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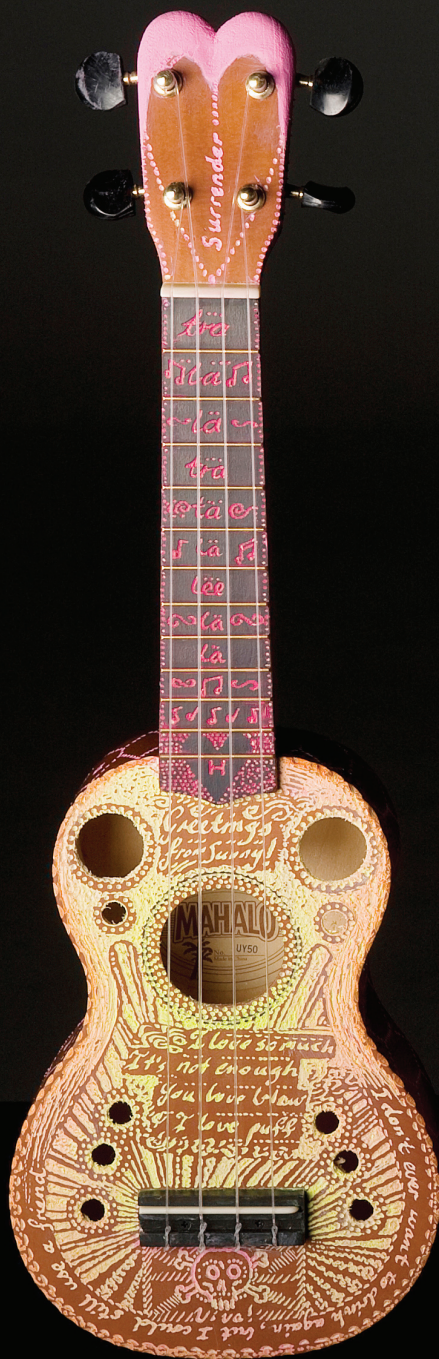
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HEARTLINES

27 - 28 FEBRUARY 2010



SASA
GALLERY

Heartlines

SASA Gallery & Fenn Place

Curator: Mary Knights

*'And I realised the impossibility which love comes up against. We imagine that it has as its object a being that can be laid down in front of us, enclosed within a body. Alas, it is the extension of that being to all points in space and time that it has occupied and will occupy. If we do not possess its contact with this or that place, this or that hour, we do not possess that being. But we cannot touch all these points. If only they were indicated to us, we might perhaps contrive to reach out to them. But we grope for them without finding them. Hence mistrust, jealousy, persecutions. We waste precious time on absurd clues and pass by the truth without suspecting it.'*¹ — Marcel Proust

Heartlines is an installation and performance project engaging with transient emotions, connections, things hidden and restrained, the beautiful and the terrible. Inspired by Paul Grabowsky's theme for the 2010 Adelaide Festival of the Arts, the artists in this exhibition have approached the perplexing mysteries of matters of the heart from wildly different perspectives. Creating an entangled web, ideas converge and intersect in space and through time.

The artworks in *Heartlines* are ephemeral, like emotions some endure while others last for barely a moment. At dusk Margit Brünner walks at the edge of the sea. To transfer her experience of elation, she journeys back to Fenn Place and screams a *Juchitzer*, an archaic Austrian call of joy. Playful and experimental, it pierces the air for a second or two before vanishing leaving only an invisible trace and memories.

Throughout his great work *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–1927) Marcel Proust (1871–1922) wove together memories and reflections of the past. Confiding secrets, betraying insecurities, describing moments of delight, hilarity and anguish, he exposed the vagaries of his heart and perceptively revealed machinations in Parisian high-society through the end of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century. Intimate dramas and grand passions are shadowed by long dissipated emotions and the inevitability of death.

Unfolding over twenty-four hours much of the work in *Heartlines* marks the passage of time. Kay Lawrence, referencing a ritual of desire in which young women waiting for their true love collected one thousand buttons and made 'charm strings', twists red silk into string and threads buttons given to her. Each is knotted into place with a wish for the giver — the fulfilment of their heart's desire. Exploring female sexuality and the body, Deborah Prior knits incessantly. Row by row the woollen skirt she is wearing gradually conceals her youthful body like a grey sheath. Linking fecundity

and mortality a bowl of fruit, cast in frozen black ink by Annika Evans, gradually melts leaving a dark stain on a white tablecloth or shroud.

Brassaï (Gyula Halász, 1899–1984) was fascinated by Proust's 'battle against Time, that enemy of our precarious existence'² and suggested that he found an ally in photography 'born of an age-old longing to halt the moment, to wrest it from the flux of *'durée'* in order to 'fix' it forever in the semblance of eternity.'³ Although in *Heartlines* the hours slip away, a snippet of time seems to be trapped in an endless loop in Amy Patterson's projected images of a wistful figure standing at the edge of the sea. Glimpses of the past are captured in Keith Giles's work that incorporates fragments of childhood photographs, tiny scraps of comics and found images that are tucked into matchboxes and partially obscured. Time also seems to pause in Jimmy McGilchrist's augmented real-time video. As people catch a glimpse of themselves or another on the screen and pause, butterflies settle and lightly touch the body, then scatter as if disturbed, dispersing like scrutinised emotions.

Proust's narrator, in the quote above, reflects on his maudlin love for the allusive Albertine and the intense confusion of emotions he felt at his inability to contain her. Italo Calvino (1923–1985) suggested that these jealous musings exemplified the intricacy of connections and networks that link 'space-time occupied in succession by every-one, which brings about an infinite multiplication of the dimensions of space and time.'⁴ Calvino considered multiplicity and the 'connections between events, people and the things of the world' as 'a method of knowledge'⁵ that was limitless and expanded endlessly.

Suggestive of a proliferation of connections, Matt Huppatz and Julie Henderson have made installations from found objects. Out of context, Matt's household things and Julie's work which includes felt made from her own hair cut across a twenty-year span, defy interpretation and suggest allusive emotional associations. Gary Campbell has made an installation of cascading interlocking plastic tags, each numbered as if registering an individual life. A link across time, Anton Hart & George Popperwell's uneasy sculptural object references a previous, related exhibition. Tracing space with a complex knotted line, Michael Geissler has suspended a drawing made from a single strand of copper wire in mid-air. Responding to connections and entanglements Jane Lawrence and Rachel Hurst have embroidered words onto pristine white paper wedding dresses and hurled them out of a window. Amy Baker has built an anxious and precarious matrix from thousands of sharp wooden skewers that seems to be expanding and multiplying organically from a concrete niche.

As *In Remembrance of Times Past* a vast spectrum of disparate emotions, moods and feelings are expressed and repressed in

Heartlines. Insinuating themselves into the space, two heavily armed security guards stand back-to-back silently guarding the entry to the Allan Scott Lecture Theatre. Occasionally they pace the pavement. Undermining their stern and alert demeanours, Pam Zeplin's pink-leopard skin love-hearts spill out of their pockets. Nearby, broadcasting connections across time and outer space, Andy Petrushevics presents a bizarre and disconcerting transmission from Dorcian from Mirandenox 5: "...from the realm beyond time, an incalculable space...your life force is already connected to us in your dreams...become one with your master..."⁶

Causing discreet spatial slippages and disruptions that are easily missed, Steven Carson has hung threads of sequins that flutter and catch the light near the entrance of the Dorrit Black Building. Brad Lay has made a tiny dramatic diorama in a corner. Toby Richardson and Steve Wilson's have resurfaced the angular shapes of fixed architectural forms with bevelled mirrors that reflect glimpses of the sky into the shadowed space.

While responding to specific sites, the artwork in *Heartlines* is speculative and opens up imaginative spaces. The emphasis is on artwork that is conceptually strong and physically slight. Jessie Lumb has made small magical incursions by filling cracks in concrete and bitumen with rainbow coloured fluorescent plasticine. Using clay dust Angela Valamanesh has shaped forms on the concrete floor under a museum cabinet reminiscent of disintegrating prehistoric bones. Strangely undifferentiated they could represent unearthed remains or a generic biological sketch. Shaw Hendry's engraved ukuleles exhibited courtesy the Hermano Fan Club brings into existence a whole imaginary world. Alluding to possibilities Irmina van Niele has suspended a long, fragile ladder made from plastic drinking straws from an overhead walkway. Like hopes and dreams it is insubstantial and just out of reach.

Many of the artworks in *Heartlines* allude to an absent presence. Heavy breathing echoes through corridors and walkways. Johnny Dady's cardboard pianos resonate with silence. Proust mused on the potential of intangible things to trigger memories and emotions: '*after the destruction of things, alone, frailer but more enduring, more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, smell and taste still remain for a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, on the ruin of all the rest, bearing without giving way, on their almost impalpable droplet, the immense edifice of memory.*'⁷

Implausibly, a perfect icicle hangs down the side of the Kaurna Building. Nicholas Folland's sculptural piece is exposed and extremely vulnerable. Louise Haselton has juxtaposed materials that surprise and perplex. Chris Boha's strange machine with shuddering spider-like legs seems vaguely familiar as if once seen in a dream. Proust wrote that the '*past is hidden outside the realm of our intelligence and beyond its reach, in some material*

object (in the sensation that this material object would give us) which we do not suspect. It depends on chance whether we encounter this object before we die, or do not encounter it.'⁸

In an intimate corner of an enclosed courtyard, a single wooden chair sits at the edge of a tiny garden. Hand-crafted from various woods, Linda Marie Walker's *Writing Chair* offers a still, contemplative place. When he first arrived in Paris in 1924 Brassai taught himself French by reading Proust. With each reading the text yields more, and it was not until Brassai reread *In Search of Lost Time* when he was ill in 1968 that he discerned the writer's emphasis on imagery and photographs in his books.⁹

Just as in Proust the '*self and the world...are systematically disaggregated into a plurality of selves and worlds. And this grand Proustian theme is mirrored in and enacted by Proust's language...*'¹⁰ artists in *Heartlines* have used text and language to explore many facets of emotional experience. John Barbour has written a cryptic text titled '*Where Do Words Go When they Get Tired?*' open to a multiplicity of readings. James Dodd has responded to public declarations of love and identity in found graffiti. Whispers of cherishing and love, Brigid Noone invites visitors to sit on her comfy old lounge and listen to a contemplative reflection while she inscribes tattoos of hearts, snakes, ribbons and star-bursts onto their skin. Integrating critical reflection and subjective responses, in his performance *Crooning & swooning: short songs for artworks*, Monte Masi serenades each artwork.

Beautiful and terrible, while much of the work reflects on the past, some of the artwork like Ray Harris's disturbing videos, Mary-Jean Richardson's fragile, ethereal and spectral images drawn on tissue paper, Troy-Anthony Baylis celebratory drag performances *Kaboobie Proud Mary* and *Kaboobie Sexy Ida* have a powerful emotional immediacy. And, possibilities for the future are foreshadowed by Dave Archer's *Love or Lust machine* (for only fifty cents), and James Marshall's installation *Lets Die Together*.

Endnotes:

1. Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past: The Captive*, trans. C.K. Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin and Andreas Mayor, New York: Random House: 1981, 95.
2. Brassai, *Proust in the Power of Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, Chicago & London: Chicago University Press: 2001, xi.
3. Brassai, *Proust in the Power of Photography*, 2001, xi.
4. Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, trans. Patrick Creagh, London: Vintage: 1996, 110.
5. Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, 1996, 105.
6. Andy Petrushevics, unpublished artist's notes, 2010.
7. Marcel Proust, *The Way by Swann's*, *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. Lydia Davis, New York: Penguin Books: 2002, 49-50.
8. Lydia Davis, 'Translator's Introduction', Marcel Proust, *The Way by Swann's*, *In Search of Lost Time*, 47.
9. Brassai, *Proust in the Power of Photography*, 2001, x.
10. Christopher Prendergast, 'General Editor's Preface', Marcel Proust, *The Way by Swann's*, *In Search of Lost Time*, xvii.

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Centre: Shaw Hendry, *Hermano Ukuleles Works*, 2009

Back: David Archer, *Love or Lust*, 2005

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