interpretative – in galleries.’<sup>198</sup>

Interdisciplinarity, on the rise in 1990s scholarship and art practice, as well as the confrontation that globalisation brought to history of all kinds, has forced art history to reconsider its bounds and assumptions since *The Two Art Histories* conference and publication. Echoes of these debates resonate more than two decades later in relation to curatorial pedagogy.

As an academic who made a shift from art history departments to running a graduate program in Curatorial Practices and the Public Sphere, Amelia Jones has recently argued that curatorial studies provides a better lens than art history from which to address art’s entrenchment ‘in the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, as well as in the contemporary manifestations of (late) capitalism’.<sup>199</sup> She concludes: ‘Art history as a discipline (particularly in the United States) has become too caught up in its own boundary-guarding strategies of defining its ‘proper’ field of practice (thereby ignoring or repressing rather than examining the pressures noted above) to assist in this project’.<sup>200</sup> More diplomatically, Johanna Burton has identified the division of art history and curating (particularly as the debate plays out as shifting trends in curatorial education), as indicative of a shift from a focus on (art historical) objects to a focus on (curatorial) ideas. She writes:

---

<sup>198</sup> Ivan Gaskell, ‘Magnanimity and Paranoia in the Big Bad Art World’, in Charles W. Haxthausen (ed.) *The Two Art Histories* (Williamstown: Clark Art Institute, 2002): 15

<sup>199</sup> Amelia Jones, ‘The Local versus the Global in Curating and Curatorial Pedagogy’, *Journal of Curatorial Studies* vol. 6, no. 2 (2017): 232.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*: 238.

The divide between what has come to be seen as curating that finds its footing in art history versus that which anchors to the vicissitudes of larger culture has increasingly yawned. To my mind it's a false divide, particularly since the version of art history I advocate is in and of itself indivisible from the analysis and contemplation of society, particularly in terms of its organization by way of class, gender, sexuality, and race.<sup>201</sup>

Given this PhD is one of the first to be undertaken in a Curatorial Practice program in an Australian university, such questions of curatorial scholarship and its relationship to other disciplines, primarily art history, are particularly pertinent. In a sense, my research project can be seen as both symptomatic of and responsive to (or perhaps opportunistic) the circumstances outlined above: I have used a curatorial research program to historicise a contemporary art practice, outside the norms of a traditional art history. In the case of my research project, the scope of curatorial practice within the academy has enabled the study of an artistic practice not significantly addressed by the art histories presented either in museums or universities. While Damp have a prolific exhibiting history, up to the time of this research project, their work has not been strongly represented in public collections, and they have not been subject of a monograph or institutional survey show.<sup>202</sup>

Damp's is a practice with collaborative authorship, and a body of work that has often taken non-material, performative, or social forms – particularly that of exchange between the artists and audiences. These factors pose challenges to both art history and exhibition-making. Paul O'Neill makes the point that even after four decades of institutional critique, 'the prevailing image of the artist is still one that adheres to a vanguard position for the artist as autonomous subject – an individual author'.<sup>203</sup> While for institutions, convening collaborative projects and forms of socially engaged practice, 'often places stressful demands on an institution and logistically challenges the roles we normally assign to artists and arts

---

<sup>201</sup> Johanna Burton, 'On Knot Curating', *The Exhibitionist* no.4 (June 2011): 52.

<sup>202</sup> Prior to this PhD project, Damp had one work in the collection of Heide Museum of Modern Art. After the program *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21* was presented on campus in 2016, the Monash University Collection acquired several works by Damp.

<sup>203</sup> Paul O'Neill, 'Group Practice', *Art Monthly* 304 (March, 2007): 10

workers'.<sup>204</sup> Fortunately, there is an archive of literature on Damp's practice in the form of catalogue essays, reviews and articles in independent publications. However, such materials are often all but lost from the public sphere as so much of art's unfolding discourse is poorly distributed, poorly collected by libraries, and not indexed. The rise of a generation of self-contextualising artists so prevalent in 1990s-2000s Melbourne, who ran galleries and published magazines, begins to beg the question: where does this archive of activity and material go two or three decades later? How does it enter into dialogue with the institutional or academic art history?

By embracing both art historical and pedagogical strategies within its curatorial framework, my project brought Damp's practice into the context of the university, as an object of study and research. Within the 'exhibition as study', Damp's own voice was one of many, alongside my own, other collaborators, and contributing cohorts. For example, the current members of Damp delivered an art forum lecture to MADA students and faculty in the first week of semester 2016, in which they each spoke on aspects of their practice, history and self-identified context. In part, this was an opportunity to pre-emptively challenge my curatorial use of the historicising timeline of their work which was displayed the following week. In this way, the exhibition as study model allowed for a disparity of material and interpretation to be given voice and visibility within the institution. This was achieved through my close working relationship with Damp as a curator (or, my *proximity* to my subject), and through the critical value of the pedagogical underpinning of the project.

Traditionally, the most significant curatorial treatment of the archive of an artistic practice is the survey or retrospective exhibition. It is an exhibition form that, like the monograph for art historians, raises questions of critical distance, and therefore, raises suspicions about critical value. The development of the survey exhibition genre is outlined below, followed by analysis of a selection of recent curatorial attempts to critique and reinvigorate the form

---

<sup>204</sup> Julia Bryan-Wilson, cited in Elizabeth M. Grady, Arden Sherman, Herb Tam, 'Research Convening: Perspectives on Exhibiting Social Practice in Museums', *Independent Curators International* (11 May 2017), accessed 10 July 2018, <http://curatorsintl.org/research/research-convening-perspectives-on-exhibiting-social-practice-in-museums>



– with particular attention to the respective curator’s positioning in terms of critical proximity.

### **The survey exhibition**

Part of the turn from the material object to the narrative as observed above by Burton, has included an emphasis or privileging, in the hierarchy of exhibition genres, of the thematic group exhibition over the solo show. Narratives and ideas, as authored by the curator, may be more overtly presented in a thematic exhibition. Whereas the curatorial ‘voice’ in a single artist exhibition, even surveys and retrospectives, takes a back seat and may even be considered unnecessary or a hindrance to the presentation of what is thought of as the unmediated solo show. Curator Rob Bowman argues against this in his essay ‘First Person Singular’, where he promotes the ‘less clearly individually owned or authored, and curatorially more interesting for it’ solo show.<sup>205</sup> Bowman’s argument, which draws largely on his experience working on solo artist projects with the London-based commissioning project Artangel, is antithetical to what he sees as the more commonly held notion that in comparison to the curated group show, solo shows are ‘straightforward and declamatory, a vehicle for the artist’s voice in the first person singular, unmediated by an underlying commentary or curatorial metatext’.<sup>206</sup>

Such privileging of the thematic group show over the solo show in terms of curatorial authority, has partly been inscribed by the emerging field of exhibition history. The history of curating and exhibitions has been growing since the early 1980s (emerging alongside the development of curatorial training programs and the ‘rise of the curator’ in contemporary art). As a field, exhibition history is an amendment to traditional art historical methodologies, with a focus on the public presentation of art as mediated narratives organised around events in time. Yet, as curator João Ribas points out, that history has been largely written around a single typology, ‘that of the “paradigm shifting” group exhibition’,

---

<sup>205</sup> Rob Bowman, ‘First Person Singular’, *The Exhibitionist* 1 (2010): 36.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

and overlooks the solo exhibition form.<sup>207</sup> Even though the solo exhibition is ubiquitous in contemporary art institutions and the most common form through which artists' work is presented and assessed, it is invisible in the discourse, 'remarkably unconsidered and under-theorized', repressed by the dominant narratives of the biennial or group exhibition.<sup>208</sup>

In tracing a history of the form, Ribas positions the solo show as an act of resistance, citing examples of early modern painters in Europe beginning to present showings of their collected works in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. He identifies the Irish painter Nathaniel Hone as perhaps the first to self-organise an exhibition and accompanying catalogue of works spanning his career, in London in 1775. Having had his work rejected by the Royal Academy, Hone presented his work in this way as a direct appeal to the public to 'whose candour and judgment' he was 'submitting himself and his art'.<sup>209</sup> In this way, this prototypical solo survey show can be seen as an attempt to assert independence and reject or sidestep institutions such as the Royal Academy for artistic (and commercial) validation and opportunity. Hone, and the more famous example of Gustave Courbet pitching a tent outside the 1855 *Universal Exposition*, positioned the solo exhibition from the start as 'directly tied to the need for alternative models to resist such centralized forms for the reception and consumption of art, which afforded both legitimacy and economic support'.<sup>210</sup> While finding a way to resist the dominant system of art at the time, these alternative models also began to put in place conventions for the solo show as form.

Ribas goes on to discuss the solo show in the contemporary context as a 'repressed' form, noting that its evolution and conventions have been little considered. He cites curator Robert Storr as having identified some of the tacit or implied conventions of the genre as involving: chronology, connoisseurship, evaluation and mediation. In terms of evaluation, Storr notes that the mere fact of the show itself is a marker of assessment, and significantly, that by their

---

<sup>207</sup> Joao Ribas, 'On the Solo Show: From Resistance to Repression', in Paul O'Neill, Mick Wilson, Lucy Steeds (eds), *The Curatorial Conundrum: What to study? What to research? What to practice?* (LUMA Foundation & The Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 2016): 86.

<sup>208</sup> Joao Ribas, 'On the Solo Show: From Resistance to Repression': 86.

<sup>209</sup> Nathaniel Hone, cited in Joao Ribas, 'On the Solo Show: From Resistance to Repression': 88.

<sup>210</sup> Joao Ribas, 'On the Solo Show: From Resistance to Repression': 90.

very nature these shows are ‘almost always, hagiographic’.<sup>211</sup> Keeping in mind the beginnings of the solo show, as an act of the artist circumventing the institution to make a direct presentation to the public, we can see how an expectation of the solo show as an unmediated presentation of the pure artist’s voice would persist. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev has described curatorial self-effacement as common when working on a solo show, as a way of ‘paying penance for the excessive role of the curator today’.<sup>212</sup> Between the ‘self-effacement’ of the curator, and the ‘hagiography’ of the solo show, the genre can fall into a category of uncritical and uncertain purpose and the question of critical distance again arises. It is a question that several curators, institutions and artists have addressed through practice, working from various positions on a spectrum of distance and proximity to the subject in retrospective exhibitions.

Working in the mode of curatorial ‘self-effacement’, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 2016 mounted a retrospective of Kai Althoff in which the artist aimed to ‘seize all powers of selection and interpretation from the museum and anyone who represented it’.<sup>213</sup> Curator Laura Hoptman describes her role in this exhibition as being ‘complicit’ with the artist. In a reflection on her curatorial process, Hoptman highlights the reluctance of many artists to take part in museum retrospectives, noting that for some it is ‘torturous: a psychically painful exposure to a potentially judgemental, indifferent, or even hostile public. Or, maybe worse, a misrepresentation by the very institution that claims to honour them’.<sup>214</sup> In seeking an alternative to these possible outcomes, Hoptman enabled Althoff to author his own retrospective, repositioning her curatorial role as the artist’s ‘accomplice’ and aiming to ‘create the most completely artist-driven show that MoMA had ever produced’.<sup>215</sup> A radical end-game of the curatorial-effacement Christov-Bakargiev describes, this exhibition enacts a total collapse of critical distance as the institution steps aside and lets the artist self-curate. As such, MoMA and Hoptman’s objective was clearly never about critical distance or a critique of the artist’s practice, and the result is an altogether different (sub-)genre than the

---

<sup>211</sup> Robert Storr, cited in Joao Ribas, ‘On the Solo Show: From Resistance to Repression’: 87.

<sup>212</sup> Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, cited in Joao Ribas, ‘On the Solo Show: From Resistance to Repression’: 87

<sup>213</sup> Laura Hoptman, ‘Complicit’, *The Exhibitionist* (23 May 2017), accessed 10 July 2018, <http://the-exhibitionist.com/articles/rear-mirror/complicit>

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

retrospective, one that prioritised one of Althoff's 'most powerful mediums', the display format.

Critics described the installation (which excised any institutional narration in the form of wall labels or chronology, and gave the artist control over the catalogue, press releases, advertisements et al) as a *gesamtkunstwerk*, and a form of self-portraiture.<sup>216</sup> However, many were very critical of the institution's abdication of their duties to edit and mediate, Ariella Budick described the exhibition as 'sloppy', 'chaotic', and a 'retrospective in the form of a tantrum';<sup>217</sup> while Ken Johnson wrote the exhibition was a 'shambles' and concluded the artist was given 'too much freedom'.<sup>218</sup> Budick contextualises the exhibition in relation to MoMA's emerging policy of curatorial passivity, citing retrospectives of Sigmar Polke (2014), Christopher Williams (2014) and Walid Raad (2015-16), that also gave little navigational information to audiences, and sees the Althoff exhibition as taking this 'obfuscation to new extremes'.<sup>219</sup> The exhibition is the epitome of the unmediated 'first person singular' form of the solo show that privileges the artist's voice. The invitation from MoMA to the artist, and their support of Althoff's hijacking of the traditional museum retrospective, was the extent of any curatorial authorship.

The Artist's Institute, discussed briefly in previous chapters, has also modelled an alternative version of the retrospective. Rather than taking form as one monographic exhibition, the Institute would work with one artist's practice for a six-month season. The Institute deploys the paracuratorial to present a season of events and exhibitions around the artist's practice, alongside a graduate seminar for MFA and MA students at Hunter College. Jenny Jaskey,

---

<sup>216</sup> See: 'Kai Althoff: and then leave me to the common swifts', *The New Yorker*, accessed 10 July 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/art/kai-althoff-and-then-leave-me-to-the-common-swifts-und-dann-uberlasst-mich-den-mauerseglern>, and Ariella Budick, 'Kai Althoff at the Museum of Modern Art, New York – "Chaotic"', *The Financial Times* (3 October 2016), accessed 10 July 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/b3e49f5e-8560-11e6-8897-2359a58ac7a5>.

<sup>217</sup> Ariella Budick, 'Kai Althoff at the Museum of Modern Art, New York – "Chaotic"', <https://www.ft.com/content/b3e49f5e-8560-11e6-8897-2359a58ac7a5>.

<sup>218</sup> Ken Johnson, 'The Paintings are Delicate. The Show's a Shambles.', *The New York Times* (22 September 2016), accessed 10 July 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/23/arts/design/the-paintings-are-delicate-the-shows-a-shambles.html>

<sup>219</sup> Ariella Budick, 'Kai Althoff at the Museum of Modern Art, New York – "Chaotic"', <https://www.ft.com/content/b3e49f5e-8560-11e6-8897-2359a58ac7a5>.

who has been Director of The Artist's Institute since 2015, describes a close working relationship between the artist and curator, in which the curator has complete access to the artist to develop a program exploring their 'cosmos' of practice – 'their whole world not just the thing they make'.<sup>220</sup> The curator's proximity to the artist, necessitated by the structure and duration of the program, enables a deep level of engagement and access to be passed on to the graduate seminar cohort and broader audiences. However, it also means Jaskey is unable to curate the program in any way that the artist would not support or approve of, as she says, 'the programming is in line with something the artist would love, because why would you do something they wouldn't love'.<sup>221</sup> While the artist works in a collaborative way with the curator in this case, as opposed having complete control as in the example of Althoff at MoMA, there is still a degree of prioritising the artist's voice and self-contextualisation.

Curator Elena Filipovic incorporated other artists into her retrospective of Felix Gonzalez-Torres which was staged three times in different venues.<sup>222</sup> At each iteration of the retrospective, Filipovic invited an artist to reinstall the exhibition inviting multiple curatorial viewpoints and interpretations of the work. Artists Danh Vo, Tino Sehgal and Carol Bove each presented a version of the touring retrospective. In this way, the curator opened up Gonzalez-Torres' body of work to other artists, raising questions of how an artist's legacy is made or presented, and by whom. It is also an example of a curatorial strategy of delegating the act of interpretation or artistic license to artists, as is seen through the practice of museums enabling artists to rehang collections as a form of 'intervention'. By taking away the dominant creative role of curatorial work, the logic or 'hang' of the exhibition itself, Filipovic instead facilitates other artists to critique or respond to Gonzalez-Torres' work.

Directed by curators and art historians Shelly Bancroft and Peter Nesbett, Triple Candie operated as a gallery in Harlem, New York, 2001-2010, and since then have presented projects in museums and galleries by invitation. Initially established as a conventional non-

---

<sup>220</sup> Jenny Jaskey, in interview with the author, 21 May 2015.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Specific Objects Without Specific Form* was staged at Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, the Foundation Beyeler, Basel, and the Museum fur Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt in 2010-11.

profit alternative art space, Triple Candie changed direction in 2005 when they began to deploy a range of curatorial strategies and methods that can be seen to operate within the field of institutional critique and aimed to disrupt gallery conventions. Throughout their programming and projects post-2005, Triple Candie approached exhibition making with many unconventional methods, most significantly through their decision to produce 'exhibitions about art but largely devoid of it'.<sup>223</sup> By doing this, Triple Candie have been able to critique the role of artists, art institutions, art historical tropes, and exhibition genres. In particular, they have interrogated the model of the survey show, mounting a series of unauthorised retrospectives of artists, and one retrospective of an entirely fictional artist.

In the 2006 exhibition *Lester Hayes: Selected Work, 1962-1975*, Triple Candie presented the imagined work of a fictional artist. Constructing an entire biography and exhibition history, Hayes was portrayed by Triple Candie as recently deceased, an influential but unrecognised post-minimalist of African American and Italian American descent, whose entire oeuvre was lost in a tragic fire which marked the early end of his art career.<sup>224</sup> Given the plot device of the fire, Triple Candie found themselves at liberty to recreate the artist's works 'with the permission of the artist's estate'.<sup>225</sup> Generating an entire archive of work, ephemera and detail around the artist, Triple Candie played into the genre of artist biographies as 'pioneering tales' that function as 'modern social creation myths'.<sup>226</sup> By positing works similar to but pre-dating works by acclaimed artists such as Bruce Nauman and Richard Tuttle, the exhibition also delved into the politics of influence and originality, with the added complexity of racial politics and recognition. Reviewing the exhibition, critic Holland Cotter was prompted to ask: 'is contemporary art largely a promotional scam'? And are Triple Candie 'themselves perpetrators of a scam? Or are they critical thinkers working in an alternative direction to the market economy?'<sup>227</sup> Regardless, the artist, as realised by the

---

<sup>223</sup> Triple Candie, 'Purposes', accessed 30 June 2014, <http://triplecandie.org/About%20Purposes.html>

<sup>224</sup> Triple Candie, 'Lester Hayes: Selected Work, 1962-1975', accessed 30 June 2014, <http://triplecandie.org/Archive%202006%20Lester%20Hayes.html>

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Sara Hines, 'Post-postmodernism and the archive: uncertain identities and "forgotten" legacies', *Afterimage* 35 no.3 (November/December 2007): 24

<sup>227</sup> Holland Cotter, 'A promise that never bloomed, a post-minimalist you've never heard of', *The New York Times* (16 January 2007): E3

curators in this project, is shown to be a vehicle for market-driven cliché, myth, biases and sales pitches.

Also in 2006, Triple Candie presented two of the three unauthorised retrospectives that they have become most commonly associated with: *David Hammons: The Unauthorized Retrospective* and *Cady Noland Approximately: Sculpture and Editions, 1984-2000*. The third exhibition in this category, *Maurizio Cattelan is Dead: Life & Work, 1960-2009*, followed in 2009. Through these retrospectives, which were made with no involvement of the artist subjects or their representatives, Triple Candie delivered a mix of irreverence, serious critique, and sincere homage. Initially motivated by a desire to show the work of Hammons and Noland – both influential artists yet reclusive and often unwilling to exhibit – the curators had to develop methods of representing the artists' practices without access to original artworks. In the case of Hammons, documentation became the method, his work shown in the form of photocopies and computer printouts of reproductions found in catalogues, websites and magazines, mounted with black tape onto sheets of plywood. Representing (albeit in varying degrees of quality) around 100 works in chronological order, the exhibition would be a near impossibility to realise with the original pieces.

Hammons, having a reputation himself as an art trickster, was suspected by some to be secretly behind the Triple Candie exhibition. While this was not the case, a reviewer commented that the 'unorthodox show was oddly in sync with Mr Hammons's own oeuvre, raising interesting questions about art and representation, reproduction and authorship'.<sup>228</sup> Certainly the art market's fetishisation of the original art object and issues of access are highlighted in an exhibition of photocopied documentation, but the show also brought a classroom aesthetic referencing methods of education and dissemination. Reflecting on their use of common materials in their exhibitions, Triple Candie have cited a desire to connect with a local (Harlem based) community audience, by using an aesthetic that might be familiar and accessible:

---

<sup>228</sup> Martha Schwendener, 'Limelight', *The New York Times* (2 March 2007): E30

In order to establish a connection or relationship, the materials that we wanted to use, by and large, we were very careful to not make anything seem too precious or rarefied, so that the feeling in the gallery, or the materials on view, everything, was a bit more quotidian.<sup>229</sup>

In contrast to the documentation of Hammons' work, *Cady Noland Approximately* consisted of replicas of Noland's works – sculptural objects made by Triple Candie and collaborators based on source images of Noland originals. Rather than faithful reproductions, the objects were merely approximate, visual stand-ins or gestures of the inaccessible art works they referenced. Generally received with less good-humour than the Hammons retrospective, this exhibition was described in *The New York Times* as an 'attention-seeking stunt', critic Ken Johnson going on to say, 'No one who values Ms. Noland's work is going to care about seeing inexact substitutes, and no serious critical judgments about her art should be based on such ersatz objects'.<sup>230</sup> Similarly, Jerry Saltz in *The Village Voice* reviewed the show as 'a slap in the face' suggesting that, 'if I were Cady Noland I'd think about getting a lawyer to get medieval on Triple Candie'.<sup>231</sup> That the use of recreations, which did not claim to be originals, caused such fervent responses speaks to the expectations of an art experience and was perhaps confounded by the fact that Noland had distanced herself from the art world, having not exhibited in more than ten years at the time of Triple Candie's project.<sup>232</sup>

*Maurizio Cattelan is Dead*, presented in 2009, combined both methods of representation explored in the Hammons and Noland shows – showing extensive documentation, photocopies and ephemera, alongside approximate recreations of Cattelan's works. The exhibition took the museum display tactic further, organising ephemera and wall texts in the form of a biographical timeline. Again highlighting the impact of the mythologised artist figure, the anthropological approach was presented in a thorough but witty and scrappy

---

<sup>229</sup> Peter Nesbett, in interview with the author, 5 August 2015.

<sup>230</sup> Ken Johnson, 'Cady Noland Approximately', *The New York Times* (12 May 2006): E23

<sup>231</sup> Jerry Saltz, 'Invasion of the art snatchers: unintentionally playing the roles of Rupert Pupkin and Masha in *The King of Comedy*', *The Village Voice* (17-23 May 2006), accessed 30 June 2014, <http://triplecandie.org/Triple%20Candie%20About%20Press%20Cady%20Voice%20051706.html>

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.



manner, and received the following criticism: 'This show looks as if it had been produced by nerdy, ham-fisted high school students, making it too easy to dismiss as the sour grapes of envious outsiders'.<sup>233</sup> Other critics, and Cattelan himself, took a more favourable view of the exhibition. The project is the only one of the unauthorised retrospectives to have elicited a response from the artist-subject, Cattelan apparently visiting the exhibition and eventually parlaying its acquisition into the collection of the Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art in Athens after it was restaged there in 2010.<sup>234</sup>

While both Hammons and Noland are reclusive figures who are known to exert extensive control over the presentation of their works, Cattelan made for a far more ubiquitous and social art-world subject. In part, the unauthorised exhibitions can be seen as curatorial wish-fulfillment and primarily aimed to provide public access to significant artistic practices. Questioned on the ethics of presenting exhibitions without the blessing of the artist-subjects, Triple Candie have argued, 'we were determined to put the needs of the public over the desires of an individual artist. Depending on where you stand on the issue, this could be seen as either tabloid- or activist-curating'.<sup>235</sup> While displaying extensive scholarship and research towards educational goals by making materials accessible and providing extensive wall texts, the exhibitions also critique the model of the retrospective, which Triple Candie sees as inherently absurd, and 'usually hagiographic enterprises that seek to minimize any true critical investigation of their subjects'.<sup>236</sup> As Australian curator Alana Kushnir has pointed out, the stance also targets 'the commonly accepted ethical rights of artists to control the presentation of their work in public' – something of a sacred cow of curatorial practice it is no wonder the results have received a mixed and controversial response.<sup>237</sup> The use of documentation and reproductions also brings into question the fetishisation of the object and the original – the domain of the commodity art market, substituting it instead with a fetishisation of the reproduction and the archive – tools of education.

---

<sup>233</sup> Ken Johnson, 'Art in review', *The New York Times* (7 August 2009): C27

<sup>234</sup> Becky Huff Hunter, 'Infectious sovereignty: editorializing the exhibition', *Art Papers* (March/April 2012), accessed 30 June 2014, <http://triplecandie.org/About%20Press%20artpapers%20March2012.html>

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Triple Candie, 'David Hammons: The Unauthorized Retrospective', accessed 30 June 2014, <http://triplecandie.org/Archive%202006%20Hammons.html>

<sup>237</sup> Alana Kushnir, 'When Curating Meets Piracy: Rehashing the History of Unauthorized Exhibition-Making', *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 1, no.3 (2012): 303.

Triple Candie enact a performed critique through the exhibition form. Working from the traditional art historian's position of critical distance, Triple Candie have found it necessary to distance themselves from artist in order to produce their exhibitions with independence and objectivity. However, for all their focus on the audience's experience and creating access to inaccessible practices and narratives, they also maintain a distance from the artwork; in many cases they do not provide audience access to artworks, rather the idea or simulacra of an artwork.

What is useful in the above examples, is the attention given to the survey show genre and the attempts to innovate it. Whether by inviting artists to rehang or respond to the initial exhibition, through paracuratorial and discursive strategies, or by rejecting the artist-subject's own involvement in the show, each have grappled with the relationship and distance between curator and artist-subject in a solo survey show. With the exception of Triple Candie, each of the above curatorial approaches privilege the artist and artistic intent over the artwork. Hence the radicality of Triple Candie's provocation. However, in my view, their strategy is an unsustainable model as they dispense not only with artists but with artworks. While describing their work as driven by educational motivations, Triple Candie arguably distance the artwork at a further remove from their audiences. Bringing pedagogical objectives into a curatorial practice should open up a work to critique, but should also bring a close understanding and enriched knowledge.

### **Historicising a contemporary practice**

In my own project, *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21*, my relationship as curator to the artist-subject Damp, was complicated and enriched by the fact of the program involving both a collaborative commissioning project and a historical survey. It was also disrupted by the fact of Damp comprising multiple individual members – four currently, but over seventy across the lifespan of their practice. A close proximity and high level of access with the current members of Damp was necessitated by the working relationship. This closeness was imperative to the curatorial process (in gaining access to artworks and archives, and in working together over a year to produce the iterative

commissioned work *Gormenghast*). As Jenny Jaskey has noted regarding her program at Hunter College, it also provided the opportunity to share that access with students, making the close proximity between curator and artist a valuable tool to the pedagogical process.

While a traditional art historical position would hold that this lack of distance between curator and artist would imply an impossibility of criticality, I would argue that the benefits of proximity in terms of access and pedagogy both outweighs and sidesteps this concern. But before even making that response, it is worth noting again, that the concept of critical distance rests, at best, on shaky ground.

My working relationship with Damp, my *proximity* to my subject, afforded me the trust necessary for unfiltered access to the artist's archive for both my research and presentation of works on campus throughout 2016. Damp's archive is not without its complexities. Having shared and moved studio spaces a number of times over the course of two decades, during one move in 2010, an entire set of plan drawers was lost (or mistakenly thrown out) including its contents: a rich archive of ephemera and careful recording of group meetings, plans and processes, which had been maintained primarily by Sharon Goodwin since Damp's beginnings. Fortunately, and despite this devastating event, artworks and documentation (variously in slide, print, video and digital formats) has largely been retained by the current members and was made available to me. Given the power of the archive to determine narratives, interpretation and history, the leap of faith required of a living artist (or group) to provide such access to a researcher or curator should not be underestimated. In the book *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, editor (and artist member of Group Material) Julie Ault reflected on the challenges, and her personal grappling with, the very idea of working with the archive of Group Material's practice and history:

Institutionalising the archive implied closing down, or 'closing the casket', but simultaneously involves opening up and multiplication through use and interpretation. The archive is a primary source for potentially infinite production of history. The archive relocates agency from Group Material as working entity to others

who activate its bodies of information. Institutionalisation also entails a reassignment or sharing of authority.<sup>238</sup>

My focus, as discussed in *Chapter two: Audience as cohort*, was to provide access and proximity to Damp's practice primarily to small participatory audiences. Without repeating this material, I will point to the regularly changing display of works throughout studio spaces, corridors and in *Gormenghast* as part of the Damp Study Group series of weekly seminars, as one key way in which works were made present. Beyond these informal displays of works, I also curated the exhibition *Damp Video: what we want movies to be and do*, presented in the temporary MADA Gallery space (in building G, room G134), 25 July – 7 August, 2016. This exhibition brought together works from Damp's archive that engaged with narrative, elements of the performative or playful, involving amateur costuming and props. My selection and installation of works echoed the display devices and provisional ethics found in Damp's exhibition history, utilising studio furniture and materials at hand on campus to present video, photographs and drawings.

By working in the mode of the 'exhibition as study', *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21* presented a curatorial version of contemporary art history, through animating Damp's archive, framing their practice in a way that echoed their own artistic strategies and was narrated and interpreted by multiple voices. The artists' own voices were present in the form of the current members of Damp presenting a lecture and workshops, and through their ongoing work on *Gormenghast*, however Damp were not closely involved in the other presentations of their work or archive contextualised by myself as curator, or in the responses to it by the student cohort or Artmeet ARI, which were equally present in the program. Situated in the context of a university art school, the project not only considered the relationship of the curatorial to art history, as discussed earlier in this chapter, but also the relationship of art school education and students to art history – specifically to contemporary and local art history.

---

<sup>238</sup> Julie Ault, *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (London: Four Corners Books, 2010): 57.

A key way the project did this was with direct reference to Damp's work *Tension: the '80s*, 1996. Installed in a corridor at Monash University as part of the Next Wave Festival 1996, this work was one of Damp's first public exhibitions. The work took the Australian art magazine *Tension* as a starting point, using pages from its issue documenting the 1980s decade of Australian art and artists, to construct a haphazard timeline along the corridor windows of the Fine Art building D2. Damp, young art students at the time, inserted objects and memorabilia from their own lives alongside the icons of art and art history they had studied through magazines and at art school. In so doing, Damp asked what would their place be within a narrative of Australian art history, cheekily inserting their everyday lives into the received canon of an older generation of artists. Twenty years later, in February 2016, working with participants of the Damp Camp Studio Workshop, I installed a timeline documenting Damp's own practice in the same corridor. As one of the first presentations of the project *Art holds a high place in my life*, the timeline was an opportunity to outline Damp's practice and history to students and faculty as an unobtrusive presence, embedded in the open space of the studio corridor. The installation operated as an illustrative companion to the artists' Artforum lunchtime lecture given at the beginning of the academic year in 2016.

*Art holds a high place in my life (timeline)* was installed for three weeks at the beginning of the project. Ideally, had a more permanent location been available, it would have formed the backdrop to the rest of the program, with the opportunity to edit, add, question and respond to the timeline over the duration of the exhibition as study. Instead, it is proposed that the examination exhibition in the new MADA Gallery will return to this chronological display structure, and build towards a catalogue raisonné in exhibition form. This repetition, reprising a key element of the 2016 project and echoing an early work by Damp, mines the artists' archive and opens it up for response and activation over the course of the three-week exhibition.

As a processual and unedited presentation of Damp's entire archive of available works, the 2018 examination exhibition will provide a further instance of putting the process of study on display. This final iteration of *Art holds a high place in my life* aims to act as both a coda to, and a culmination of, the 2016 exhibition as study. While working with Damp as both

collaborating artist and subject of study, I have remained in close proximity with my subject, enabling a depth of access to their work for the participating audience cohorts, and through opening their archive to response from these cohorts, have also enabled a form of critical and collective study to take place. The exhibition as study can be seen as a form of para-art history, providing an opportunity to develop scholarship around an artist's practice through a collective and visible act of study, rather than through a selective or singularly authored, potentially hagiographic, retrospective. The exhibition as study lends itself to the temporal rhythms of the university art school, to the role of the curatorial within the university, and to the contribution of para-art histories. Importantly, this form of curatorial study as a para-art history also allows for localised narratives which address the social history, context and reception of artworks and artist's practices, and pushes back against the conventions of a traditionally defined art history.



Fig 32: Damp *Untitled* 1996 installed in *Gormenghast*, 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley.





## Conclusion

### *Objectives and guidelines*

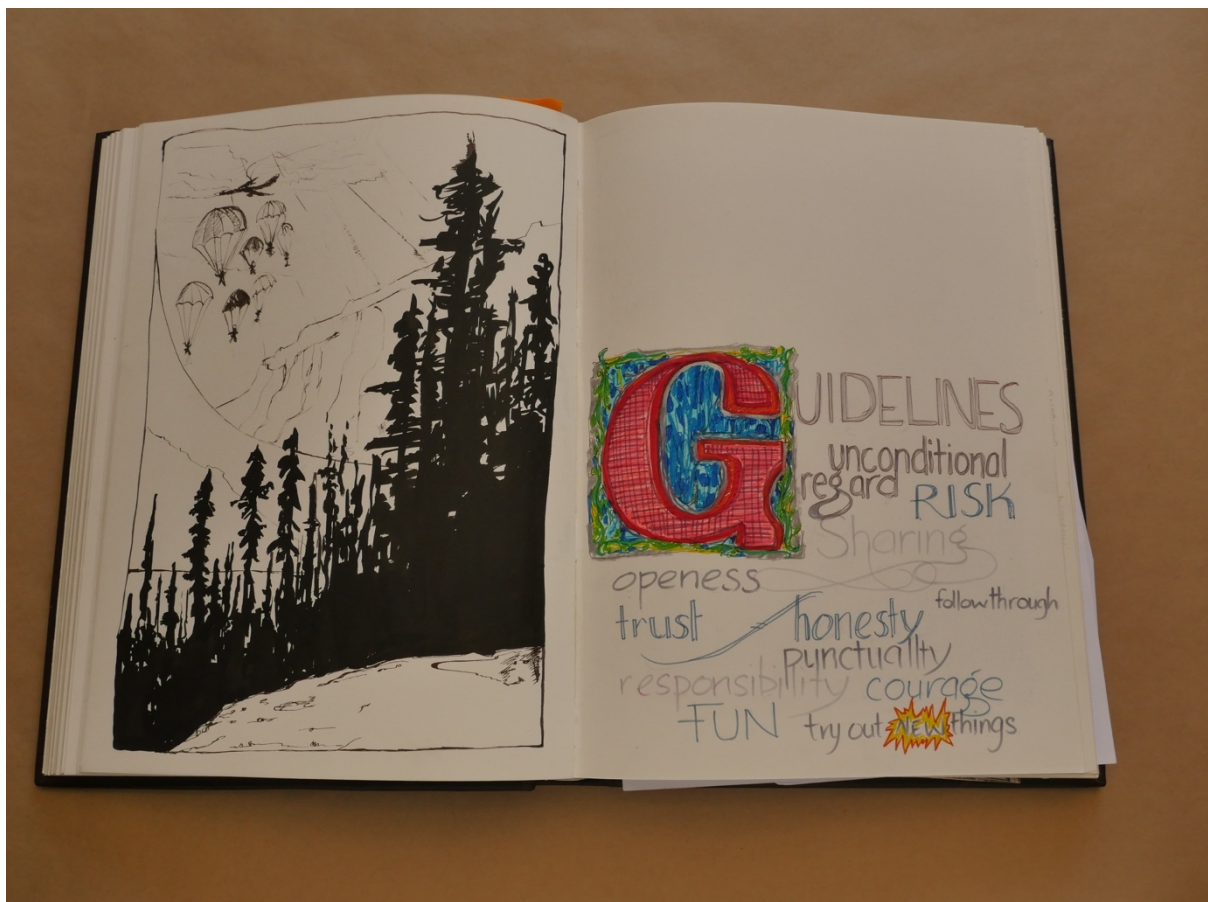


Fig 34: Damp, *Book of Shadows* 2005-ongoing (detail), pages showing notation of 'Guidelines'.

# Final Objectives. 18/03/01

## On the Jazz

- momentum
- focussed
- awareness
- embrace challenge
- unconditional regard.
- fun.
- adrenalin
- improvisation - within structure

## Kick Arse

- application of how we apply ourselves at a high level - quality presentation.
- our experience
- being direct
- making contact

## • EXTEND COMFORT

(risk) extend range of comfort (personal w in group.)

expansion + growth via risk

listening

be self w in group

honesty

## • LOUD VOICE

- more contact.
- being heard
- far-reaching
- powerful energy.

## • FUN

Fig 33: 'Final Objectives', 18 March 2001, group notation on A2 sheet of paper. Damp's Archive.

Through practice and exegesis, this PhD has modelled a curatorial methodology of exhibition as study. Through the 2016 project *Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21* and as reprised in the 2018 examination exhibition, I have presented what I term a 'study' of Damp's practice. Inserting the study into the university art school, the project tested the institution as a site for artistic production and curatorial work. Further, it experimented with modes of shared ownership within the institution, responsive programming open to participatory contributions, and an elongated program developed around the study of one artistic practice. Throughout the project, the curatorial form followed that of its subject, by echoing strategies and processes found in Damp's artistic practice.

Having set out to seek a crucial role for the curatorial within the university, this research project has delivered both pedagogic and public outcomes, and in so doing, brought the two activities which would rightly be the domain of the university art school gallery closer together: education and curating. It was my initial intention to exploit the proximity of education and production taking place in studios, alongside the display and presentation taking place in the co-located faculty gallery, in effect investigating a nascent notion of a 'teaching gallery'. As it happened, my project operated largely outside the university art school gallery, and instead utilised the artwork *Gormenghast* as a para-site, as well as temporary gallery spaces, corridors, loading bays and studios. It is only in the final presentation of this PhD in 2018 that the MADA Gallery has been relocated and reformed – granting it the potential to function as an exhibition space fully integrated into the fabric of the research, teaching and learning of the faculty (although not necessarily with the resources or directive to do so).<sup>239</sup>

---

<sup>239</sup> MADA Gallery opened in a newly designed and renovated space in the Fine Art building D in October 2017 with the exhibition *John Baldessari: Wall Painting*, which invited students to participate in a previously unrealised Baldessari work by painting a wall of the gallery in a new colour each day of the exhibition. In 2018 MADA Gallery, which is managed by faculty administrative staff, issued an open call for external exhibition proposals to augment its program of PhD examination shows in 2019.

As discussed in *Chapter one: Gormenghast and the university art school as site*, the iterative architectural work by Damp and MAP displayed a demarcated form of collaboration between the two groups and through various uses of the work. In this way, the work itself was illustrative of the cooperative yet boundary-keeping sense of ownership that was the extent of the collaboration achieved across the various commissioning and hosting parties of MADA, MAP, and MUMA. While very modest funds could be raised within the university on short notice to build the public sculpture, much less could be raised to deliver any program it would host: mirroring the prioritisation of capital works on university campuses currently seen around Australia. While the experience of developing and presenting *Gormenghast* was instructive and enabled this research project to illuminate aspects of producing art and curatorial work within the university art school, it could not fill the breach of the absent MADA Gallery. Thus, my initial question of how might a university art school gallery bring together shared curatorial and pedagogical programming in the form of a teaching gallery, was met with institutional challenges that meant my research took place outside the gallery. By necessity, my project was instead primarily located in the highly visible and every-changing *Gormenghast*, and embedded through the fabric of the campus teaching, studio and incidental spaces. There remains scope for further research into programming a 'teaching gallery' within a more consistent exhibition space. This might be particularly relevant for universities where curatorial studies programs are taught, however the process of testing work in public through exhibition and display, is crucial for any creative practice.

This research project has found that working within the contemporary university art school as a site for production, has (in this case, but not unusually so) meant working in an environment of ongoing change – most visibly in terms of campus construction, but also as represented in corporate branding makeovers, and academic and institutional realignments. As such, the project itself has taken a responsive and adaptive curatorial approach – shrinking and expanding to fill spaces on campus as and when available, using materials found on campus as exhibition furniture, working with anyone who chose to respond to the project and opted-in to the various avenues for participation. Fortunately for the conceptual coherence of my project, this was also in keeping with strategies occasionally found in

Damp's practice. For example, when working on the 2001 solo exhibition *What we want, what we'll do for it* at Artspace in Sydney, Damp decided to arrive and make the exhibition in situ over a period of ten days, treating the installation period as a mini-residency, and relying on encounters with strangers to enable the development of work. Indeed, Damp also initiated the particular form of institutional collaboration taken on in my project, through their decision to work with MAP on the architectural commission which eventuated as *Gormenghast*. This is one of many examples in this project in which I have taken my curatorial cues from Damp's practice, with the aim that the form of the study could match its subject.

Damp have been an ideal foil and subject for this project. Established in 1995, the group's historical trajectory aligns with the timeline of social and participatory practices emerging as a dominant thread in contemporary practice of the 1990s, and the subsequent 'turn' in contemporary art toward pedagogy in the 2000s. As seen in *Chapter two: audience as cohort*, Damp are themselves the unexpectedly long-lasting result of a class project, initiated through the pedagogical experiments of artist-educator Geoff Lowe. The group emerged, and committed to stay together, as a salve to the perceived individualism and competitiveness characteristic of 1990s Australian art schools, many at that point having been recently been amalgamated into the university sector. Damp's overarching project in the 1990s was to create a model of an audience. The very act of collaboration itself was, for Damp, a form of audience-making. From works such as *Cheersquad*, 1997, in which Damp embody the role of an audience, to a series of micro-exchanges between artists and audience in works including *Clothing Exchange*, 1997, Damp have sought to 'democratise' art, in the sense of making it less elitist and more accessible. Twenty-one years after Damp formed, contemporary art is far more readily accessible to a broad public, and the question of access again finds a valuable model in the audience as cohort.

Just as my project did not attempt to present a definitive retrospective survey show of Damp, the exegesis has not set out to document a complete monographic history of Damp. Rather, the PhD aimed to work creatively with the group's body of work, processes and history, as a framework and case study for the research project. However, in doing so, my research has

also contributed to the field of literature on Damp, which is otherwise limited to a number of short form catalogue essays and magazine articles and reviews. Through the exegesis, Damp's practice and history has served as a lens from which to view the university art school as a site for artistic production and collective study, strategies for engaging located cohorts as audiences with both pedagogical and public outcomes, and the limitations and challenges of survey exhibitions as modes of critique.

As well as bringing the shared attention of the primary audience on campus at MADA to Damp's processes and practice, my study draws attention to Damp as a group that has held a significant place in the recent and local contemporary art field. Despite being a group that has had an impact and influence encompassing a generation of Melbourne artists, up until the time of this project, they have not been subject of a museum survey show or monograph, or significantly collected by institutions. There is vast scope for further and continuing study and appraisal of Damp, particularly as an early proponent of socially engaged practice in Australia in the 1990s, and as one of the longest running multi-member artist groups in the country. My project has made a start for future researchers to build on, by bringing critical attention to Damp's work, documenting their early history, and by gathering literature and archival material (including, through the process of the examination exhibition, developing a catalogue raisonné and archival inventory). Both the exegesis and the practice have taken what might be termed a para-art historical approach to contribute scholarship to a local contemporary practice that has been somewhat marginal to museum or academic art histories.

Through the duration of the 2016 project, I found that working with small audience groups as cohorts to develop aspects of a curatorial program, is an effective way to develop community and shared ownership over time. Establishing means for motivated students (and staff) to opt-in to a form of participation and to contribute to curatorial projects has the potential to both enliven a campus and extend the focus of study, within an institutional setting that did not provide such opportunities either through curriculum or the under-resourced faculty gallery programming. My adoption of this approach, primarily through Damp Camp and Damp Study Group, was ideally suited to a study of Damp's practice, as it

mirrored to an extent their own working methods and history. The exhibition as study enabled the cohort of students to have a depth of engagement with Damp's practice that was largely unmediated and direct, but without Damp taking on the role of teacher. To some extent Damp operated as an artist-in-residence, regularly inhabiting the campus to produce new work, and through the constant presence of their works in various modes of display or exhibition over the year. The familiarity this style of programming can generate over time between the student cohort and the artists' work, is a valuable curatorial tool worthy of further experimentation – particularly when presenting works that do not fall into an easily exhibitable object-based category.

A working process that was fundamental to Damp's establishment, and perhaps their longevity, has been the group's practice of writing 'objectives and guidelines'. This tactic was adopted from the format of psychotherapy groups, in which the group members would spend time formulating and articulating what they wanted to achieve together and what could be agreed on. Damp's objectives and guidelines over the years can be seen as statements of intent or aspirations. Following this model, with its pedagogical leanings and self-reflexivity, I have listed below my own lessons learnt through this research project. This list can be read as a form of 'notes to self', as practical notes on the exhibition as study, or avenues for further experimentation.

*Use the institution, before the institution uses you*

- Collaboration within the university art school is possible, but should always be broached as occurring on uneven and unequal terms. Different departments and individual colleagues may have naturally aligning interests that bring them together around a project, yet there will also be structural hierarchies and competing financial or 'branding' agendas that may create a power imbalance between collaborators. The roles in a seemingly parasitical relationship between project and institution can quickly be flipped.



*Trust the audience, invite them to speak*

- The dispersal of curatorial ownership can be leveraged to create a sense of community and cultivate subsequent audiences. Students were more enthusiastic than anticipated to 'opt-in' to participatory extra-curricular projects and naturally adopted a role as advocates, spreading word of the project to their peers and micro-networks throughout the faculty and campus.
- Both Damp Camp and Damp Study Group illustrate methods in which a curriculum (in this case informal and unassessed, but not necessarily so) can be developed alongside and integrated into curated public-facing outcomes in the mode of exhibition as study.

*Keep the artist close, but the artwork closer*

- The uncritical yet authoritative nature of the survey show genre is neatly undermined when applied to the case of Damp, a multi-authored group with a partial archive and a history of non-object based context-specific works. The exhibition as study can be a more fruitful curatorial approach than a monographic survey show for a practice such as Damp's.
- Through critical proximity and access, the pedagogical imperatives of the exhibition as study open the work up to critique in many forms, counterbalancing accusations of hagiography in surveying an artistic practice through a curatorial lens.

As the curatorial establishes its footing as an academic discipline within the university art school, it finds itself beside both art history and contemporary practice. The 'exhibition as study' is one curatorial methodology that can play a crucial and unique role from this position – one that is generative of new knowledge, that is attentive to practice and engages with artworks and artists from a position of critical proximity, and that reflects the object of study in its framework and modes of presentation. It is hoped that this research project opens avenues for further experimentation in the relationship between curatorial practice and pedagogy, and in curatorial approaches to surveying contemporary artists (particularly collaborative practices and context-specific practices) and localised art histories outside of, or beside, the museum and university.





## Bibliography

Abu ElDahab, Mai, Anton Vidokle, and Florian Waldvogel, eds. *Notes for an Art School*. Amsterdam: International Foundation Manifesta, 2006.

Aikens, Nick, ed. *Too Much World: The Films of Hito Steyerl*. Sternberg Press, Van Abbemuseum, Institute of Modern Art, 2014.

Ascroft, Michael. 'Contemporary art and over-institutionalisation', *un Magazine* 6.1, 2012: <http://unprojects.org.au/magazine/issues/issue-6-1/contemporary-art-and-over-institutionalisation/>

Ault, Julie. *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*. Four Corners Books, 2010.

Bancroft, Shelly and Nesbett, Peter. Interview with the author, Melbourne, 5 August 2015.

Barcan, Ruth. *Academic Life and Labour in the New University: Hope and Other Choices* Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2013.

Barikin, Amelia. 'Zombie History: Contemporary Art in the Jungles of Cosmic Time', *Three Reflections on Contemporary Art History*, Nicholas Croggon & Helen Hughes (editors). Discipline in association with emaj, 2014.

Bartlett, AJ and Clemens, Justin (eds.). *What is Education?* Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Basbaum, Ricardo. 'Post-Participatory Participation', *Afterall* 28 (Autumn/Winter 2011): 90-101.

Basualdo, Carlos. 'The Unstable Institution', *Manifesta Journal* 2 (Winter 2003/Spring 2004): 50-61.

— 'Rules of Engagement', *Artforum International* 42 (March 2004): 166-169.

Bishop, Claire. 'What is a curator?', *IDEA arta + societate* 26 (2007). Accessed 19 May 2014: <http://idea.ro/revista/?q=en/node/41&articol=468>

— *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London / New York: Verso, 2012.

— (ed.) *Participation*. Whitechapel and MIT Press, 2006.

Bliss, Lauren. 'The University in the Age of Witchcraft', *un Magazine* 7.1, 2013, accessed 5 July 2015: <http://unprojects.org.au/magazine/issues/issue-7-1/the-university-in-the-age-of-witchcraft/>

Bors, Chris. 'Shelly Bancroft and Peter Nesbett on Relaunching Triple Candie', *Artinfo.com* (12 February 2009). Accessed 30 June 2014: <http://triplecandie.org/Triple%20Candie%20About%20Press%20Almost%20Baroque%20artinfo%20021208.html>

Bourriaud, Nicolas. 'Revisiting the Educational Turn (How I tried to Renovate an Art School)', *Art Review* (November 2015), accessed 10 July 2018, [https://artreview.com/features/november\\_2015\\_feature\\_nicolas\\_bourriaud\\_educational\\_turn/](https://artreview.com/features/november_2015_feature_nicolas_bourriaud_educational_turn/).

— *Relational Aesthetics*. Les presses du réel, 2002.

Bowman, Rob. 'First Person Singular', *The Exhibitionist* 1, 2010.

Buckley, Brad, and Conomos, John (eds). *Rethinking the contemporary art school: The artist, the PhD, and the academy*. The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2009.

Buergel, Roger. Interview with the author, Zurich, 14 May 2015.

— *Garden of Learning* exhibition catalogue. Busan Biennale Organizing Committee, 2012.

Burton, Johanna. 'A Questionnaire on "The Contemporary": 32 Responses', *October* 130, Fall 2009.

— 'On Knot Curating', *The Exhibitionist* no.4, June 2011.

Butler, Rex. 'Modernism: more popular than populism. The public sphere and contemporary art', *Broadsheet* 43 no.4, December 2014.

Butt, Danny. *Artistic Research in the Future Academy*. Intellect, 2017.

— 'The Art School and the University: Research, Knowledge, and Creative Practices' PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 2011.

Cotter, Holland. 'Art in Review', *The New York Times* (5 March 2010): C28(L).

- ‘The Social History of Objects’, *The New York Times* (11 August 2006): E30(L).
- ‘Visions of a People in Motion’, *The New York Times* (28 December 2007): E37(L).
- ‘A promise that never bloomed, a post-minimalist you’ve never heard of’, *The New York Times* (16 January 2007): E3(L).
- ‘Out with the fat, in with the hungry’, *The New York Times* (21 December 2008): 26(L).

Cornelissen, Goele. ‘The public role of teaching: to keep the door closed’, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 42, nos 5-6 (2010): 523-539.

Cramer, Sue. ‘Ecology, Religion, Rock & Roll’, *Geoff Lowe: A Constructed World Contemporary Art Archive 6*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997.

Creaney, Janet. Interview with the author, Melbourne, 27 October 2014.

Critchley, Simon. ‘Absolutely-Too-Much’, *The Brooklyn Rail* (1 August 2012):

<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2012/08/art/absolutely-too-much>

Cross, David (ed). *Iteration: Again, 13 public art projects across Tasmania*, Punctum Books and CAST, 2011.

Day, Charlotte. ‘Culture Club: artist-initiated activity in Melbourne’, *Good Thinking: words and pictures on contemporary Melbourne art*, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 2000.

Dwyer, Tessa and Palmer, Daniel. ‘Doing it for themselves: artist run alternatives and contemporary Australian art’, in Din Heagney (ed.), *Making Space: Artist-Run Initiatives in Victoria*, VIA-N, 2007.

Eicher, Dominic. ‘Documenta 12 2007’, *Frieze* 104 (Jan-Feb 2007), accessed 10 July 2018

<https://frieze.com/article/documenta-12-2007>.

Elkins, James. *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*. Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, 2014.

Engberg, Juliana (ed.). *Geoff Lowe: Collaborations 1980-1990*, exhibition catalogue. Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 1992.

Fineman, Mia. ‘Has the trickster hero struck again?’, *The New York Times* (5 February 2006): AR6(L).

- Fraser, Andrea. 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique'. *Artforum International* 44, no.1 (September 2005): 278-283.
- Gabik, Suzi. 'Connective Aesthetics: art after individualism' in Suzanne Lacy (ed), *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, Bay Press, 1995.
- Gaitan, Juan A., 'What is the public?', in Jens Hoffman (ed), *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*, Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2013.
- Gioni, Massimiliano. 'The Limits of Interpretation'. *The Exhibitionist* 4 (June 2011): 17-22.
- Gruijthuijsen, Krist. 'On becoming something' lecture, Nottingham Contemporary, 25 June 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtjMcroHtqQ>
- Hainley, Bruce. 'David Hammons Zwirner & Wirth'. *Artforum* (May 2006): 286.
- Hall, Emily. 'Maurizio Cattelan Is Dead', *Artforum* (November 2009): 234-235.
- Harney, Stefano, and Moten, Fred. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions, 2013.
- Haxthausen, Charles W. (ed.) *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University*. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in association with Yale University Press, 2002.
- 'Beyond "the two art histories"', *Journal of Art Historiography* no. 11 2014.
- Hess, Anna, and A Constructed World, eds. *Speech Objects*. Blois, France: École d'art de Blois-Agglopolys and Musée de l'Objet, 2011.
- Hines, Sara. 'Post-postmodernism and the archive: uncertain identities and "forgotten" legacies', *Afterimage* 35 no.3 (November/December 2007): 20-25.
- Holmes, Jonathan. 'Going Solo: a report on survey exhibitions in Australian public museums in the 1970s' unpublished conference paper, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania, 2003.
- Hoptman, Laura. 'Complicit', *The Exhibitionist* (23 May 2017), accessed 10 July 2018, <http://the-exhibitionist.com/articles/rear-mirror/complicit>
- Huberman, Anthony. Interview with the author, San Francisco, 25 May 2015.

— 'Take Care', in Binna Choi, Mai Abu ElDahab, Emily Pethick, eds., *Circular Facts*. Sternberg Press, 2011: 9-17.

— *The Now Museum: Contemporary Art, Curating Histories, Alternative Models* symposium, New Museum and CUNY Graduate Centre, New York, 10-13 March 2011:  
[http://curatorsintl.org/events/the\\_now\\_museum](http://curatorsintl.org/events/the_now_museum)

Hunter, Becky Huff. 'Infectious Sovereignty: Editorializing the Exhibition', *Art Papers* (March/April 2012).

Jaskey, Jenny. Interview with the author, New York, 21 May 2015.

Johnson, Ken. 'The anonymous artist project II', *The New York Times* (12 August 2005): E25(L).

— 'Cady Noland Approximately', *The New York Times* (12 May 2006): E23(L).

— 'Art in review', *The New York Times* (7 August 2009): C27(L).

Jones, Amelia. 'The Local versus the Global in Curating and Curatorial Pedagogy', *Journal of Curatorial Studies* vol. 6, no. 2, 2017.

Joselit, David. '2012 Busan Biennale', *Artforum International* (December 2012): 267-268.

Kastner, Jeffrey. 'School's out: Jeffrey Kastner on Manifesta 6', *Artforum International* 45 no.1 (September 2006): 187.

Kester, Grant. A Questionnaire on "The Contemporary": 32 Responses', *October* 130 Fall 2009.

Koop, Stuart. 'Eros and Agape', *Group Group Show* exhibition catalogue, 2008.

Kushnir, Alana. 'When Curating Meets Piracy: Rehashing the History of Unauthorized Exhibition-Making'. *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 1, no.3 (2012): 295-313.

Kwon, Miwon. 'One place after another: notes on site specificity', *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 85-110.

Lee, Fiona. PhD thesis, *Rogue Academy: Conversational art events as a means of institutional critique*, University of Tasmania, 2016

Lesage, Dieter. 'The academy is back: On education, the Bologna Process, and the doctorate in the arts', *e-flux journal* 14 (March 2009)

Liang, Lawrence. 'Ultrationalism: A proposal for a quiet withdrawal', *e-flux journal* 56 (June 2014): <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/ultranationalism-a-proposal-for-a-quiet-withdrawal/>

Lind, Maria. 'On the Curatorial', *Artforum* 48 (October 2009): 103.

Lowe, Geoff. Interview with the author, Paris, 5 May 2015.

Lund, Johan. 'The art of disappearing', *C Magazine* 101 (Spring 2009): 30-33.

Lynch, James. 'Modernism's Orphanage: social relations, group processes and transforming narratives', unpublished MFA exegesis, Monash University, 2010.

Madoff, Steven Henry (ed.). *Art School: Propositions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The MIT Press, 2009.

Marsh, Anne. 'Provocation', *A+A Online*, accessed 15 June 2017, <http://www.artandaustralia.com/online/disquisitions/provocation>

Matthews, Hannah. 'Damp: the longest relationship I ever had', *Broadsheet* 38.4 2009:

Morton, Callum. Interview with the author, Melbourne, 13 November 2014.

Moulton, Aaron. 'Extraordinary rendition: on the institutional kidnapping of Cady Noland and David Hammons', *Flash Art* 39 (July-September 2006):

Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. The New Press, New York, 1997.

Morgan, Harriet. 'Remember the past and revel in the future', *Damp, The Book of Shadows* exhibition catalogue, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, 2010.

Morsch, Carmen. 'Alliances for Unlearning: On the Possibility of Future Collaborations between Gallery Education and Institutions of Critique', *Afterall* 26 (Spring 2011): 5-13.

Nelson, Robert. Interview with the author, Melbourne, 23 April 2015.

Noack, Ruth. 'From Busan with Humour', *Afterall* 34 (Autumn/Winter 2013): <http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.34/from-busan-with-humour#cite8771>

Norton, A., & Cherastidtham, I. *Mapping Australian Higher Education 2014-15*. Grattan Institute, 2014.

O'Neill, Paul and Mick Wilson, eds. *Curating and the Educational Turn*. London and Amsterdam: Open Editions / de Appel, 2010.

O'Neill, Paul. 'Group Practice', *Art Monthly* 304, March, 2007.

Podesva, Kristina Lee. 'A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art', *Fillip* 6 (2007): <http://fillip.ca/content/a-pedagogical-turn>

Princenthal, Nancy. 'David Hammons at Triple Candie', *Art in America* (April 2006): 153-154

Rancière, Jacques. 'The Emancipated Spectator' *Artforum International* 45, no. 7 (March 2007): 271-280.

— *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

— 'What does it mean to be un?', *Continuum: Journal of media & cultural studies* 21 no.4 (2007): 559-569.

Raunig, Gerald. *Factories of Knowledge: Industries of Creativity*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2013.

Raunig, Gerald & Ray, Gene (eds), *Art and contemporary critical practice: Reinventing institutional critique*. London: May Fly Books, 2009.

Readings, Bill. *The University in Ruins*, Harvard University Press, 1996.

Renew, Alicia. Interview with the author, Melbourne, 27 October 2014.

Ribas, Joao. 'On the Solo Show: From Resistance to Repression', in Paul O'Neill, Mick Wilson, Lucy Steeds (eds), *The Curatorial Conundrum: What to study? What to research? What to practice?* LUMA Foundation & The Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 2016.

Ribeiro, Sophia. 'Kristina Lee Podesva interviewed by Sophia Ribeiro', *OnCurating* 19 (June 2013): Accessed 30 June 2014: <http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-19-reader/kristina-lee-podesva.html#.U7D9VI2SzKk>

Roelstraete, Dieter. 'Critical Mess: On the ruins of the museum's research departments', *Mousse Magazine* 26 (November 2010): <http://moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=620>



Rogoff, Irit. 'Turning', *e-flux journal* 0, November 2008.

Saltz, Jerry. 'Invasion of the art snatchers: unintentionally playing the roles of Rupert Pupkin and Masha in *The King of Comedy*', *The Village Voice*, 17-23 May 2006. Accessed 30 June 2014: <http://triplecandie.org/Triple%20Candie%20About%20Press%20Cady%20Voice%20051706.html>

Schwendener, Martha. 'Limelight', *The New York Times* (2 March 2007): E30(L).

Smith, Roberta. 'David Hammons', *The New York Times* (24 March 2006): E31(L).

Sorkin, Jenni. 'Reviews: Museo de Reproducciones Fotograficas', *Frieze* (September 2007):

Stallabrass, Julian. 'Elite Art in an Age of Populism', in Alexander Dumbadze/ Suzanne Hudson, eds., *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*, John Wiley & Sons, Oxford 2013: 39-49.

— *High Art Lite*. Verso, 1999.

Stein Greben, Deidre. 'Unauthorized Productions', *ARTnews* 106 no.8 (September 2007): 110-112.

Thomas, Richard, and Wasko, Ryszard. *The Bridge: Construction in Process VI*. Craftsman House and G+B Arts International, 2000.

Triple Candie. *Maurizio Cattelan is Dead: Life and Work, 1960-2009*. Philadelphia: Triple Candie Inc., 2012.

— 'Triple Candie'. Accessed 30 June 2014. <http://triplecandie.org/>

Uchill, Rebecca. 'Hanging out, crowding out or talking things out: Curating the limits of discursive space', *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 1 no.1 (2012): 27-43.

Utomo, Dita Wulandari, 'Locality and Public Participation: A case study of "Learning Council" in Busan Biennale 2012', *The Asian Conference on the Arts and Humanities* 2014.

Wilkinson, Kylie. Interview with the author, Melbourne, 21 February 2017.

Willsdon, Dominic. 'Where are we and what time is it? On beginning to curate Suzanne Lacy', *A blade of grass* website, 20 December 2017. Accessed 10 July 2018, <http://www.abladeofgrass.org/fertile-ground/time-beginning-curate-suzanne-lacy/>

Wise, Kit. Interview with the author, Melbourne, 13 November 2014.

Wilson, Michael. 'New York Round-up', *Art Monthly* 329 (September 2009): 30-31.

Verwoert, Jan. 'Lying Freely to the Public', *Open* 14, 2008: 66-72.

— 'Exhaustion and Exuberance'. Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum, 2008.

— 'Control I'm Here: A call for the free use of the means of producing communication, in curating and in general', in Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (eds.), *Curating and the Educational Turn*. London, Amsterdam: Open Editions / de Appel, 2010.

Zolghadr, Tirdad. 'The angry middle aged: romance and the possibilities of adult education in the art world', in Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (eds.), *Curating and The Educational Turn*, Open Editions / de Appel, 2010.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

Additional photographic documentation of the 2016 project, *Art holds a high place in my life* | *Damp: study of an artist at 21*, presented in chronological order.

## Appendix 2

2.1 Project briefing

2.2 Budget

2.3 As-built plans

## Appendix 3

3.1 Damp Camp Studio Workshop participants

3.2 Damp Camp information sheet

3.3 Funding application to the Monash Education Academy

3.4 Project Report to the Monash Education Academy

3.5 Damp Camp exhibition poster

3.6 Damp Study Group participants

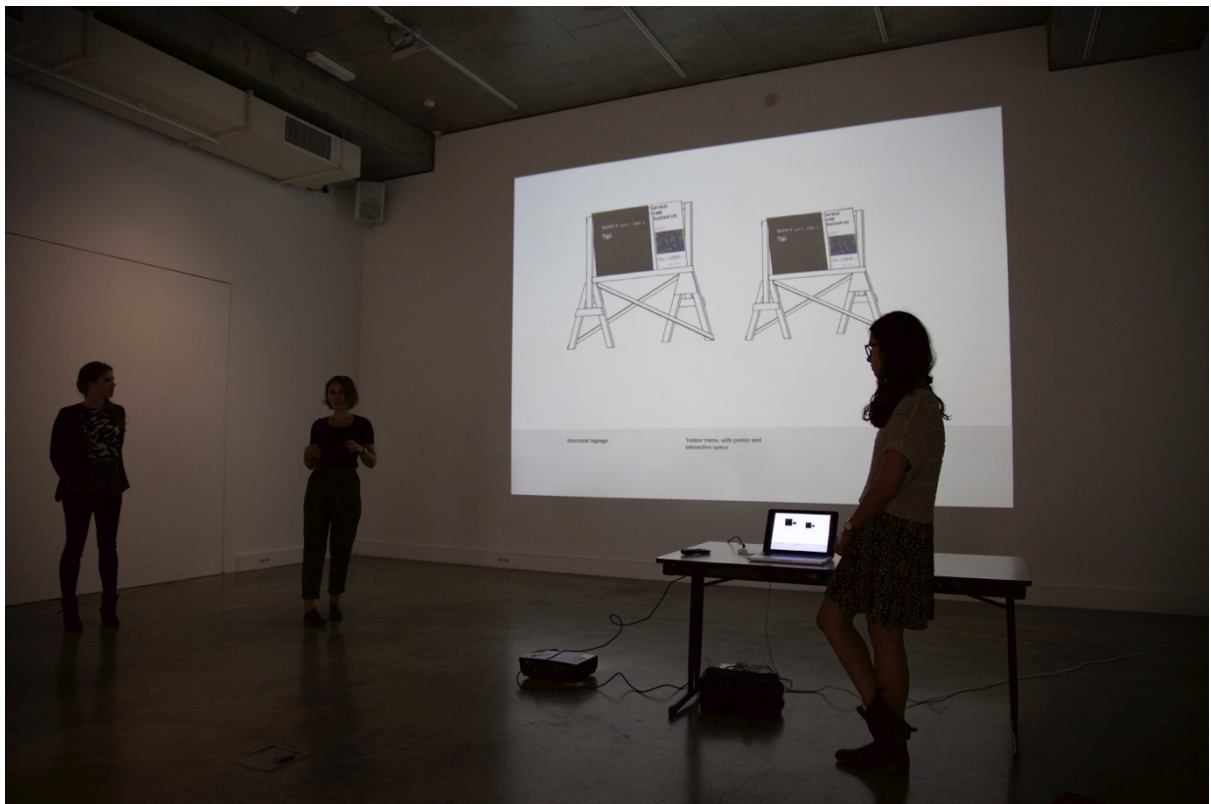
3.7 List of artworks and texts allocated to each Damp Study Group seminar

## Appendix 1

**Additional photographic documentation of the 2016 project, *Art holds a high place in my life* | *Damp: study of an artist at 21*, presented in chronological order.**



Damp Camp Studio Workshop, 14 February 2016



Damp Camp Studio Workshop, 17 February 2016









Damp Study Group, Week 1, Damp workshop. Featuring Damp, *More than a Feeling*, 2001-2004. (Monash University Collection)



Damp Study Group, Week 1: Damp workshop, tableaux vivant exercise.





Foreground: Damp, *Proposal for a public sculpture (Sign for Hastings)*, 2008.

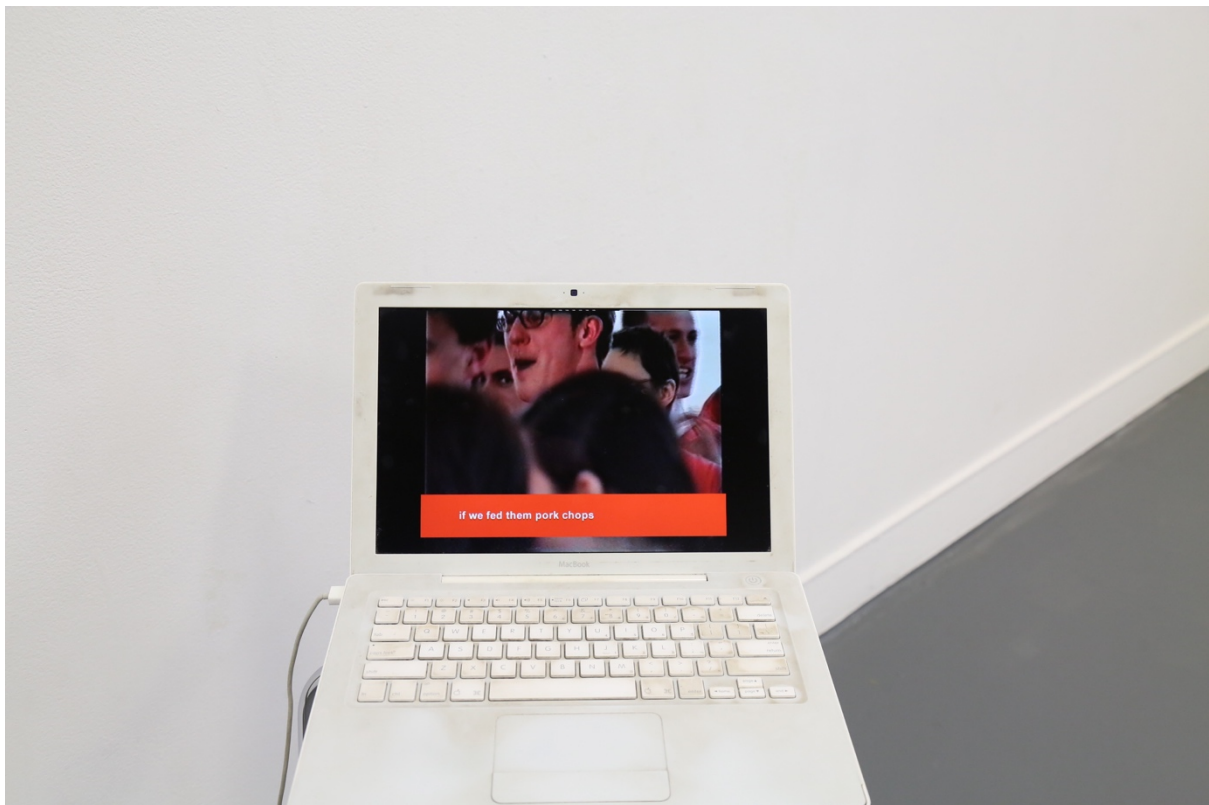


Damp Study Group, week 2: 'Site and Context'.





Damp Study Group, week 3: 'Value, transformation, authenticity'. Foreground: Damp, *Clothing Exchange*, 1997 documentation display.



Damp Study Group, week 4: 'Art and Audience'. Featured: Damp, *We're all Water*, 1998.



Damp, *Untitled bottle*, 2006, installed in Gormenghast.



Damp Study Group, week 5: 'Conflict: It's a world full of hurt'.





Damp Study Group week 6: 'Group Group: Collective thinking and process'. Featured: Damp, *The Book of Shadows*, 2005-ongoing.



Damp Study Group, week 6, developing group object swap project.





Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast* 2016. Photo: John Gollings.



Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast* 2016. Photo: John Gollings.





Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast* 2016. 20 May 2016.



Damp Study Group, 'Object Swap' project installed in *Gormenghast*, 26 May 2016.





Damp at work, 18 June 2016.



Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast* 2016. 18 June 2016.





Damp at work, 9 July 2016.



Seating installed, upper level, *Gormenghast*, 9 July 2016.





Damp and MAP, Gormenghast 2016. 27 July 2016.



Damp and MAP, Gormenghast 2016, featuring Sanja Devic installation and solar panels installed. 27 July 2016.





Damp at work, installing welded turret onto roof of *Gormenghast*, 30 July 2016.



Sanja Devic installation at *Gormenghast*, 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley.





30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley.



30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley





Artmeet ARI exhibition, 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley



Artmeet ARI exhibition, 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley





Artmeet ARI exhibition, 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley



Artmeet ARI exhibition, 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley





Artmeet ARI exhibition, 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley



Artmeet ARI exhibition, 30 July 2016. Photo: Zan Wimberley





Monash Open Day, 7 August 2016.

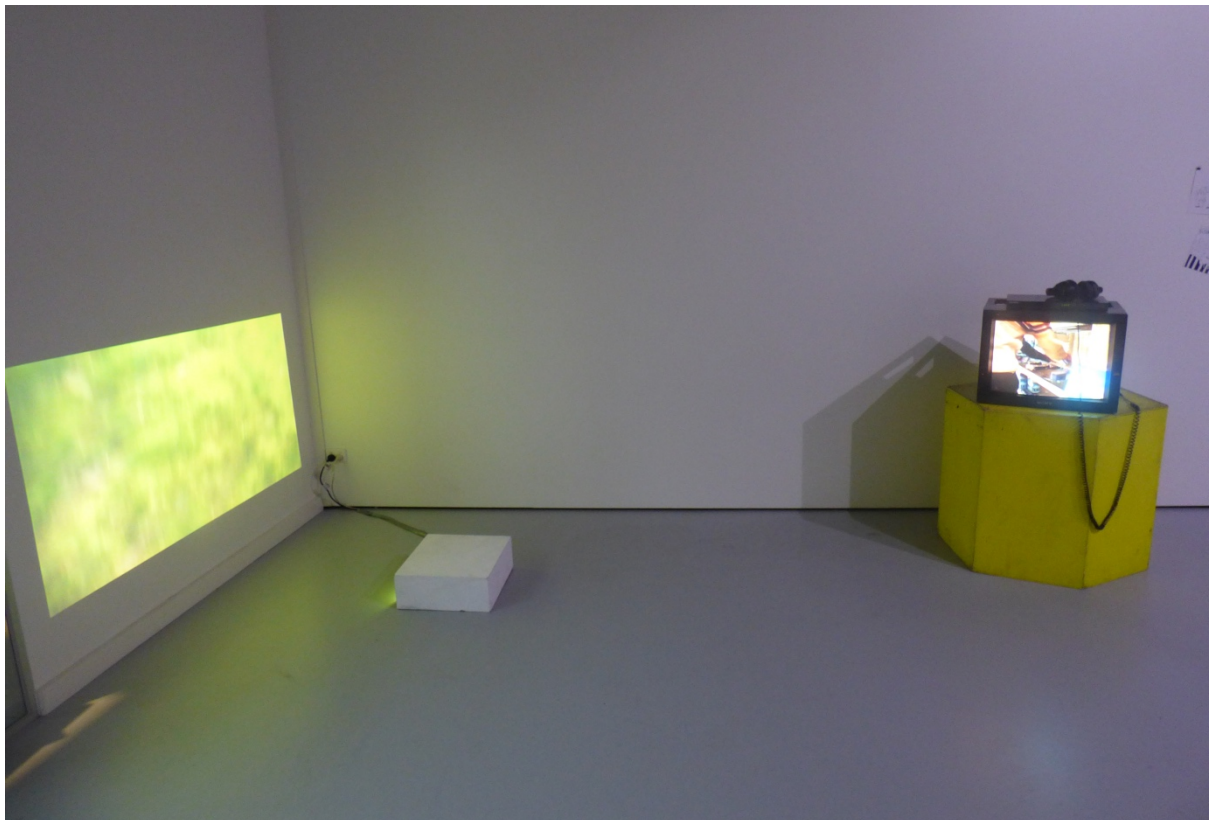


Monash Open Day, 7 August 2016.





*Damp Video: What we want movies to be and do, MADA Gallery G134, July 2016.*



*Damp Video: What we want movies to be and do, MADA Gallery G134, July 2016.*





Damp at work, installing arched window frames and DAMP letters. 24 September 2016.



Damp and MAP, Gormenghast 2016.





Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016. 20 October 2016. Photo: John Gollings.



Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016. 20 October 2016. Photo: John Gollings.





Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016. 20 October 2016. Photo: John Gollings.



Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016. 20 October 2016. Photo: John Gollings.





Damp and MAP, *Gormenghast*, 2016. 20 October 2016. Photo: John Gollings.

## **Appendix 2**

### **2.1 Project briefing document (prepared by Damp)**

## DAMP Brief for Meeting/Exhibition Space

### Needs

- Multi-purpose facility- Meeting space/studio/gallery
- Space for 15 people
- Power
- Comfortable, secluded and safe
- Well lit – natural and artificial lighting
- Heated and well ventilated
- Secure
- Open yet secluded

### Desires

- Carpet
- Furniture
- Observation/ Look out
- Fittings for plumbing
- Reflective outer surface somewhere

### Precedents

- Apollo
- Futuro house
- Hobbit hole entrance
- Tardis
- Airstream
- Dymaxion
- Old Victoria hotel Collins St
- Elm Family Hotel
- Get Smarts apartment
- The Prisoner
- Walking City Archigram
- Welcome back Cotter
- Conversation pit Heide II
- Earth ball– coke ad
- Peter's boat in Finland





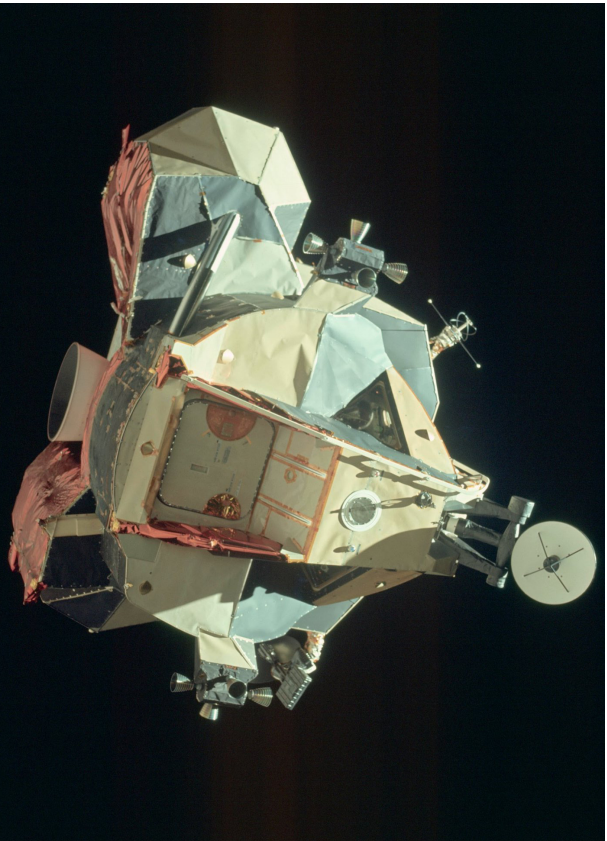




Apollo ??



Porsche 'Type 64' 1938



Apollo 17 Lunar Module Challenger



Apollo ??

D

A

M

P





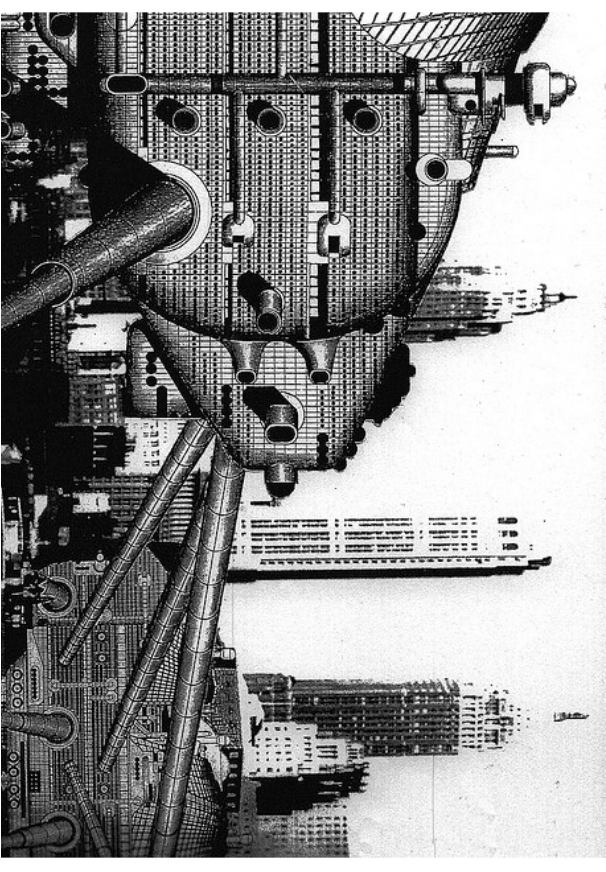
Peter's boat being restored in Helsinki - more info on Swedish designer and pics



Restored 1954 Airstream Flying Cloud Trailer



Coca Cola 1978 Ad with giant beach ballAd [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF\\_gDoFRmSY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF_gDoFRmSY)



Archigram (Ron Heron) Walking City, 1964

D

A

M

P





Outdoor comfort



Hits from the Bong ...



Furniture - come- meeting space



(Gilligan's) Island style bar

D

A

M

P





Sunken Lounge-Conversation Pit



Capsule



Reflective Tree House



Eltham Barrel Restaurant

D

A

M

P

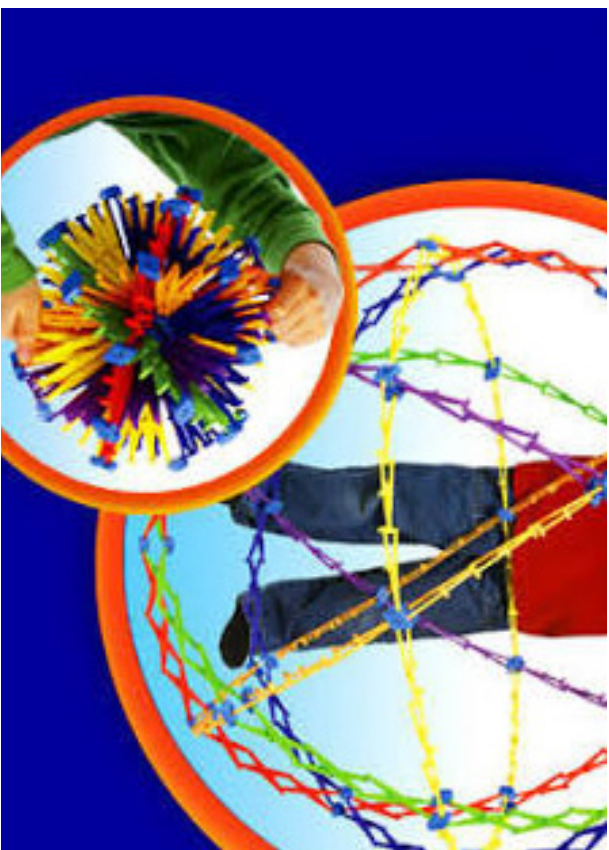




Eltham Barrel Restaurant



Hobbit Hole



D

A



Reflected Surface

M

P



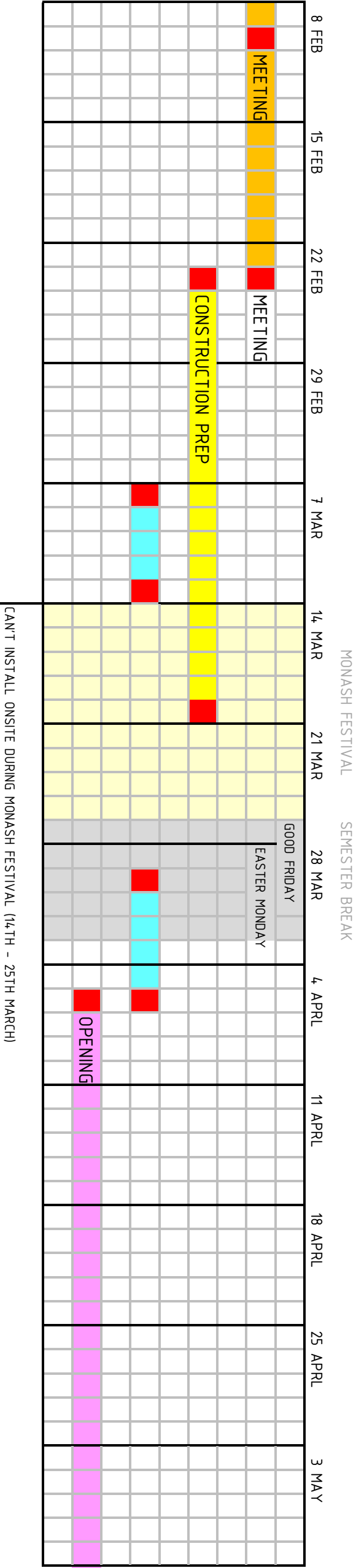
## **Appendix 2**

### **2.2 Construction timeline, budget, architectural plans (prepared by MAP)**



D-MAP  
PROGRAM

- DESIGN SIGN-OFF  
9TH FEB - 23RD FEB
- CONSTRUCTION PREP  
23RD FEB - 18TH MAR
- INSTALLATION ON-SITE  
7TH MAR - 4TH APRL
- OPEN  
5TH APRL - ?



## PROVISIONAL BUDGET

### DAMP Pavilion

#### INCOME

Research	\$14,000
Grant	\$5,000
Monash (Martin)	\$1,500
	<b><u>\$20,500</u></b>

#### BUDGET SUMMARY

Construction Budget		\$13,725
Stair		\$1,200
Artist Fee		\$1,000
Structural Signoff		\$500
Favela Materials		\$1,000
Maintenance	5.00%	\$1,025
Construction Contingency	10.00%	\$2,050

M A D A

MAP

Monash University Art Design & Architecture Research and Education  
Department of Architecture  
3181, Australia | 03 9594 2000  
Copyright © 2015

PROJECT

DAMP / MAP COMMISSION  
SCHEMATIC PLANS

TITLE

PRELIMINARY DESIGN

DATE

02/2016

DRAWN

-

REV

0

NOTES

1. THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL OTHER CONTRACT DOCUMENTS.  
2. DO NOT SCALE OFF THE DRAWING. DIMENSIONS AND ANY 3D DIGITAL ISSUED MODELS TAKE PRECEDENT OVER SCALED DIMENSIONS.

SIZE

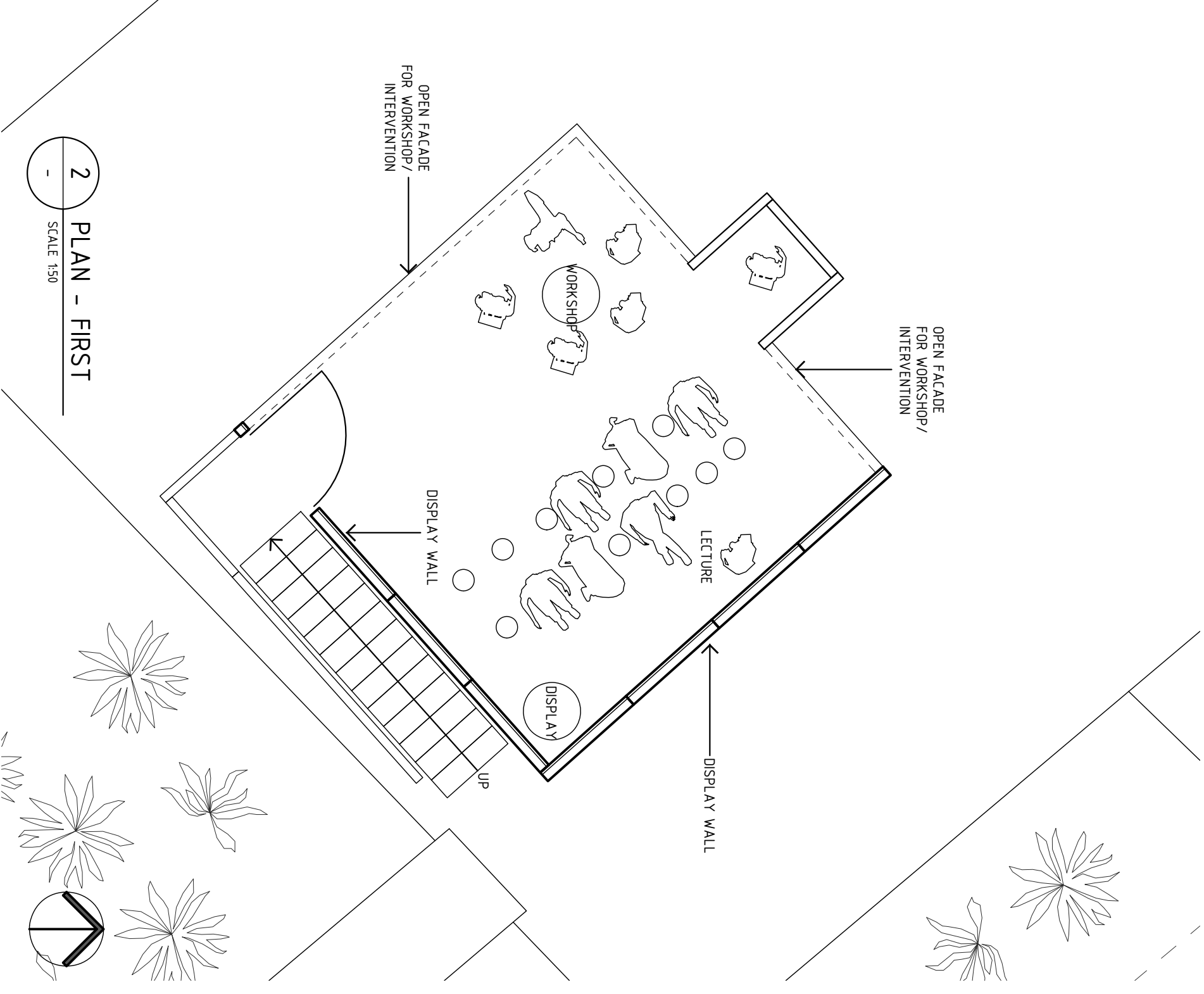
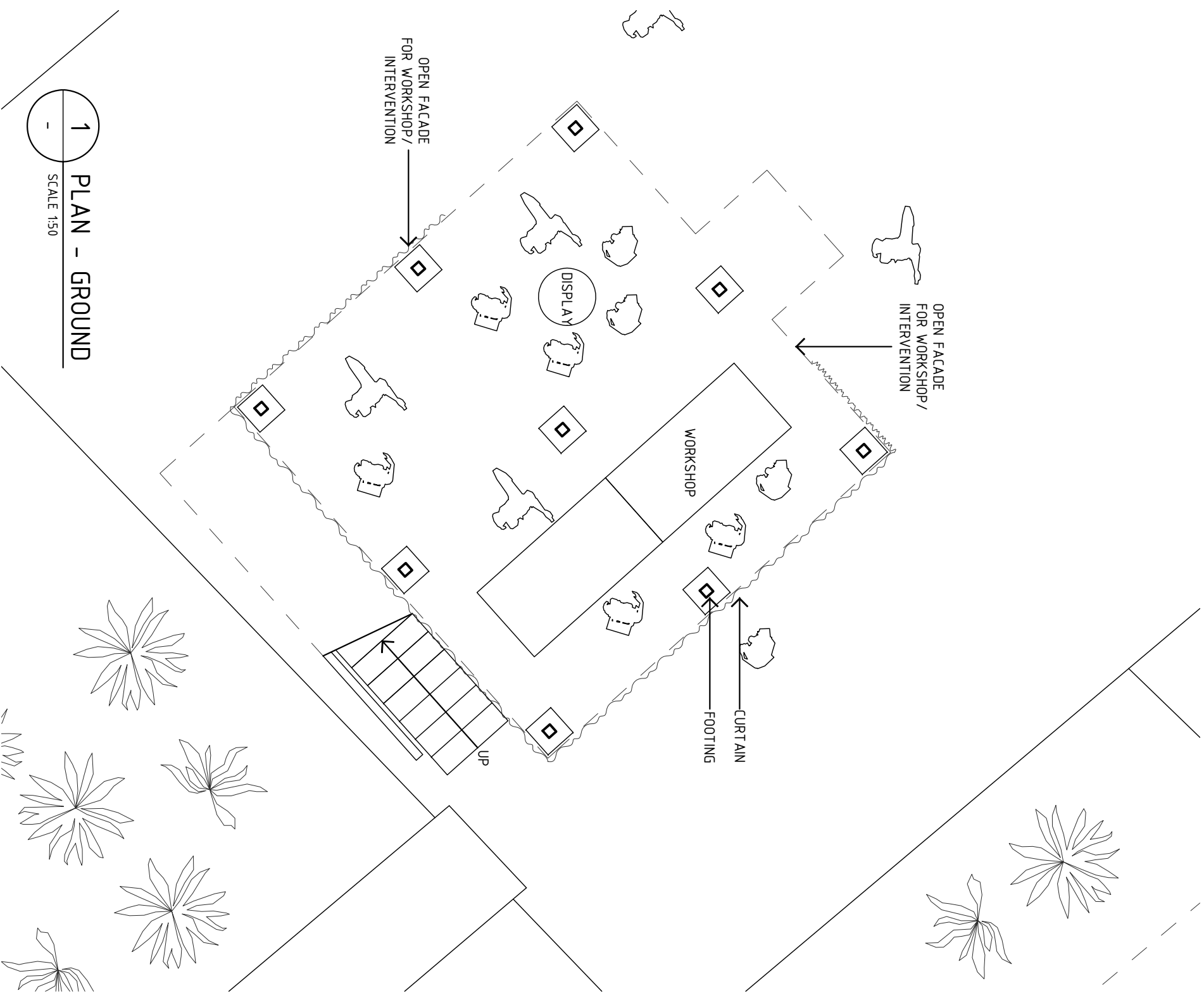
A3

SCALE

1 : 50

DRAWING NO.

A100



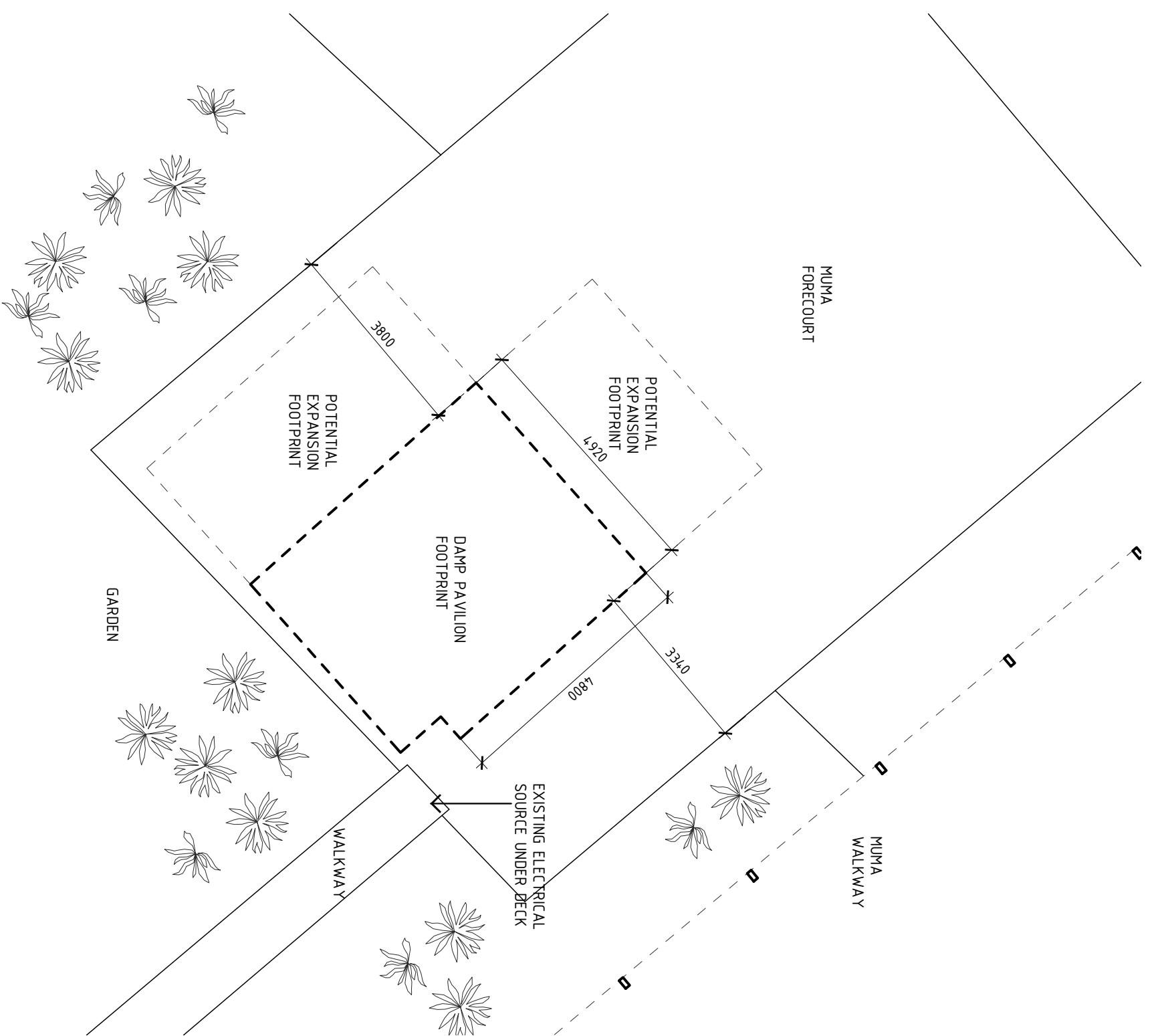
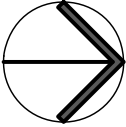


<div>M A D A</div> <div>MAP</div> <div>MORRIS UNIVERSITY ART DESIGN &amp; ARCHITECTURE</div>				PROJECT		DATE		DRAWN		REV		NOTES	
DAMP / MAP COMMISSION SCHEMATIC PLANS						02/2016		-		0		1. THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL OTHER CONTRACT DOCUMENTS.	
TITLE				SIZE		SCALE		DRAWING NO.				2. DO NOT SCALE OFF THE DRAWINGS. FIGURED DIMENSIONS AND ANY 3D DIGITAL ISSUED MODELS TAKE PRECEDENT OVER PREVIOUS DOCUMENTS.	
				A 2		4 . 1 0 0		A 2 0 0					

1

PLAN - SITE

SCALE 1:100





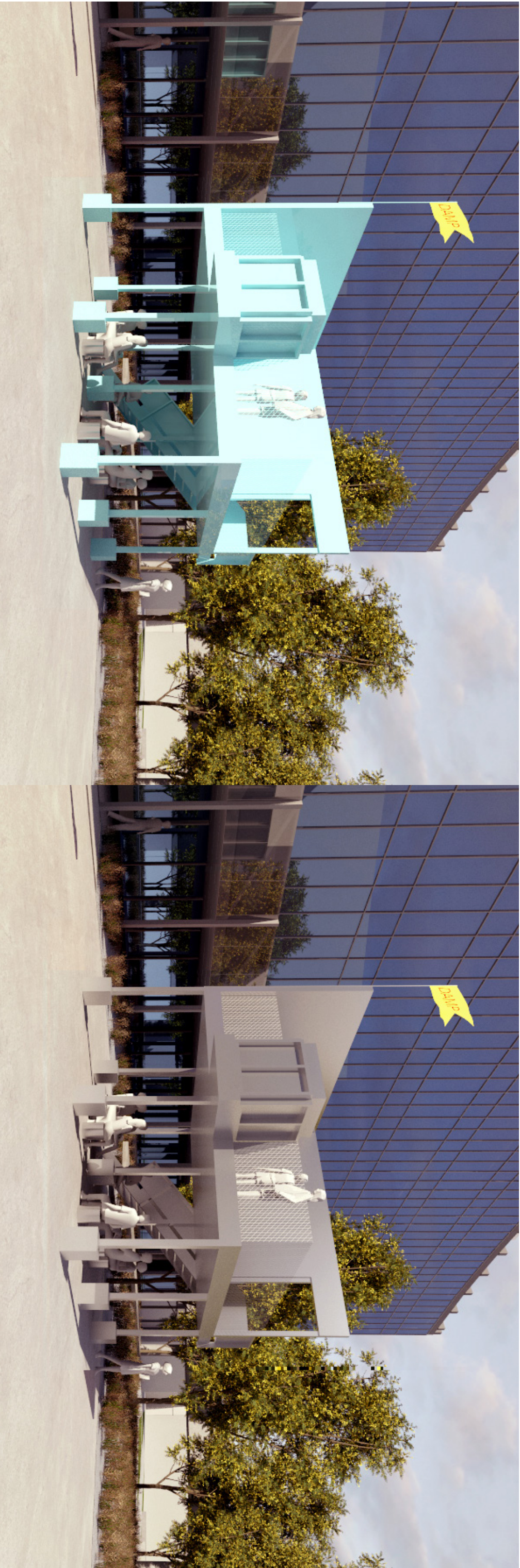


OPTION 01



OPTION 02









OPTION 01



OPTION 02





OPTION 01

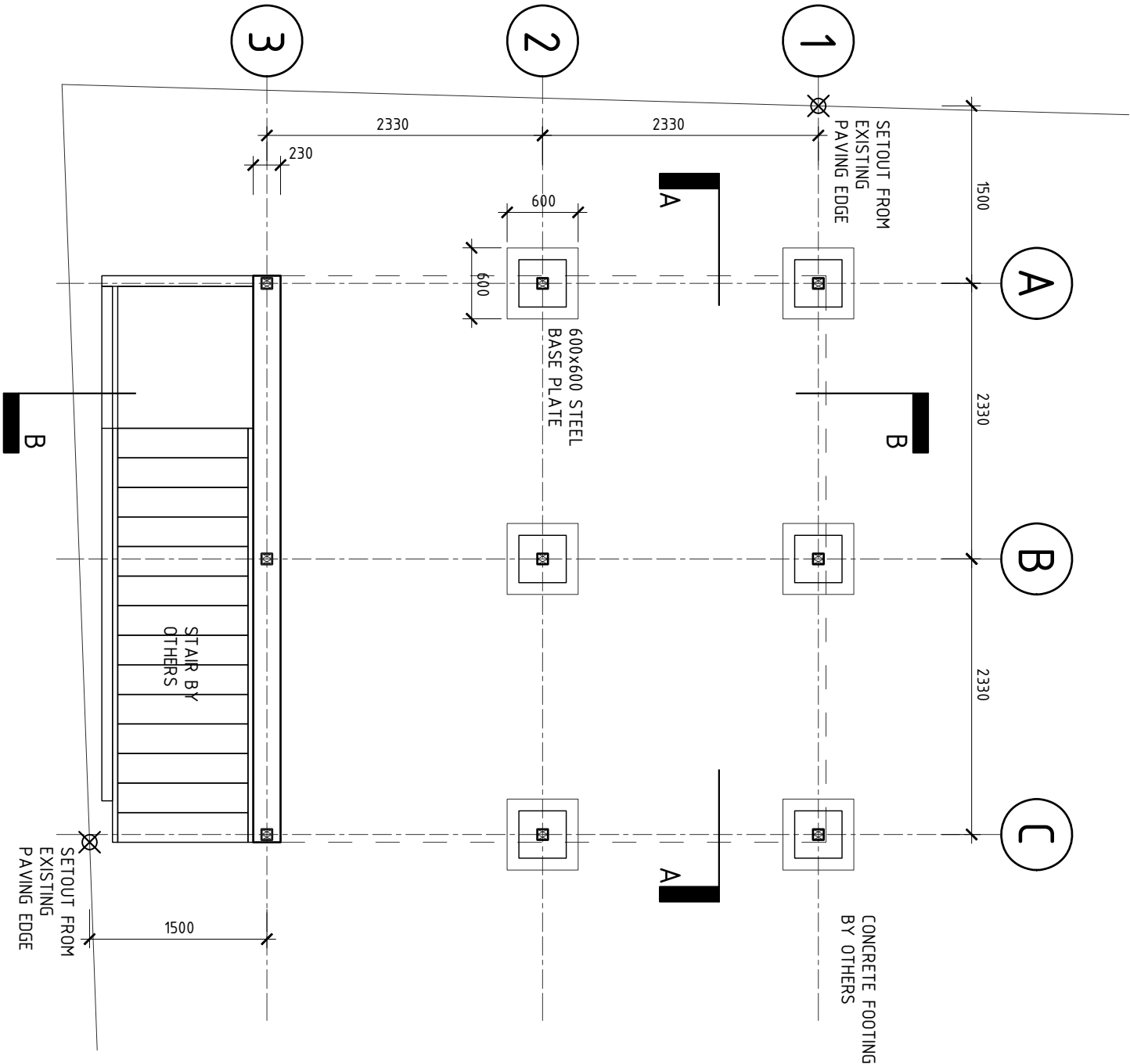


OPTION 02

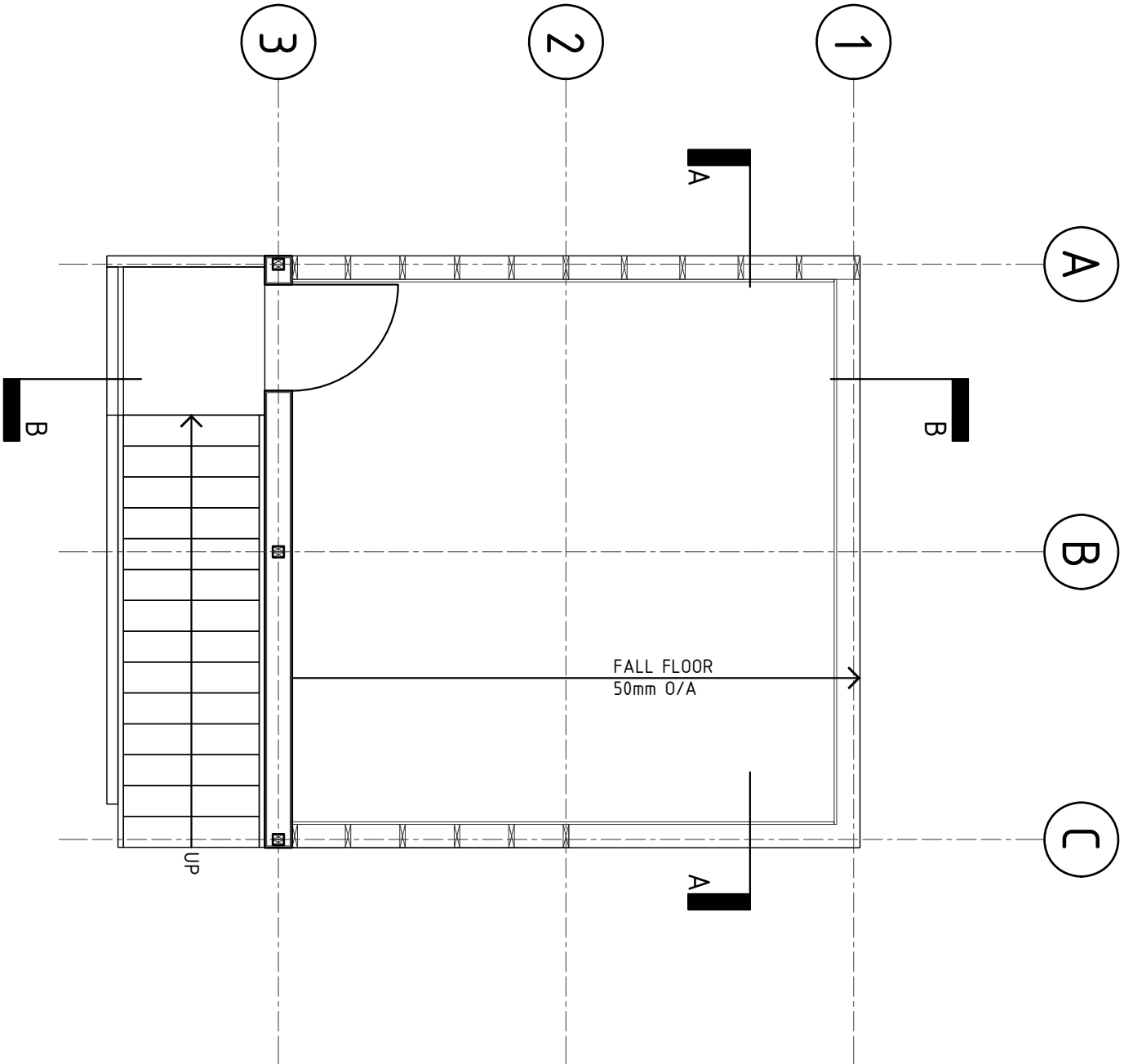


## **Appendix 2**

### **2.3 As-built plans**

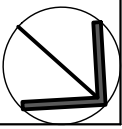


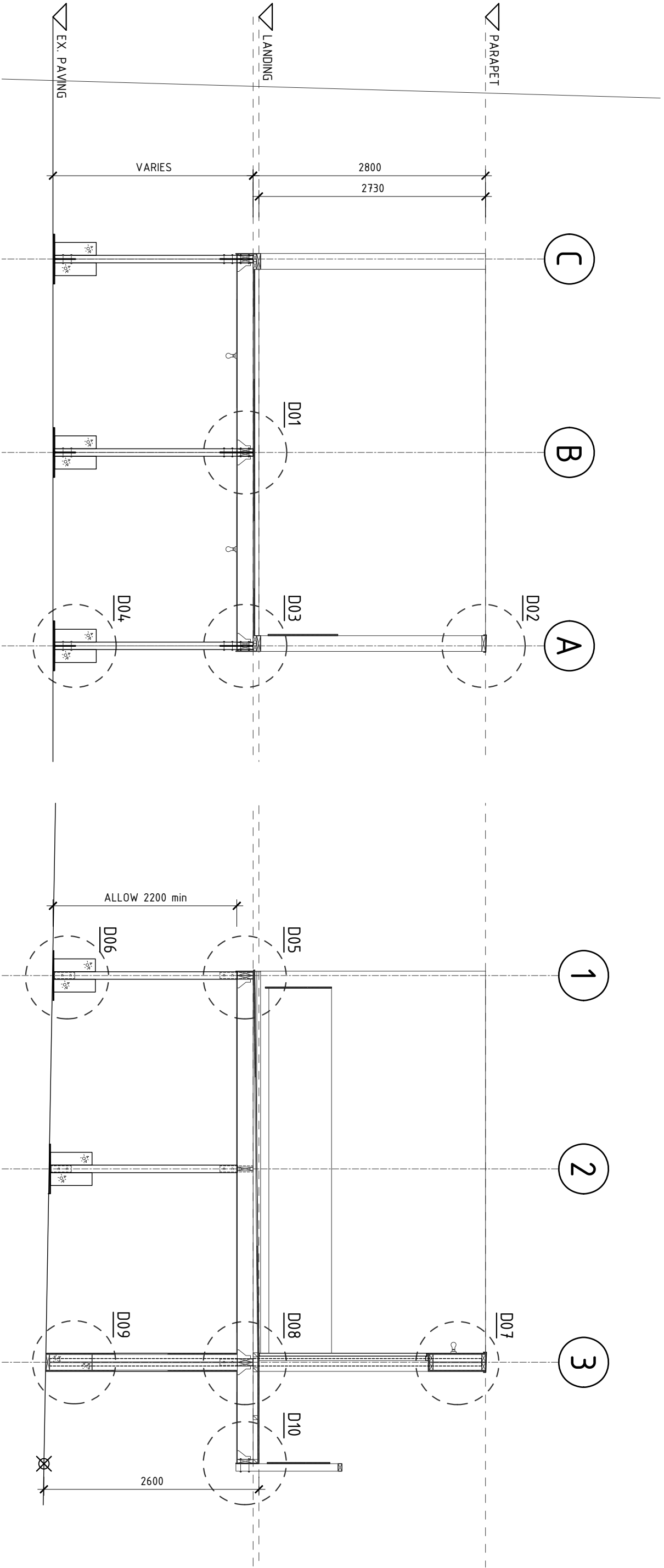
1 PLAN - GROUND  
SCALE 1:50



2 PLAN - FIRST  
SCALE 1:50

<div>MADA</div> <div>MAP</div> <div><div>MEDAN UNIVERSITY ART DESIGN &amp; ARCHITECTURE PROJECT 1300</div><div>3100 - ARTS BUILDING 2.00, CAULFIELD EAST, VIC</div><div>CAMPUS 1300 3 9803 2653</div></div>		PROJECT		DATE		DRAWN		REV		<div>NOTES</div> <div>1. THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL OTHER CONTRACT DOCUMENTS.</div> <div>2. DO NOT SCALE OFF THE DRAWINGS. FIGURED DIMENSIONS, AND ANY 3D DIGITAL ISSUED MODELS TAKE PRECEDENT OVER SCALED DIMENSIONS.</div>	<div></div>
DAMP / MAP COMMISSION		02/2016		-		0					
TITLE		SIZE		SCALE		DRAWING NO.					
PROPOSED PLANS		A3		1 : 5 0		A100					





1 SECTION - A

1 SECTION - B

M A D A		PROJECT		DATE		DRAWN		REV		NOTES 1. THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL OTHER CONTRACT DOCUMENTS. 2. DO NOT SCALE OFF THE DRAWINGS. FIGURED DIMENSIONS, AND ANY 3D DIGITAL ISSUED MODELS TAKE PRECEDENT OVER SCALED DIMENSIONS.	
MAP		DAMP / MAP COMMISSION		03/2016		-		0			
		TITLE		SIZE		SCALE		DRAWING NO.			
DETAIL SECTIONS				A3		VARIES		A3 01			

M A D A

MAP

MADASH ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECTURE

3105 ASTORIA BLVD E 2ND FL

SEASIDE, OR 97138

PHONE: 503 3983 2653

WWW.MADASH.COM

## **Appendix 3**

### **3.1 Damp Camp Studio Workshop participants**

Sarah Adkins, Fine Art

Sam Barrow, Fine Art

Gillian Butcher, MUMA volunteer Lauren Conti, Communication Design Lillian Cordell,

Communication Design Isabella Darcy, Fine Art

Yoana Doleva, Architecture

Jenna Fivelman, Architecture

Rob Janes, Communication Design

Lucy Kingsley, Visual Art

Alex McGlade, Architecture

Judith Sharkey, Architecture

Ned Shannon, Communication Design Melissa Vallence, Fine Art

Beaziyt Worcou, Communication Design

## **Appendix 3**

### **3.2 Damp Camp information sheet**





### Workshop Dates

Thursday 11 February  
Friday 12 February  
Monday 15 February  
Tuesday 16 February  
Wednesday 17 February

Work generated in this workshop will be exhibited in MADA Gallery  
22 February – 4 March 2016



# STUDIO WORKSHOP

### About the workshop

This studio intensive is organised by Rosemary Forde (Curatorial Practice) and Warren Taylor (Communication Design), with a workshop led by guest artists Damp (Melbourne collective of artists, designers and architects, established in 1995).

The workshop is open to undergraduate or honours students from any MADA department.

Participation in the workshop is free and will be limited to a maximum of 16 students.

Students will collaborate to design and produce branding and exhibition material to launch a curatorial project that will take place on campus throughout 2016.

### Outcomes

1. The studio will produce overall branding/identity for the exhibition program, including experimental signage, way-finding, posters, framing devices, etc.
2. The studio will design an initial timeline installation representing a chronology of Damp's art practice 1995-2016.

These outcomes will be exhibited at MADA Gallery from the 22nd February until the 4th March during Orientation Week and Week 1 of semester. The branding and signage components will be used to visually announce and frame the curatorial project at various locations on campus throughout 2016.

### About the curatorial project:

***Art holds a high place in my life* | Damp: study of an artist at 21**

*Art holds a high place in my life* is the title of a program presenting a survey of the artist group Damp, curated by Rosemary Forde. The program takes place on campus at MADA as an 'unfolding exhibition' and series of events throughout March-September 2016.

The key site for the program is a new public artwork/architectural structure by Damp commissioned by, and made in collaboration with, Monash Art Projects (MAP). This temporary building will be installed in the Ian Potter Sculpture Court at MUMA March-September 2016. It will host the rest of the *Art holds a high place in my life* program including mini-exhibitions, seminars, interviews, and Damp's archive.

### About Damp

Damp is an artist group founded in Melbourne in 1995. In a practice spanning two decades since then, Damp have addressed the relationship between art, artists and audiences. Often drawing on the drama of conflict, individual desire, and the expectations of defined social roles, Damp's works are peppered with an element of surprise, a little slapstick, or amateur performative gestures. The practice is truly multi-disciplinary, involving sculpture, installation, video, drawing, text, performance, painting, events and workshops.

79 individual artists, architects, designers, educators and others have been part of Damp in the past 21 years. The group is currently comprised of Narelle Desmond, Sharon Goodwin, Deb Kunda and James Lynch.

## **Appendix 3**

### **3.3 Funding application to the Monash Education Academy**



## Instructions for applicants

### General Information

The Monash Education Academy is pleased to offer ten (10) Small Grants worth \$5000 each.

The purpose of these grants is to:

- provide a necessary source of funding to further the promotion of excellence in learning and teaching at Monash
- seed learning and teaching (L&T) activities within school/faculty/institution
- provide a platform for Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) grant applications
- provide a link between faculties and the Better Teaching, Better Learning Agenda (available [here](#)).

### Format

- Applicants should complete the application form on the following page.
- Applicants must submit a project outline of no more than one A4 page, using the following headings:
  - *L & T problem/challenge to be addressed*  
Applications should clearly state the L&T problem/challenge to be addressed and articulate the scope of this problem/challenge.
  - *Proposed change to current practice*  
Applications should clearly state the anticipated benefits to L&T and draw upon available evidence to support the proposed change to current practice.
  - *Method/Approach*  
Applications should describe the project activities that will be undertaken to address the problem/challenge, drawing upon available evidence to justify the chosen methods where necessary.
  - *Transferability of outcomes*  
Applications should indicate the anticipated impact of this project. How will this funding seed similar activities by others within the school/faculty/university?
  - *Alignment with Better Teaching, Better Learning Agenda*  
Applications should be in broad alignment with the Better Teaching, Better Learning Agenda.
- Project outline should be in minimum 11 point type.
- Please note that any references must also be included in the one A4 page limit.

### Eligibility

- Applicants can only apply for one Monash Education Academy Small Grant at any time, both as individuals or as a team member.
- Staff on fixed term contracts and sessional staff are eligible if their employment extends for the duration of the grant period.

## Team applications

One application should be completed per team, within the same word and page limits as those for an individual.

## Ethics approval

- Prior to commencing your project you should read the university guidelines for responsible practice in research and research misconduct. These guidelines are available at: <http://www.monash.edu.au/research/ethics/>
- Human ethics approval might be needed for your project.
- Completing this proposal form is not an application for human ethics approval.

## Budget

- Applications should list proposed line items up to a maximum of \$5000.
- Values are to be in Australian dollars.
- Applications with a large proportion of the budget being allocated for travel expenses are unlikely to be viewed favourably.

## Project timeline

Projects should be completed within six months from receipt of funds. Projects should start no later than May 2016.

## Reporting requirements

- At the conclusion of the funding period, applicants should submit a short (approx. 3 minute) presentation with a summary of their results, evaluation of effectiveness and evidence of the impact of their funding on L&T. The presentation must be submitted within 30 days after completion of the project.
- The presentation can be in a variety of formats and can use videos, images and weblinks.
- The presentation will be made available to all Monash staff via the Monash Education Academy website, and successful applicants may be invited to present at Monash Education Academy events to disseminate their findings.
- If appropriate, applicants may be invited to contribute to a Learning Lunch Box session.

## Closing date

By **5.00pm Friday, 23 October 2015**. *No extensions will be provided under any circumstances.*

## Submission procedures

A signed copy of the application form and proposal document should be emailed to [education.academy@monash.edu](mailto:education.academy@monash.edu) by 5pm on the closing date.

## Selection criteria

An assessment rubric detailing the criteria applications will be assessed on is attached as an appendix to this document and will guide the assessment process. Grants will be selected on a competitive basis, therefore scoring highly on the rubric does not guarantee selection for a grant.



## Small Grants



### Application form

#### Applicant details

Title: Assoc. Prof.	First name: Tara	Last name: <b>McDowell</b>
Current position: Associate Professor and Director, Curatorial Practice		
School/Faculty: Monash Art Design & Architecture		
Email address: [REDACTED]		
Telephone (day): [REDACTED]		
Is this a team application? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

#### Project title (no more than 15 words)

<p>"Damp Camp": collaborative studio intensive producing a suite of exhibition display resources for student use.</p>
---

#### Additional team member details (add more lines as necessary)

Title: Mr	First name: Warren	Last name: <b>Taylor</b>
Current position: Lecturer, Communication Design		
School/Faculty: Monash Art Design & Architecture		

#### Have you received prior funding for this or for a similar project?

**Yes – related funding has been received**

If yes, please provide details:

Funding scheme	Year(s)	Amount awarded
<b>Better Teaching, Better Learning Student Bursary</b> awarded to PhD candidate Rosemary Forde to lead student-organised study group and exhibitions in semester 1, 2016	2015	\$2000

#### Will this project require human ethics approval? No

If yes, ensure that you send a copy of the approval you receive to [education.academy@monash.edu](mailto:education.academy@monash.edu)

## Budget (add more rows as necessary)

Item	Amount
Workshop facilitation fee – guest artist	\$800
Materials	\$2000
Printing and production	\$2000
Launch catering (lunch during O-Week)	\$200
<b>Total requested</b>	<b>\$5000</b>

## Project timetable (add more rows as necessary)

Projects should run for 6 months from receipt of funds.

Date	Activity
11-12 and 15-19 February 2016	"Damp Camp" studio intensive
O-Week Semester 1	Launch of "Damp Camp" outputs displayed on campus during O-Week
Ongoing throughout Semester 1	Ongoing use of modular moveable exhibition display devices for student-led exhibitions and events on campus

Please complete a **project outline no longer than one A4 page using the following headings** and sign the form on the next page.

- L & T problem/challenge to be addressed
- Proposed change to current practice
- Method/Approach
- Transferability of outcomes
- Alignment with Better Teaching, Better Learning Agenda

Tara McDowell

**Lead Applicant's Name**

**Lead Applicant's Signature**

**Date**

Please submit this form by email in **Word or PDF format by 5.00 pm on Friday, 23 October 2015** to:  
[education.academy@monash.edu](mailto:education.academy@monash.edu)



## APPENDIX 1: Assessment Criteria

Criterion		Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent
<b>1. Learning and teaching problem/challenge</b>	Criterion absent	Teaching and learning challenge is unclear.	Teaching and learning challenge is stated, but is not well articulated.	Teaching and learning challenge to be addressed is stated in clear, accessible language.	Teaching and learning challenge to be addressed is stated in clear, accessible language and significant evidence of this problem is supplied.
<b>2. Proposed change to current practice</b>	Criterion absent	Proposed change in learning and teaching practice is unclear.	Proposed change in learning and teaching practice clearly explained but is weak or unfeasible.	Proposed change in learning and teaching practice is feasible and clearly explained.	Proposed change in learning and teaching practice is clearly explained and feasible. Significant evidence of the need for change is supplied.
<b>3. Method/Approach</b>	Criterion absent	Methods unclear.	Methods described using discipline specific jargon.	Methods well described using concise, clear language.	Methods well described using concise, clear language. Need for such methodology defended.
<b>4. Transferability of outcomes</b>	Criterion absent	Unclear how outcomes will be transferred.	Proposed transfer of outcomes unlikely or unfeasible.	Proposed transfer of outcomes likely and feasible. Well described using concise, clear language.	Proposed transfer of outcomes likely and feasible. Well described using concise, clear language. Significant evidence of need for proposed outcomes supplied.
<b>5. Alignment with BTBL Agenda</b>	Criterion absent	Project is not aligned with the BTBL Agenda.	Project is partially aligned the BTBL Agenda.	Project is fully aligned with the BTBL Agenda.	Project is fully aligned with the BTBL Agenda. Significant evidence of alignment provided.
<b>6. Innovativeness and originality</b>	Criterion absent	Project is not original or innovative.	Some innovative aspects.	Fairly innovative and shows some originality.	Very innovative project demonstrating originality in approach
<b>7. Overall impression</b>					

### *Project: Damp Camp – collaborative studio intensive*

#### *L & T problem/challenge to be addressed*

Key to a dynamic learning experience in art, design and architecture is the studio culture that encourages a sense of creative community and peer learning. However, students in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (MADA) have limited opportunities to work collaboratively and have very little inter-departmental exchange.

The professional practice of artists, designers and architects pivots on the public presentation of their work. However, space for students to exhibit works for an audience and view the work of their peers and colleagues is very limited within MADA. In 2016 the MADA Gallery is relocating to a space less than half its current size, meaning a significant loss of space for the public presentation of work.

This project addresses a series of inter-related learning and teaching challenges across the faculty: Limited opportunity for creative student collaboration; Limited peer-learning or interaction between departments; Limited opportunities for students to practice the professional skills of exhibition and public presentation of work; Reduction of MADA Gallery.

#### *Proposed change to current practice*

This project enables student collaboration, peer learning and discovery. The approach is inter-departmental, creating an intensive experience of exchange and connection between students involved in the initial project, but also building ongoing connections and models of collaborative, shared teaching and learning between faculty departments.

The project takes an innovative approach to utilising limited space in the faculty. Students are at the centre of a process to develop modular design elements that can be used to demarcate temporary “pop-up” exhibition spaces. These resources will be utilised in student-organised exhibitions, providing a flexible platform and context within which art, design and architecture students can experiment with and practice the public presentation of their work.

#### *Method/Approach*

Phase 1. “Damp Camp” seven day studio intensive for a group of 16 highly motivated students selected from each department of MADA. The studio is led by Warren Taylor (Communications Design) and Rosemary Forde (Curatorial Practice) with a workshop facilitated by guest artists Damp (Australian collective of artists, designers, architects and educators, established in 1995). During the studio intensive students will collectively design and produce a small suite of exhibition tools including way-finding signage, posters, framing devices and modular display furniture.

Phase 2: The resources generated in the studio intensive will provide the means to create temporary display spaces throughout the faculty to frame and brand a series of student-led “pop-up” exhibitions throughout semester one (and beyond). Phase two is led by PhD candidate Rosemary Forde, with support from a Better Teaching, Better Learning Student Bursary.

#### *Transferability of outcomes*

The studio intensive will produce a range of resources that act as tools across placemaking, identity, and exhibition design. These resources will be transferable and available for use throughout the MADA faculty to create flexible, temporary ‘pop-up’ exhibition sites and frameworks for student-led, public-facing projects.

The format of an inter-departmental studio intensive, that generates collaborative learning, collective ownership and ongoing investment in MADA’s identity as a creative community, may also serve as a transferable model for future projects.

#### *Alignment with Better Teaching, better Learning Agenda*

This project provides a platform for students to become active participants in the learning process. It enables student-led learning and activity, collaborative and peer learning, and cross-disciplinary exchange. The project provides a professional and outward focused learning experience and empowers students to fully participate in and take a leadership role in the creative community of their faculty and campus.



## **Appendix 3**

### **3.4 Project report to the Monash Education Academy**

## **MEA Small Grants Scheme – Update, 16 May 2016**

**Project Title:** “Damp Camp”

**Team:** Associate Professor Tara McDowell, Warren Taylor (Lecturer), Rosemary Forde (PhD candidate)

**Faculty:** Art, design and architecture (MADA)

### *Where are you up to with this project?*

Phase 1. The major outcomes of this project were successfully delivered in February-March:

- Damp Camp Studio Workshop, 11-19 Feb
- Damp Camp exhibition at MADA Gallery, 22 Feb – 4 March
- Damp Timeline installation throughout the corridor of D2 (the fine art building), 29 Feb – 11 March

Phase 2. Exhibition design and program branding outcomes are ongoing:

- Elements of brand identity, including signage and posters, were developed in the studio workshop. This aspect of the project is ongoing throughout the year.

### *Have you had any successes since starting the project?*

#### **Damp Camp Studio Workshop**

Took place at MADA in February 2016, facilitated by Warren Taylor and Rosemary Forde.

15 MADA students took part in the workshop. Students were nominated to participate by lecturers in each department, resulting in a group of highly motivated students bringing a range of skills from design, architecture, fine art, visual art and art history. The group also represented a range of year levels from 2<sup>nd</sup> year to 5<sup>th</sup> year (of the architecture degree).

A highlight of the workshop was the half-day session led by the artist group Damp (Narelle Desmond, Deb Kunda, Sharon Goodwin, James Lynch). Damp introduced key works from their practice giving insight into their collaborative process, followed by a facilitated session that encouraged students to deconstruct the timeline as an organising feature of exhibition design. Damp’s workshop on the first day of the program was an effective ‘ice-breaker’ providing students with a model of working together throughout the project.

#### **Damp Camp exhibition and timeline installation**

The results from Damp Camp Studio Workshop were installed as a two-part exhibition across MADA Gallery and throughout the corridor of D2 at Caulfield campus. The MADA Gallery exhibition showcased the working processes involved in the workshop, including drafts and team projects, as well as the final design outcomes. The student participants designed and installed the exhibition with guidance from Warren and Rosemary, providing them with an opportunity to work together in a professional gallery setting, prepare exhibition materials, and consider audiences for their work.

### *Has the funding had any impact?*

The workshop, exhibition and ongoing design outcomes would not have been possible without the small grant. This project enabled students to have an inter-disciplinary, collaborative learning experience, outside of curriculum and assessment, with the engagement of professional artists and with public outcomes.

### *How effective has the funding been?*

The funding enabled us to invite the artist group Damp to present a half-day workshop with the group of 15 students. This was a rare opportunity for undergraduate students to work in an intensive hands-on environment with a professional collective of artists which also includes a practicing architect and designer.

Students indicated the following reasons for participating in Damp Camp: the chance to work with peers in other departments; to work on a creative project other than assessment tasks; to 'warm up' for the semester starting. Damp Camp met each of these goals for students and has led to connections and further collaboration between participants.

The funding also made it possible for design ideas developed in the workshop to be brought to fruition and produced, including: Damp Camp T-shirts; 1000 x A3 offset printed posters; photographic scanning and printing for exhibition; custom-designed tape printed with the program logo.

### *Have you had any challenges since the start of the project?*

Scheduling the workshop during non-semester period in February was an advantage as students were available to dedicate their time and attention to the project for an intensive five-day workshop followed by two days of installing the exhibition. By comparison, the ongoing aspects of the project are more challenging to coordinate as students have less time to commit to non-assessment tasks during semester.



Participants in Damp Camp Studio Workshop, February 2016





Damp Camp workshop participants in a game of 'spaghetti arms'



Damp Camp exhibition, MADA Gallery, 22 February – 4 March 2016



## **Appendix 3**

### **3.5 Damp Camp MADA Gallery exhibition poster**



## CURRENT SHOW

MADA GALLERY  
MONASH UNIVERSITY ART DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE



EXHIBITION: 22 FEBRUARY - 4 MARCH 2016

## DAMP CAMP

Damp Camp: Sarah Adkins, Samantha Barrow, Gillian Butcher, Lauren Conti, Lillian Cordell, Yoana Doleva, Jenna Fivelman, Mia Fleming, Rob Janes, Lucy Kingsley, Alex McGlade, Ned Shannon, Melissa Vallence, Beaziyt Worcou  
With: Rosemary Forde, Warren Taylor  
Special guests: Damp

### GALLERY HOURS

Monday–Friday 10am–5pm  
Closed on weekends and public holidays

### MADA GALLERY

900 Dandenong Road  
Caulfield East  
VIC 3145 Australia

[monash.edu/mada/gallery](http://monash.edu/mada/gallery)  
[gallery@monash.edu](mailto:gallery@monash.edu)  
+61 3 9903 2882

This exhibition presents provisional identity designs developed at Damp Camp Studio Workshop, a collaborative workshop for MADA students. Facilitated by curator Rosemary Forde and designer Warren Taylor, with a guest workshop by the artist group Damp, participating students responded to a curatorial and communication design brief for the program Art holds a high place in my life | Damp: study of an artist at 21. Three interdisciplinary teams of MADA students have worked together to propose identity concepts to be applied across posters, signage, wayfinding and exhibition design. The exhibition represents this collaborative workshop process and launches the identity for Art holds a high place in my life, a curated series of exhibitions and events on campus throughout 2016.

A related installation, Art holds a high place in my life: timeline runs throughout the corridor of building D, level 2, from 29 February. This project chronicles Damp's practice from 1995 to the present and references Tension: the '80s, a work by Damp installed in the very same corridor twenty years ago as part of Next Wave Festival 1996.

*Damp Camp Studio Workshop was supported by the Monash Education Academy small grant scheme.*

## **Appendix 3**

### **3.6 Damp Study Group participants**

Christien Brilliant

Elisa Cremean

Molly Dixon

Elly Jeffery

Gareth Kaluza

Ceryl Kanadi

Moz Lucas

Amanda Luo

Olivia Nolan-Bennett

Katherine Reynolds

Kubra Sener

Annie Apple Song

Kate Ten Buuren

Melissa Vallence

## **Appendix 3**

### **3.7 List of artworks and texts allocated to each Damp Study Group seminar**



## Seminar 1: Workshop with Damp

Desire: What we want and what we'll do for it

Key work for this week:

*More than a Feeling*

Damp

2001-2004

## Seminar 2: Site and Context

Key works for this week:

### 1. *Proposal for a public sculpture (Sign for Hastings)*

Damp

2008

Shown in the exhibition *Group Group Show* curated by Damp at the VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, 2008.

Artist's notes:

*Working in conjunction with an architect, Proposal for a public sculpture (Sign for Hastings) was the product of an investigation into the social and economic implications of living in Hastings. Located at the end of the train line with few social services and infrastructure, this outer suburban town was chosen for the site of this 'guerilla' public work. The 'locations' on the sign are taken from responses DAMP collected from locals who were asked about memories or sites of significance in Hastings.*

### 2. *Northlands*

Damp

2009

Installed at La Trobe University campus, for the exhibition *Wayfaring* at La Trobe University Museum of Art, 2009.

Artist's notes:

*Originally created as an advertisement for a new housing development, the infamous HOLLYWOOD sign was erected in 1923 and initially read HOLLYWOODLAND. With no intention of the sign being permanent and a predicted life-span of 18 months, its construction coincided with the rise of American cinema in Los Angeles and was eventually embraced by the masses. After decades of neglect interspersed with other instances of human intervention, it is perhaps apparent that the sign's existence is as much about preservation as it is destruction. LAND was eventually removed from the sign and an alarm,*

*cameras and motion senses installed.*

*On a small patch of a land between the moat and the museum, DAMP have installed an appropriated version of the HOLLYWOOD sign. Reading NORTHLANDS, the sign is both a tribute to the 'northside', as well as a reflection of the local vernacular. The HOLLYWOOD sign is painted over on a weekly basis so as to hide a kind of dissent or 'anti-social' behavior. Without the constant surveillance afforded to the HOLLYWOOD sign, NORTHLANDS, instead, is left to the whims of its audience.*

### **3. *Art holds a high place in my life***

**Damp and Monash Art Projects (MAP)**

**2016**

Installed in the Ian Potter Sculpture Court at MUMA

Commissioned by MAP with support from Curatorial Practice, MUMA, and MADA

Important precursors to the 2016 structure/sculpture include:

### **4. *Untitled***

**Damp**

**2007**

Large plinth installed with chairs on top, exhibited at Uplands Gallery, Melbourne.

Artist's notes:

*Untitled 2007 was constructed for DAMP's solo exhibition at UPLANDS Gallery in September 2007. The faux-marble over-sized plinth highlighted the tenuous divide between group and individual, while also elevating the status of group (any group – not just DAMP) to an obscure position. Executed towards the end of the Howard era, the plinth in retrospect, was a parting 'fuck you' gesture to the individualism and divisive nature of the previous 12 years. During the course of the exhibition DAMP held their weekly meetings in the awkward position atop of the plinth.*

### **5. *Untitled***

**Damp**

**2009**

Even larger plinth, with interior cubby house space, exhibited at the Queensland Art Gallery & Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, for The 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Triennial, 2009-10.

## Seminar 3: Value, transformation, authenticity

### Key works for this week:

#### 1. *Clothing Exchange*

Damp

1997

Exhibited at Grey Area artist-run initiative in the Port Phillip Arcade, 1997.

Artist's notes:

*Like many Damp works, this project involved a trade of sorts: participants gained a piece of clothing in return for a photo of themselves wearing the new (old) item. These photos were then placed alongside little narratives that the previous owners had written about their memories of the item, effectively transposing the history of the clothing onto its new owner through association. One of the benefits of working directly with strangers in this way is that they bring an unexpected energy into the dynamic.*

Read: article by Andrew McQualter in *Like Art Magazine*, 1997

#### 2. *The Harrison Collection*

Damp

2014

Exhibited at Neon Parc, Melbourne, 2014.

<http://neonparc.com.au/projects.php?id=117>

Read: review by Dan Rule in *The Age*:

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/destroyed-and-remade-collectibles-breaks-old-ground-for-art-group-damp-20140404-363xq.html>

#### 3. *Cesello Freddo*

Damp

2013

Exhibited at Kings ARI, in a group show titled 'My avant-garde is bigger than yours' curated by Nik Papas, November 2013.

<http://www.kingsartistrun.org.au/program/my-avant-garde-is-bigger-than-yours/>

This work was discussed in Damp's Lunchtime Art Forum lecture, available online at echo via the library: <http://www.monash.edu/mulo/home/art-design-and-architecture>

#### 4. *The White Lady Cubed*

Damp

**2016**

Exhibited at Incinerator Gallery, Moonee Ponds, in a group show titled *Authenticity...?* curated by Richard Ennis, 1 April – 22 May 2016.

Read: Sonia Harford article in The Age:

<http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/comedy/melbourne-comedy-festival/melbourne-international-comedy-festival-inspires-artists-to-make-fun-of-art-20160317-gnlan2.html>

and Natalie Thomas' preview in Art Guide Australia:

<http://artguide.com.au/articles-page/show/authenticity.../>



## Seminar 4: Art and Audience

### Key works for this week:

**1. The Bridge**

**Damp**

**1998**

**2. We're all Water**

**Damp**

**1998**

Exhibited at Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP), Melbourne, as part of the group exhibition *Evening Star Morning Star* curated by Charlotte Day, Max Delany and Stuart Koop.

**3. Scene 1 and Scene 2**

**Damp**

**2001**

Exhibited at Gertrude Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne, in the group show *Octopus 2* curated by Russell Storer. Also shown at Heide Museum of Modern Art in 2008.

**4. Here we are now**

**Damp**

**2002**

Exhibited at Uplands Gallery, Melbourne.

**5. A fete worse than death**

**Damp**

**2004**

Exhibited at Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

Artist's notes: *A Fete Worse than Death* presented the audience with the opportunity of getting back at their usual provocateurs Damp. Members of Damp were chained to a candy striped painted wall in the gallery, while they taunted the audience, a spruiker encouraged those that gathered to attack with supplied paint bombs. The sadomasochist performance, while granting an opportunity for the audience to vent, also eventually physically and psychologically wounded the artist.

## Seminar 5: "Conflict: It's a world full of hurt"

### Key works for this week:

#### 6. Punchline

Damp

1999

Installation and performance

Artists' notes:

*At first glance Punchline involved a presentation of a 'conventional' Damp installation of found and made objects. On opening night however, amidst a crowd of 500 people, a series of incidents were enacted by commissioned actors, as well as the artists themselves – the disturbance of opening speeches, a lovers' quarrel, 'accidental' damage to the works of art, among others...*

*These localised and carefully scripted events escalated into a disagreement and apparent conflict between the members of the group which eventually – and alarmingly – developed into an all-in brawl in which works were damaged and the (false) walls of the gallery trashed. The mood of the gallery's visitors during the opening shifted from discomfort to bewilderment to nervous relief once members of the public realised the constructed nature of the drama. Damp subsequently introduced video documentation of the opening 'performance' into the resulting debris, which formed the installation for the duration of the exhibition. A catalogue documenting the event underlined the group's idea of enacting the artist's worst nightmare at a gallery opening, and the investigation of fear as irrational, all consuming and when out of control, very ugly.*

Exhibited at 200 Gertrude Street (now Gertrude Contemporary) in 1999. Later exhibited (as documentation) in MUMA's show *Art as a Verb*, 2014, and Artspace, 2015.

Read: press release, review by Stuart Koop, review by Peter Timms, text by Max Delany.

#### 1. Untitled Bottle

Damp

2006

Recycled PET bottles, glue, gouache on paper

Artists' notes:

*A large bottle with scrawled SOS note asks for help off the Island. Given the DIY nature of the bottle, glued together from our own collection of soft drink containers, the request becomes farcical: if cast out to sea the bottle would inevitably sink. Made while watching Australia play Italy in the 2006 World Cup, and whilst also plotting the demise of the Howard Government.*

Exhibited in the group show *Bordertown* curated by artist Nadine Christensen at Uplands Gallery, Melbourne. And in the group show *Big in Japan* at Gallery Side 2, Tokyo.

#### 2. It's a world full of hurt

Damp

2007

Artists' notes:

*A giant tumour-like piñata, suspended by an oversized chain near the centre of the gallery, awaits an impending attack. The piñata – usually a gesture of goodwill and celebration – is*

*quietly undermined by the sinister faux weapons provided and the kitsch grotesqueness of the pink growth itself. It's a world full of hurt is partly a nod to the ritual of Pot-Latch – a party to redistribute hideous excess.*

Shown as the inaugural exhibition at Utopian Slumps “curator-run” gallery in Collingwood.

### **3. Big Scream Revolutions**

**Damp**

**2008**

**Video, 3 mins 19 sec**

Produced for the Biennale of Sydney 2008.

Damp were invited to contribute a video work to the ‘online venue’ of the 2008 Biennale of Sydney, directed by curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. The theme of the biennale that year was ‘Revolution: Forms that Turn’. At the same time, Damp were also asked by Indigenous artist Christian Thompson to run a workshop as part of MHUL Workshop at ACMI – an annual workshop for young Indigenous artists from across Australia founded by Thompson (Mhul means ‘idea or concept’, for central Queensland Bidjara people).

Damp decided to use whatever came out of the half-day workshop as their work to submit to the biennale – raising the significance of a workshop activity to an international audience and opening the opportunity beyond Damp to include other artists.

Artists’ notes:

*Big Scream Revolutions was a project that developed from a workshop Damp participated in at ACMI in February 2008. Artist Christian Thompson invited Damp to facilitate a project with emerging Indigenous artists from different centres in Australia. The resulting video was the product of a discussion concerning the idea of personal and political revolution and their permutations – from a disturbing silence, to misunderstanding, to abandoning the belongings in our pockets and one big scream (with Vikings!). The work was then presented in the online component of the Biennale of Sydney, 2008.*

See: video file uploaded to drive

## Seminar 6: "Group Group: Collective thinking and process"

### Key works for this week:

#### 1. Untitled Pencil

Damp

2010

Exhibited as part of *Direct Democracy* at MUMA

Read: Robert Nelson in The Age: <http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/pencilling-in-fight-for-democracy-20130528-2n9ew.html>

Dylan Rainforth in The Age: <http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/space-around-the-galleries-20130423-2id7q.html>

*Direct Democracy* catalogue – you can view this at MUMA or the library

#### 2. The Book of Shadows

Damp

2005 – ongoing

Exhibited at Studio 12, Gertrude Contemporary

Read: Studio 12 catalogue text by Harriet Morgan (PDF in the folder)

#### 3. Group Behaviour (A.K.A Spaghetti Arms)

Damp

2002

video

Group Behaviour is the video documentation of a human game – a muddle of linked arms must be unravelled to produce a circle, or perhaps two linked rings all in the confines of a geodesic dome.

#### 4. Group Group Show

2008

Group exhibition curated by Damp at VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery

Damp acted in the role of curator for this exhibition. They invited other artist groups and collectives to be part of the show. They included their own works: *Proposal for a public sculpture (Sign for Hastings)* 2008 and *Numero Duo* 2006-08.

*Numero Duo* is a series of drawings by Damp: Consisting of four men and four women in 2006, Damp sought to find their ultimate offspring via hypothetical procreation, without interbreeding. Four generations and 44 drawings later, *Numero Duo* emerged as a kind of future-imagined family tree with two 'ultimate' offspring.

Read: Group Group catalogue (scanned PDF in the folder)