

2020 ADELAIDE//INTERNATIONAL  
SAMSTAG /

# 2020 Adelaide- // International



CONTENTS /

2020 Adelaide//International  
ERICA GREEN

---

03

From which within to return, depart?:  
assembled greetings for *Somewhere Other*  
ROBERT COOK

---

06

*Olympia (The real time disintegration  
into ruins of the Berlin Olympic Stadium  
over the course of a thousand years)*  
RACHEL HURST

---

15

Ruin Value  
ROSS GIBSON

---

23

Notes on measuring value, progress  
and productivity  
ANDY BUTLER

---

28

*Effect in three movements: Zoë Croggon,  
Helen Grogan, Georgia Saxelby*  
GILLIAN BROWN

---

33

Author biographies

---

40

### 2020 Adelaide//International

The Samstag Museum of Art is proud to present this second iteration of the *Adelaide//International*, a project over three consecutive years which in 2020 ambitiously assembles five exhibitions by Australian and overseas practitioners, comprising different creative disciplines. We are delighted to again be partnering with the Adelaide Festival, auspiciously on their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

From our establishment in late 2007, the Samstag Museum has pursued a programming philosophy of vigorous diversity. It is a diversity that not only illustrates developments in contemporary Australian art but also has regard for the international, without which the frame of reference becomes provincial and diminished. While we properly these days celebrate that Australian art has, for some time now, fed substantially from its own wellspring of practices and discourses, the complexities of the visual arts—challenging, sometimes bewildering, but invariably vital and intriguing—are fundamentally a reflection of the wider world in which we live, and its accelerating closeness. A social, political and environmental world. A cultural world.

Last year, the 2019 *Adelaide//International* was a consideration of the past and its influence. The exhibition constituted a ‘conversation’ between two artists from Australia and one each from Aotearoa New Zealand and Singapore, who presented individual meditations on the love and recovery of Indigenous culture in a postcolonial world. The artists shared a common inheritance from the profound sweep of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century English colonisation into ‘our’ geographical world, with the associated migrations, disruptions and exchanges that followed.

This year, the 2020 *Adelaide//International* is more concerned with the present, and its thematic vehicle is architecture, so central (as it is) to civilization’s modernity, history and evolution. The exhibition not only looks to the ways in which built forms command our awareness of their tangible spatial presence but also points to architecture’s indispensable role as a ‘choreographer of human experience’, facilitating our social dimensions, satisfying our material needs, and—inspirationally—fulfilling our highest aspirations for imaginative design excellence and innovation. We are also reminded that architecture, while essentially temporal in character, can, at its most sublime, transcend its original time and function, becoming ageless, a thing uniquely of itself, and an enduring touchstone for the present.

The centrepiece of the 2020 *Adelaide// International* is a recreation of Australia’s marvellous contribution to the 16th International Architecture Biennale in Venice. *Somewhere Other*, created by John Wardle Architects in collaboration with Natasha Johns-Messenger, is an intriguing large timber structure made from spotted gum—its colour, grain and scent redolent of the Australian bush— a habitat that draws the viewer to explore its mysterious passageways and to enjoy the surprise of unexpected vistas.

## INTRODUCTION /

Belgian artist David Claerbout is interested in time, which he conjures through an extraordinary recreation of Germany's Berlin Olympic stadium, built in 1936 and still symbolic of Nazi millennial ambitions. Claerbout's monumental moving-image work *Olympia (The real time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years)* not only digitally remakes the stadium, pixel by pixel, but with highly original software exposes it to natural, painstaking weathering that the viewer experiences in real time. With some irony of intent, *Olympia* has been designed to digitally endure into the far-distant future—albeit in this progressively ageing manner—in emulation of its Roman forebear.

Also joining the exploration—may we say, celebration—of architecture and its possibilities is the triumvirate of Zoë Croggon, Helen Grogan and Georgia Saxelby, whose graceful juxtapositions of architecture with the human form feature in the exhibition *Effect in three movements*, curated by Samstag curator Gillian Brown. In Fenn Place outside of Samstag, *Hold Me*, the disruptive soundwork of First Nations artist Brad Darkson, is a critical fugue on the 'architecture' of bureaucratic white society.

We must also acknowledge an associated fifth exhibition at the SASA Gallery, adjacent to Samstag, in which Matthew Bird, working collaboratively with lecturer Rachel Hurst and architecture students from the University of South Australia, responds to the *Adelaide//International* in an exhibition titled *Parallaxis*, a speculation on the 'afterlife' of architecture.

*2020 Adelaide//International* is supported by several respected writers who have provided informative essays on each of the *Adelaide//International* exhibitions: Robert Cook on *Somewhere Other*; Gillian Brown on *Effect in three movements*; Andy Butler on *Hold Me*; and Rachel Hurst and Ross Gibson, who each write on *Olympia*.

We sincerely thank all our participants in the *2020 Adelaide//International*. Their inspired engagement, and their creativity, skills, enthusiasm and insights have elevated our project to one of great originality.

Erica Green  
Director, Samstag Museum of Art  
February 2020



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# John Wardle

**from which within to return, depart?:  
assembled greetings for Somewhere Other**

**Robert Cook**

**A honing**

*Somewhere Other* by John Wardle Architects. Hello to it and them. One thing I should say is that John speaks and writes wonderfully about his project. He's easy with it, relaxedly pulling the elements together, grounded yet alive to the task, the project, its possibilities, openings it might yet produce. Candid about the challenges, the gestational turnabouts. Toward my memory of his voice—its calm confidence, its presence within the work—I assemble fragments and projections, phantoms. Interpretation? Not that. Indeed I rather feel that *Somewhere Other* is itself an interpretation of Wardle's own body of work, in the form of a honing-in-on, in the form of a part in which we might see the whole, and awry perhaps. No, definitely. If he has made a looking machine (if!), it is one whose inward gaze pushes out to amplify his work's capacity to bridge, traverse and link. In *Somewhere Other*—as a project made in this country towards another, Italy; from this cultural and political and material space to the conglomerate inter-nationalism of its Venice Architecture Biennale destination—those elements become gestural, points of welcome, greetings. We might thereby apply this metaphor (analogy?) broadly to his discipline entire, considering it as a set of points of tension, release, union and remove. If we were Freudians there would a reference to membranes. But because we are thinking here about the idea/experience of "Australia" archi-translated, The Go-Betweens work: "like a lip lifted from a lip". Greetings then come as goodbyes, doors are moved through, in or out, our movements and sight lines have poetry and drama. To it that Hello and.

**But which corridor to take? What angle to view? From which within to return, depart?**

(Before here, Adelaide, where I am not, *Somewhere Other* slipped through the Suez Canal, on its way from Geelong—I've never been—to Venice. Such things happen daily, I'm sure, no doubt with zero fanfare, but there remains a generational romance in this breach, though I don't mean to exoticise—though globes and flows and power and memory and myth and feeling and nuances of belonging flicker nonetheless through the work. And so, in one beat, I see it—its cone-like shape, its framework and divisions—as a ship in a bottle, gently tugged into three-dimensional form once slipped inside the Samstag Museum. It did not happen—has not yet happened—that way, though let's hold that somewhere otherwise, so that the modularity of transit—of flat-packing and the shipping of cargo and meaning—just barely glances our sense of an Eames partition, their light bracketing-off of spatial experiences as a prelude/postlude to open-plan living and working, so that the delicate and personal ego- and geo-politics that guide the sub-division of our living moment-to-moment float, buoyant, as a kind of question around our who, why and where—all those matters that arise when canals and globes are mentioned.) Can this be taken to read as a note about how the care involved in ensuring the work speaks of its (principle) place as a set of diverse sensory experiences echoes an equal commitment to ensuring it does not overwhelm, that it does not claim space, but makes space-for? Conversation, others, participation, a heading-toward, around and away.

## Attendance

*Somewhere Other* was not made but attended to, functioning as an idea-as-gathering-point for the warm union of peers, a prolonged *occasion* for the honouring and sharing of skillsets. It being a long-form composition, therefore, for the performance of regarding humanism antithetical to the Allen key era of our recent past while utilising that era's flat-pack patter to form new relationships to the-made and the-making. Respect emanates, as does that of community—a community whose talents combine to elevate. In this I read a notion around craft as an exercise in care-giving as founding a design approach based on specifically toned attitudes to the limit-line of materials. Technologies do not collide but negotiate, and they don't discriminate between who is technological and who isn't (they are selves, it seems, agents of construction! I have no way of knowing this!). Venetian glass-makers work with the parameters of colour production, Wardle then working around possible volumes to ensure the lens can make new journeys for various eyeballs; Natasha Johns-Messenger advises on optics and believability, her mirrors forming an impossible tunnelling within and through only if certain conditions are met (they are); Coco and Maximilian assemble a filmic curation of the broader Wardle oeuvre's edgings, perimeters and frames; assemblers in Venice oil the wooden surfaces so that its presence announces itself in unexpected ways. The work is a fitting-together—physically and conceptually and communally.

## It is also a splitting, and splintering.

I mean the way it slots together, its form, the vision-shaping. But also...I'm feeling it from a particular place, and how to widen that? Perhaps by acknowledging my reflex habit of feeling uneasy around and inside (scare-quote bear-hugged) Architecture; by its careful, considerate and refined distance from the mass-built facility-esque homes and units of my childhood-adolescence-to-kinda/absolutely-now. (My 1984 unit in a group of eight has archways, for god's sake!) It's not a diminishing or a class shame thing; it's that its rational and sensual will to beauty, pleasure and purpose and respectful/rhetorical honouring of the occupant and (occupancy as haptic idea and ideal) frame values and states of being I can't live up to. I cannot and will not relax, and I cannot and will not be actually present. I like my spaces therefore unassertively provisional and doubled, screens for drifting and platforms for doing, tentative structures for the rehearsal and projection of the self to come, not the self that is, and it's from this not-entirely-coherent complex that I project an unforced kinship with John Wardle's project, a kinship that transcends my anxious Archi-phobia. It might help that while it's the product of an architect, it's not exactly architecture, but it's also not-not architecture, and I guess it's the work's categorical indeterminacy that is not only comforting to me but is its actual "zone" of resonance; it conceptually channels an analysis of the problematics of dwelling in a singular place via a fractured embodiment of a split-state betweenness, and, in doing so, undercuts the glib aesthetic moralities of deserved-occupancy (I'm so anti-this, hence the repetition). And more besides. Provisionality (obviously so pro-this, repetition, again, again) happily reigns. Indeed, the first version of the work (fashioned after an ambitious tapestry commission he had undertaken) was rejected by Wardle for feeling like too much "a building" (I think I have that right) and so the work itself is defined by that moment of its shifting and folding to lightness, to the fragment and fragmentation.

Its structural reference points therefore are not modernist universalist functionalism as a united sequence of psychic, economic and racial “clearings”—the problems of Heidegger ringing through all that—but hallways, passages, corridors, keyholes, looking-glasses, scopes, each with their own specific gravities. The filmic projections of *Coco* and *Maximilian* chart its motion, lineage and incidents, such that the private and public twin, where halls encourage and anticipate our *trajectories*, eyes and bodies are drawn, not merely in dull motion, towards a kind of end, yes, but an end shaped in such a way that the space and act of transition has a quality and a substance in and of itself. This changes the very idea of “outlook” and the “window” when the journey is a destination.

Perhaps I am writing from a memory of “the passage” as it presented to me as a child. The passage, spoken as such, took me from the family room to bed, there was often a ride involved, and it marked the separation from the group life of the communal living room (if only living was happening!) to the dream space of the self; a division and a release containing anxiety and freedom. Wardle’s wooden planes and angles thereby carry a legacy of a physically structured retreat into the inner worlds that we build ourselves from, and in doing so necessarily conjure the spirit of a schematic surrealism that is part Lynch, part Lacan, part Bachelard.

The Lacan part is admittedly an intuitive leap but I have in mind his (to me) opaque and entirely indecipherable diagrams locating the subject in regards to the Other, desire, the/an unconscious, that seem to spatialise the self by opening it out and turning it in on itself. It’s a version of this that I think Wardle’s piece performs. The set-up of the walls in concert with the explicit positionings of the body, and then the run-off/draining of vision out and through the series of mirrors that virtualises the reality and acts out the division of here and there, the physical and the ocular, the conscious and the unconscious; awareness lodged in the visual, the forgetting of the body as a lumbering unconscious, even if only for a moment. Again, a (Sartrean, the keyhole moment in *B and N*) splitting nonetheless, quite clearly laid out; one must surely be aware of this imminent self-loss as one approaches the...cone? Hood? Beak? Ear trumpet? (It is in fact modelled on the Venetian mask, with its long nose. Those things freak me out.)

The handles are therefore not only for bracing and balancing but for bracing against the sudden unpolliced visibility of the viewer’s body. The vulnerability of that, being seen but not seeing back, being occupied. Or seeing in only one direction. And of needing to be prepared for the self-forgetting to come, this anticipation itself a threshold and a passage of a kind, and maybe even a release and a relief is being promised as one gives oneself over. In this, a relation to the Law? Perhaps; John also references the mask of Ned Kelly, its built-in cinemascope of pursuance and rebellion, a prison and buffer both.

**Also: the work maybe tells you what to do, and maybe you anticipate that. Do you precede yourself? Does *Somewhere Other* make you live in the future? Is it a reverse delay pedal?**

**It strikes me I don't know how to enter things.  
Ideas, artworks, projects. Maybe buildings?**

Momentarily over-excited I lurch at them from the side, find myself suddenly at some disorientating mid-point of "the entity". It's all around me. Having not entered by the front door, having not spent time with the host, having not been shown around, having not acclimatised, I rush to locate landmarks.

There's some panic in this, in the "having not", and in the real time of the typing out of my phantoms towards the actual project, elsewhere this spirit is shudderingly present, inappropriate...

It strikes me—the entity of *Somewhere Other* is this spatial temporal destabilisation. Its care is a softening of it but not a repression of it (destabilisation, *et al.*). Indeed, it is the ways these elements are assembled that generate its spark while also embodying the binary nature of it, the cleaving of the hemisphere, the eye from body, here from there, scene from frame. It is a particularisation by way of these relationships, and through it the quasi-Heideggerian question arrives to greet us:

**Can we dwell on a bridge?  
Or are they conceptually counter?  
If not, does the work propose that the future is non-binary?**

**Or is it asking us to accommodate a series of slippages through various binaries? Passages. Mostly smooth. Our minds and bodies providing the traction for the differences from ourselves. Wall to wall. A face-off.**

This idea-enclosure mirrors the work-form, and I think I want it to be the image that closes the greeting. By speaking itself to itself. I can step away.

Save a photo in the Esther McCoy book (*Piecing Together Los Angeles*). The "Richard Walker family" (yes, really) on the roof of their in-progress Malibu Hills home, shot for the *Living for Young Homeowners* magazine, 1949. The home they will begin their group lives in. And then so many others. Plaid pioneers, the space a modern clearing for and from their birthright.

Well, how much space there was and what we did with it, beyond declare presence and occupation? It is harrowing. I can't believe I can't let it go.

Still, while the point I assume has already been made, again I stress *Somewhere Other* is long way from this kind of platforming...though its difference does mean a restating is in hand to make *more clear* how the work is enfolded in another notion of what space might yet be, and what and how we might be subject to it.

In this sense, screens and screening take different meanings, globally. Get me?

And it strikes me, because Martino Stierli's book was once on my lap, that *Somewhere Other* is—of course (!)—a cubistic montage! A way of dealing with scale and prospect and time, of finding a way to fit in the fullness of viewing when a clearing does not present itself.

Splintering prevails in order to incorporate awry. This makes sense.

OK, to montage is to slice and unify, to cut and care—not for healing but for another proposition for a newly mutant self that the work provides geographical memories for.... To ensure continuity of self, while opening it up a little..

From what vantage point will we then look back at ourselves and wonder who these people were, who took so long to become Merleau-Ponty, pre-Freudians keeping their viscosities landlocked? We will see ourselves today as lingering modernists...despite our rhetoric. Sitting on what windowsill?

*Somewhere Other*, as greeting, welcomes this looking-back, bridging the envisioning.

Well that's "theory" for you.

Stepping away.



Image: JOHN WARDLE ARCHITECTS, *Somewhere Other*, 2018, installation view, 2020 Adelaide//International. Photo: Sam Noonan



Image: JOHN WARDLE ARCHITECTS, *Somewhere Other*, 2018, installation view, 2020 *Adelaide//International*. Photo: Sam Noonan



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# David Claerbout

**Olympia (The real time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic Stadium over the course of a thousand years)**

**Rachel Hurst**

David Claerbout is unlikely to be offended by the observation that his work is about as interesting as watching grass grow. For in his millennium-long, computer generated video installation, *Olympia (The real time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic Stadium over the course of a thousand years)*, that is exactly what we watch. With this first showing of Claerbout's work in Australia, we are introduced to the Belgian multi-media artist's preoccupation with the moving image, and his capacity not only to critique photographic and cinematic conventions, but to destabilize time itself. In the context of the architecturally influenced exhibitions, in the *2020 Adelaide// International*, Claerbout's project offers a subversive commentary on some of the conceits of architecture—namely its pretenses of permanence and persuasion.

*Olympia* is a relentless promenade through one of the uneasiest icons of 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture, the 1936 Berlin Olympic stadium, recreated digitally with all the exactitude of the ideologues of the German Reich who conceived the original, but with diametrically opposed intentions and methods. Each stone, each column and bronze stanchion has been replicated and placed meticulously according to the original, though the building blocks here are not sandstone and steel, but software code. Like the Roman god Janus, the stadium looked simultaneously backwards a thousand years to the classical forms and political might of the Roman Empire, and forwards fanatically to a millennium of Nazism, as if nothing could disrupt its longevity. In common with many significant architectural edifices it assumed a kind of perpetual present, impervious to climatic changes, political or meteorological. In contrast, Claerbout's virtual *Olympia* embraces real-time phenomena of weather, seasonal change, material growth and decay, using sophisticated programming and instantaneous authentic data input (reflecting the weather in Berlin from day to day). Begun on the Ides of March 2016, the effects of nearly four years of cyber-life will be apparent to Adelaide spectators—in the accumulation of dust, weeds, vegetal growth, spiderwebs and the like—as will immediate conditions in Berlin. More profoundly, its prolonged focus on architectural occupation asks us to reconsider our own temporality, and what part architecture plays in choreographing our behavior. Whether in contemplative stasis within the Samstag gallery, or elegiac circuit through the monumental propaganda of the Berlin stadium, *Olympia* offers a portal to see ourselves.

Trained as a painter, but specializing early as a lithographer, Claerbout had established his reputation working photographically by the late 1990s, before concentrating on the moving image as his predominant creative mode. Fascinated by the implicit assumptions in any visual form, he suggests that lithography, with its cumulative assemblage of the final image, inculcated him in a process where one is never seeing the entire picture, perhaps instilling the deconstructive urge that pervades all his work.<sup>1</sup> For oddly he seems to have spent much of his career interrogating image-making as an affectionate sceptic, always looking for the gaps, the visual clichés or morbidity indicators in any medium, laying them bare through his own image making. Still photography, for example, remains integral to his recent practice: sometimes as a springboard (for example using old found photos in *Ruurlo, Bocurloscheweg*,

1910 (1997)); sometimes as foundation for CGI manipulation as in *Oil Workers (from the Shell company in Nigeria) returning home from work, caught in torrential rain* (2013), or as companions to a projection, like the second screen of *Olympia* that harvests details from the animation as single images. Yet he describes photographs almost disparagingly as “films that keep their mouths shut”,<sup>2</sup> declaring that photography is an ideology of the past, eclipsed by cinema, and more immediately by digital visualization, in the same way photography itself usurped painting.<sup>3</sup> “The temptation, it seems, is always things that are over the horizon, technically and conceptually.”<sup>4</sup> So one can trace in Claerbout’s portfolio an evolution from painting through lithography to CGI animation that shadows technological invention, while at heart his obsessions are intangibles of time and memory. “I’m full of paradoxes...” he admits “...I’m the greatest enemy of new technologies but I use them.”<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, he uses analogue drawing—the only remnant of his foundational training—at the inception of many of his projects, storyboarding sequences and composing camera angles. This parallels the architectural world where, despite increasingly digital production from documentation to construction, the hand sketch remains a primary way to manifest first ideas. But like the virtuosity of his meticulously staged moving image works, Claerbout’s drawings are no casual scribbles: in other *Olympia* installations his lush renderings of the stadium could make an exhibition in themselves.

The multimedia aspect of Claerbout’s work makes sense when you realise it’s a progression of means to an end. Though each of his major works can be seen as a simultaneous celebration and dismantling of the image as a core cultural artifact, their cornerstone themes are time, repetition and material memory. Irrespective of technology, Claerbout argues that vision is a synthetic sense, deeply informed by memories from the other senses. We have something like a perceptual DNA, made up of our past exposure to simple phenomenon, like moving light, wind, surfaces of water, oil or ice. Claerbout tries to marshall these impressions as phenomenological truths that enable his works to be experienced as something more visceral than a retinal imprint.<sup>6</sup> It’s an intent that would be familiar to many contemporary architects like Peter Zumthor, Wang Shu and Studio Mumbai, pushing against the progressively ocularcentric nature of the discipline, to promote sensorially rich and ontologically informed buildings.

While memory is one key to this expanded sensory experience (particularly of repeated patterns, such as seasonal flux), so too are other time frames like duration. “I sculpt in duration...”, says Claerbout, “...with anything that can reside in memory and be summoned by memory.”<sup>7</sup> A pivotal predecessor to *Olympia*, *Bordeaux Piece* from 2004 illustrates both this durational manipulation and the requisitioning of architecture as a canvas for cyclical occupation. Set in the ‘Bordeaux House’ by distinguished Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, the film tracks the passage of light, wind and sound across the house for an entire day, as the backdrop for a ten-minute scene performed 70 times by the same actors. It is an exhausting layering of two scales of temporal repetition, yet at just under 14 hours long, was a mere limbering up for *Olympia*, which Claerbout describes as “the project of my life”,<sup>8</sup> the culmination of 15 years of thinking and experimentation.

While *Bordeaux Piece* ostensibly portrays real life, being film of an actual house, with human occupants and a semblance of narrative, *Olympia* is a fabrication: utterly uninhabited, the only protagonists are the vegetation and detritus that accumulate in a time scale so vast there is no hope of seeing the whole story, let alone repetitions of it. Yet Claerbout describes it as “biologically alive”,<sup>9</sup> as the scenes that play across the screen have not been seen before and cannot ever be seen again with the same degree of authenticity. They are entirely of the moment, evolving, albeit infinitesimally, as we view them. The images exist in synchronicity with our lives as we live them.<sup>10</sup>

As the camera glides smoothly through the Stadium colonnades, it is easy to overlook the demanding logistics of making the work. Building the massive digital model took extensive archival research, 3D scanning and hours of CGI production time, while coding a computer program that simulated the seasons and biology of decay required collaboration with software and biological experts, architects, engineers and gardeners. Ironically the real stadium is rather a fragile construction, designed fastidiously by Werner March yet built hastily as a theatre of Nazi propaganda. Claerbout questions whether the architects of the Third Reich ever took seriously the idea of a 1000 year reign, but were motivated by its allegorical aspect, where even the ruins would immortalise an eternal totalitarian movement.<sup>11</sup> In dramatic counterpoint, *Olympia* has been built with the most rapidly obsolete technology, for software evolves from one day to the next, yet it has the potential to exist indefinitely, hermetically sealed from the elements. Claerbout notes dryly, “Software is redundant tomorrow, but is the ambassador for eternity.”<sup>12</sup>

The clash between ideological and biological time in *Olympia* exposes the blind spot in architecture toward time generally. Architectural writer Jeremy Till suggests that it is the goal of every architect to control time, “to banish those elements of time that present a challenge to the immutable authority of architecture”.<sup>13</sup> Time is essentially “the enemy of architecture”,<sup>14</sup> and every effort is made to remove, resist or manipulate the dangerous but inevitable elements of flux, which include not just cyclical conditions, but those of “linear time (programmable change, dirt, ageing and social drift)”.<sup>15</sup> Complicit in this denial, architectural photography in the 20<sup>th</sup> century presented buildings as “idealized moments, before time enters to disturb the perfection of the scene”, providing “solace for architects who can dream for a moment that architecture is a stable power existing over and above the tides of time.”<sup>16</sup>

*Olympia* does none of these things. Instead of presenting a perpetually pristine edifice, “the real story becomes plants growing, the background that has no story to tell.”<sup>17</sup> The building (and with it Nazism) disappears behind growth as the edifice itself decays, erasing itself. In what might be every architect’s worst nightmare, the foreground of the architectural endeavor is obliterated by the background, and the impregnable symbol of Hitler’s “criminal utopia”, is recast with a “techno-hippie soul that celebrates weeds”.<sup>18</sup> And like techno music it relies on repetition to make it disorienting. Just as the original stadium exploited its vast circularity and regular geometry to homogenise space and seduce spectators, so too *Olympia* understands the potency of the circle. The camera tracks in a constant orbiting movement to reinforce the incessant loop of the space, cycle of time and encroaching nature. It reveals that, unlike photography, there is no fixed focus and no Fourth Wall. “The image is replacing the object itself and becoming a universe in itself.”<sup>19</sup> Till might argue that this type of controlled computational promenade is a further form of “temporal coercion”<sup>20</sup> embedded in the contemporary imaging of architecture, and it is true that the pace has an almost meditative effect: yet the reversal of orthodox visual hierarchies and the creeping growth and decay are anathema to conventional modes of architectural representation. What exactly are we supposed to be looking at?

And where are we in the picture? There are no humans in *Olympia*. While this is comparatively commonplace in architectural photography, it is rarer in cinematic forms. Claerbout’s works, particularly those in architectural and urban settings, have generally been inhabited, often artificially setting the tempo of occupation against other tempos of movement (as in *Sunrise* [2009], *Sections of a Happy Moment* [2007], and *Long Goodbye* [2007]). His goal was to have the “human body as an ironical measure of architecture”.<sup>21</sup> But in *Olympia* humans are not the reference. The critical animation comes from other forms of nature, and the dynamic of the camera. Human presence is nevertheless implicit in the film: in its walking pace, in the immediate reality and anticipation of the Anthropocene over the next millennium, and through its coevality with our real-time collective viewing of the work.

This is part of the cleverness of the piece. We are seemingly distant from the reality of this work—a fabricated place, a manufactured future and the impossibility of seeing it all—yet it nevertheless choreographs our experiences in stronger ways than many tangible bricks-and-mortar buildings do. The average duration for viewing an artwork in a gallery is comparatively fleeting—somewhere between 17 and 28 seconds<sup>22</sup>—and curators are acutely conscious of the need to cater for visitors who are either “screamers, strollers or scholars”.<sup>23</sup> Claerbout, in contrast, almost goes *misère*, suggesting that the viewer needs time to settle into the exhibition space; that he likes to ‘lose’ visitors via a lack of events or spectacle within his images; that perhaps in the sanctuaries of contemporary museums, they could even fall asleep. “Only when I have lost their attention can the viewer set their mind on something else than that of a movie goer.”<sup>24</sup> Beyond the composition of images, Claerbout is effectively extrapolating his techniques of foreground-background slippage to the habits of spatial occupation. Instead of *using* the architectural space, we are simply *dwelling* there.

If this implies a negation of architecture, where it becomes an accommodating but quiet presence, it may be a rare but not unheralded concept in the discipline. Zumthor, for example, advocates for buildings that are “not mere vehicles for an artistic message”, but ones that “seem simply to be there. We do not pay any special attention to them.”<sup>25</sup> Spending time in them—like time spent immersed in *Olympia*—“our perceptive faculties grow quiet, unprejudiced and unacquisitive ... Here in this perceptual vacuum, a memory may surface, a memory which seems to issue from the depths of time.”<sup>26</sup>

In a world where time and space are always monetised and always scarce, Claerbout’s investigations add weight to the work of phenomenologically attuned architects like Zumthor, Peter Märkli, Sandra Barclay, and, in the context of this Australian event, Kerstin Thompson and John Wardle; architects who, like Claerbout, aim to make temporality become tactile, something you might feel here and now, and something which replaces overt narrative with the rediscovery of vacant time. And whether dwelling in a real space or the virtual cloisters of the Berlin Stadium, “the tools of production have been used in very sophisticated ways to do ostensibly nothing.”<sup>27</sup>

The production time for *Olympia* ends in 2041. Unless he is still alive then, Claerbout says his studio will relinquish it, to be fostered by somebody else: its prognosis is not dependent on technology, but the desire to continue to feed the project.<sup>28</sup> Assuming it plays on for another 996 years, there should be at least thirty generations who can see it with the absolute certainty that they will die before the program shuts down. It’s a claim few architects would dare make of their projects, though the rhetoric of ‘timelessness’ is a familiar trope in the profession. With *Olympia*, Claerbout provokes not only the conceits of the original stadium architects, but those of the contemporary profession, who deal superficially with both the ideological, material and climatic durability of their work.

Just as it takes a brave architect to allow time to creep into both the imagery and design of their buildings,<sup>29</sup> it takes a brave artist in the brouhaha of the contemporary art world to pursue a philosophy of elevating boredom. Claerbout is currently continuing to study the distances between irreconcilable phenomenon—whether fast and slow time, wind and the photograph, fire and fixed matter, or fluid and static states. His sustained meditations on digital materiality, and how the ever more penetrating digitalisation of our world is altering our nervous systems and perception, are a brilliantly perverse use of ethereal cyber technology to heighten our sense of the corporeal.<sup>30</sup> So as we watch the grass growing round and through and over *Olympia*, Claerbout is delving further into elemental transformations of matter, vocal sound and deep reflexes of fear and meditation. Perhaps his next work will be like watching paint dry. We can only hope so.

## DAVID CLAERBOUT /

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Image: David CLAERBOUT, *Olympia* (the real-time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years), video still, 2016.

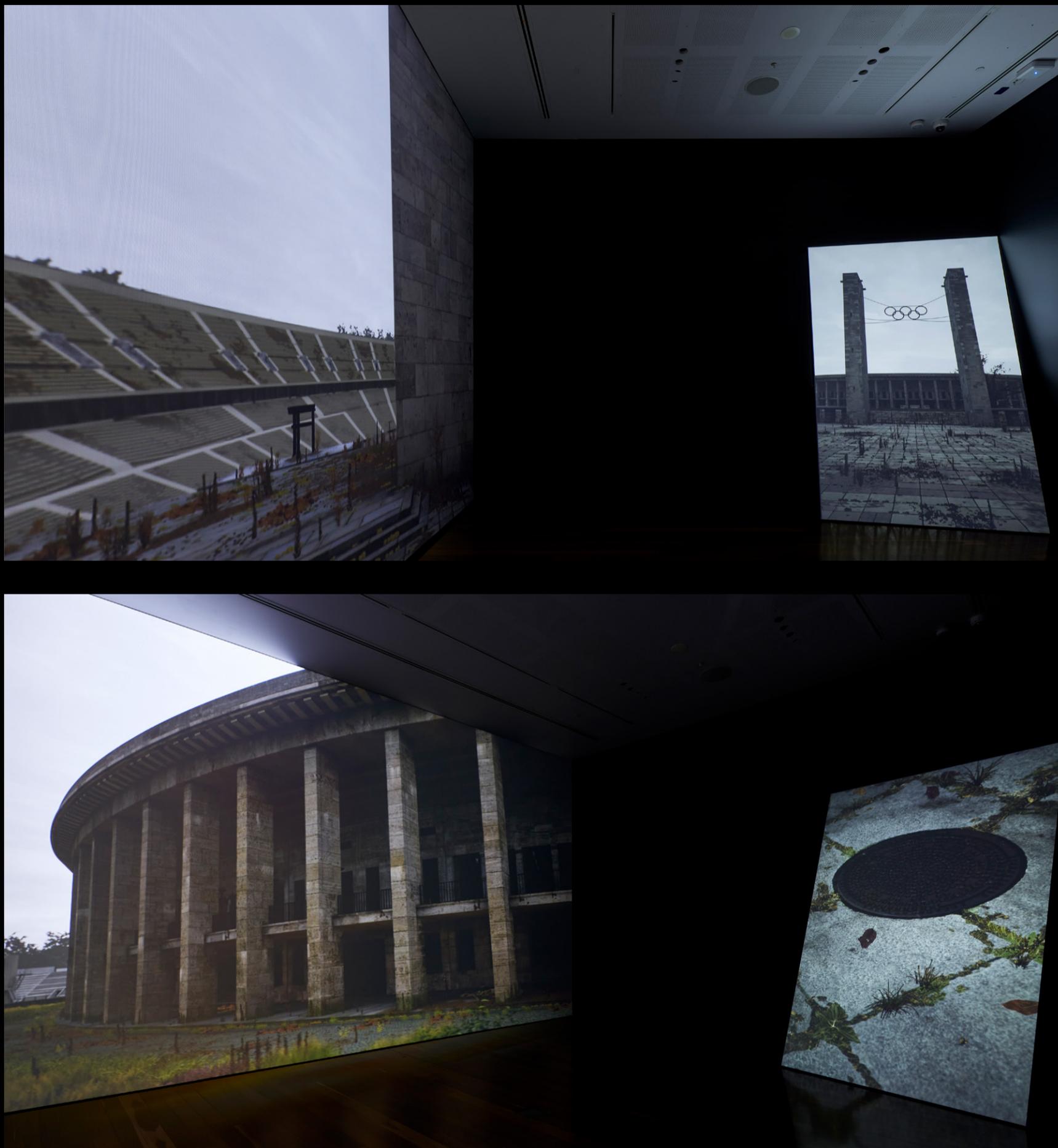


Image: David CLAERBOUT, *Olympia (the real-time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years)*. installation view, 2020 Adelaide//International. Photos: Sam Noonan



Image: David CLAERBOUT, *Olympia (the real-time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years)*, video still, 2016.

## Ruin Value

### Ross Gibson

Berlin's Olympic Stadium (1936) is the subject of David Claerbout's properly monumental video installation at the Samstag Museum. The artwork exemplifies Thierry Davila's canny observation that Claerbout is a master-builder of 'temporal objects'. These are objects whose main theme is time. Time needs to be invested and expended around them – your time and the object's time. In fact, so intensive is this investment and expenditure, viewers of *Olympia* soon find themselves drawn away from their customary, personal tempo as they delve into the currents of time—swirling past, present and future together—that wait within the space visible on the screens.

In this case, the space depicted is a history-thickened public edifice: the Berlin Olympic stadium. The stadium's inauguration is conventionally dated as 1936, but the time instilled in the place is not so simply announced. The massive, controversial complex is suffused with many different eras. Indeed the poly-chronic density in the place is the reason Claerbout chose it as the subject of this—perhaps his boldest—temporal object.

Across many centuries, the Grunewald Forest sprawled on the western edge of Berlin until a swathe was cleared in 1909 to allow the construction of a racecourse. The supervising architect was Otto March, who in 1912 was also awarded the contract to turn the precinct into an arena for the 1916 Olympic Games, due to be staged in Berlin. Foundations were laid for a stupendous arena, much of it to be submerged into the old forest earth. World War One, however, prevented the Olympics and annulled the stadium. Even so, in the ensuing decade March supervised the construction of various smaller sporting venues on the site.

In the early 1930s, with the announcement that the 1936 Olympics were to be hosted by Germany, Otto March's sons, Werner and Walter, were awarded the contract to build a contemporary coliseum on the site of their father's legacy.

The Nazis came to power in 1933. Enter Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, who sketched over and ideologised the March dynasty's plans. Here the time-tangle in the stadium gets denser and darker. Speer's first alteration was to the modernist steel trusses that the March brothers had planned. He replaced them with myriad columns of *muschelkalk*, a fossil-embedded limestone. By Speer's reckoning, not only did the newly specified masonry highlight ancient history because of the limestone's compacted seashell stratification but it could also gather an aesthetic gravitas as it weathered and crumbled during the centuries following the ascendancy of the 1000-year Reich. According to Speer's vision, as future generations paraded through time, the *muschelkalk* would crumble into an orchestrated, beauteous decrepitude. Thus in its foreshadowed future collapse, by virtue of the prescience of its wilful master-builders, the stadium could become transcendently authoritative, serene and eternally composed, even in its decomposition after its Olympic purpose had been fulfilled. The masonry would allow the stadium to transition from an occasional secular assembly space to an eternal symbol of Nazi supremacy. Paradoxically, the exquisite eventual ruination of the stadium would prove that the Nazi commissioners were all-knowing, all-controlling metaphysical overlords who could occupy even the future via their management of the physical world's decay.

The orchestrated collapse of the muschelkalk could show how the Reich could celebrate itself and how it could rule over all time – past, present and future. The beauty of the weathering stone could prove how the Nazis can dominate every existential eventuality available to human consciousness, even after the regime had departed the scene of history, leaving it strewn with its stage-managed detritus.

The stadium therefore gave material form to the paradoxical ideal of *'ruinenwert'*, a notion that Speer invented so that he could pander to Hitler's mania for creating a 1000-year world order which, illogically, was death-driven, permanently destabilised and destruction-fuelled. Proposing the *ruinenwert* fantasy, Speer performed a malicious conjurer's trick. He suggested that Hitler could govern the urgency of Germany's immediate history whilst also maintaining—via aesthetic means—eternal dominion over personal and national death. All through the future, Speer's *ruinenwert* motif suggested, awe-struck survivors in the Reich's aftermath would still be signalling *heil*—via aesthetic appreciation—to the Fuhrer. With the fossil-stone crumbling through millennial time, the stadium would take the form of a Classical ruin, an ur-structure that would constantly ghost and inspire each future moment in the wake of the Fuhrer's reign.

Nowadays, after the catastrophe of Nazism, the stadium still stands, mainly because it was requisitioned by British occupation forces in 1945. From the 1960s until now it has become the home venue for Hertha Berlin Football Club. Over the past twenty years—with the interior refurbished but the exterior remarkably compliant to Speer's original specifications—it has also become Germany's main venue for hosting international football, athletics and music festivals.

Human intervention has thus stemmed and indeed reversed the slow decay that Speer fantasised for the stadium. Even so, there remain many people who agitate for the obliteration of the complex, as if one could effectively erase the disquieting memories of Nazism. But, more sinister, there are many commentators who want to withdraw maintenance from the stadium so that it can devolve into a picturesque ruin.

Enter now David Claerbout, eighty years after Speer's chilling, epochal intervention.

With so much meaning, memory and emotion stacked into the Olympic Stadium, Claerbout has numbered every stone and digitised a mega-model of the structure, inserting the fate-heavy data into an architectural modelling program blended with a modified sims-game engine. Calculating the propensity of the stone to undergo chemical and physical decomposition, the engine predicts and displays the day-by-day disintegration of the stadium, subjected to weather and unimpeded biological incursions from plants, bacteria, insects and animals—all animals except humans. The program does not factor in any maintenance-energy dispensed by human conservators. 'Leave the stadium to ruin. Let's bear witness, in real time, to the millennial nightmare that Speer envisaged,' the installation seems to declare. 'Let the simulation run—real second after real second—throughout the Reich's fabled thousand-year reign...but remove society from its fate; let the laws of natural history govern the place.'

We should recognise, of course, that considerations of millennial time have special potency here in Australia, in the site of more than 60,000 years of human endeavour, in the site where our understanding of the Anthropocene—the earth’s most ecologically decadent eon—is coming into alarming focus right now. In the aftermath of the 2019-2020 Australian firestorms, the ability to imagine across millennial time-scales has become an urgent everyday requirement *worldwide*. The exhibiting of *Olympia* here right now, with erosion-dust and forest-ash wafting around us, is literally timely.

Since its instigation on 15 March 2016, *Olympia* has been ticking minutely through millennial time. Approaching five years now, viewed over the half-decade lapse, the work already shows some subtle changes in the stadium and its environs. When viewed over the duration of any single visit to the gallery, however, or indeed over the few weeks of the artwork’s installation in any one place, the changes that are most palpably perceived do not register on the screens. Rather, the most telling changes are discernible as shifts in the emotions and intellection of the observer, the mortal witness whose own decay-time is inevitably so much shorter and faster than the stadium’s.

As so often happens with Claerbout’s installations, he maps out the physical dimensions—the compass—of an event in an environment so that he can then manipulate the ways the clock and calendar also influence our comprehension of the phenomena that he is representing. By recalibrating the compass, the clock and the calendar so as to realign the *physical* measure of your experiences in a place, he also resets many *metaphysical* questions bristling inside your common sense. Questions such as:

How do my memories shape my understanding of the present and the imminent future that I share with the objects and environments and fellow plants and animals that host my existence?

or

How can I transpose myself into another point in space and time, imaginatively, right now, so I can inhabit the sensibilities of someone else in the scene?

or

What happens to my sense of self and to my construal of society if I develop the ability to perceive a scene simultaneously from many points of view and within a wash of time where the past presses urgently into the present in such a way that all past events are equally available? What if all events and objects from the past are understood to be equally powerful rather than diminishing through duration as if arrayed in a perspectival time-field?

The point of *Olympia* is not only to appreciate and interrogate the architectural spectacle that looms so imperiously while you stand amidst it in the gallery (where, truth to tell, not much *eventfulness* occurs, or is *meant* to occur). More exactly, while unfurling the thudding presence of the architecture, the work also goads your imagination ethereally, encouraging you to envisage future experiences and to encompass spans and folds in space and time that extend well beyond your normal grasp of everyday eventfulness, experiences swelling into dimensions that obliterate the scale of a single human life.

With such questions activated, *Olympia* continues to explore the rich themes that have run through Claerbout's work for more than twenty years. (See for example the investigations of time and space in *Bordeaux Piece* [2004], *Algiers Sections of a Happy Moment* [2008] and *The Quiet Shore* [2011].) Even so, *Olympia* points to a fascinating new set of interests, which Claerbout has begun to explain in recent lectures.

At a presentation in Paris late last year, for instance, he offered a bold condensation of current neurological science to show how he has been using these ideas to enrich his artistic investigations of what he calls 'synchronicity' within 'divided attention'. Referring to theories and experiments concerning the 'bi-cameral' or two-sided structure of the mammalian brain, Claerbout explains how human vision seems to share the cognitive load—left and right—such that detail-hungry predation is served by one side of the brain while the systematic or meta-state global awareness that fosters self-protection is facilitated by the other side. From this process (persuasively detailed in Iain McGilchrist's book *The Master and his Emissary*), each of us learns to live with a kind of divided attention which is also a powerful doubled apperception, as our neurology sends signals back and forth between the skull's hemispheres, blending close concrete scrutiny on one side into over-arching abstract conceptualisation on the other side. Some people and some cultures may tend to favour one side or the other—concrete over abstract or vice versa—but the healthiest circumstance seems to prevail when individuals can develop a robust ability to keep both cognitive modes oscillating, balanced almost gyroscopically, in a never-ending shuttle of apprehension: close—far&wide—close—far&wide.

If you resolve to bring these ideas back to the gallery to round out your understanding of *Olympia*, you could think in temporal rather than spatial language. Thus you would grasp how the immediate present is always counterposed with everything that is possible in the extensive future. Within the bi-cameral brain, one mode of understanding is here and now, concrete and immediate; the other mode is out there then, abstract and theoretical. A robust mentality needs both divisive modes—focused present-tensed predation versus wide future-scoping self-preservation—to be operating in synchronicity. An eye on right now; an eye on the future.

At the Olympic stadium, the Nazis used such bifurcation in a sinister exercise to enforce political power. Mindful of these neurological principles when experiencing *Olympia* now, however, we can see how Claerbout's timely installation encourages us to deploy the brain's synchronous capacity both for promoting healthy self-assertion in the present and for planning future resilience against looming oblivion.

Now is the right moment, clearly, to be encountering this temporal object in this South Australian space.

<sup>1</sup> Thierry Davila, *Shadow Pieces* (David Claerbout), Geneva: Mamco, 2015, p. 10.

2020 ADELAIDE//INTERNATIONAL  
SAMSTAG /

# Brad Darkson

## Notes on measuring value, progress and productivity

### Andy Butler

The architecture of bureaucracy choreographs our lives. *Hold Me* is the hold music of Centrelink on repeat, an endurance test that's a testament to the countless hours of labour spent tethered to a system designed to remove people from a social safety net and to discourage those in need of financial assistance from seeking it out in the first place. In the same way that the physical architecture of a building or space is instrumentalised to direct the way we experience the world, the structure of governmental bureaucracy is orchestrated to turn people into the most efficient capitalist subjects possible.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is an economic formula that we use to tell ourselves about value, progress and productive labour. It's how we measure the worth of human activity and then develop governmental policies around it.<sup>1</sup> While it's a seemingly dead-boring and cold concept, its functions and outcomes – and their associated emotional resonances – are at the heart of *Hold Me*.

For the past few decades feminist economist Marilyn Waring has famously been considering what counts and what doesn't when we measure the health of a nation's economy and its GDP<sup>2</sup>, and her work has been fundamental in driving the process behind *Hold Me*. GDP is the sum market value of all goods and services produced within a specific timeframe (quarterly, yearly, etc.). All the things that we do or make as part of an economic transaction are counted.

The things that aren't counted in the calculation of GDP are important. Unpaid work isn't counted—things like emotional labour, caring duties, family, artmaking, any form of cultural production whose outcome can't be wholly measured by a financial transaction. The International Monetary Fund gives the following example to demonstrate the difference between counted and uncounted labour: a baker who produces a loaf of bread and sells it to a customer would be classified as contributing to the GDP, but if he baked a loaf of bread and then gave it to his family, it would not be counted; no financial transaction has taken place (although his action of purchasing the ingredients *would* be counted).<sup>3</sup>

Marilyn Waring notes that a lot of labour exists outside of the logic of the GDP's measures; through its usage as a measure of productivity, we draw distinct lines between productive and unproductive labour. Parenting and "women's work" are obviously counted as unproductive if they're unpaid. So too does the distinction relate to happiness, relationships between people and communities, human emotions and more; if it isn't sold on the marketplace, it isn't *worth* anything in the story of our nation's progress and growth.

*Hold Me* is based on Centrelink's bureaucratic architecture, which is almost farcically wrapped up in the logic of progress, economic value and productivity at the expense of all else. Pick up the phone installed on the side of the Samstag building and you'll hear a snippet of Centrelink's hold music. Around it, in the background, Darkson and his partner nurse their child while waiting, waiting, waiting to resolve the debts they've been told they owe to our national social safety net.

Darkson has been on and off Centrelink for some time while building a career as an artist. Alongside his creative labour, he has been a sessional teacher at a university and a freelance sole trader. Much of his labour would count for nothing when measuring its productivity within the marketplace, and the labour that *does* have a market value is sporadic, undervalued. There are anecdotal stories everywhere of artists still being on Centrelink even while having a significant cultural value ascribed to their labour. (Cultural value can't be measured as "productive" if it can't be ascribed a market value.)

Universities are not innocent in all this. The building that *Hold Me* is tethered to gestures towards the role played by the bureaucratic infrastructure of higher education institutions in the precarious labour conditions of artists and sessional academics. The punitive bureaucratic structures of welfare and the neoliberal structures of universities are wrapped up in each other. Both are embedded within a broader logic that strives towards economic growth, where growth is only measured in contribution to the marketplace. Many artists are employed on twelve-week rolling casual contracts with no security, no sick leave, no annual leave, no benefits that contribute towards stability—all in the name of economic efficiency, cheaper costs, increased productivity.

Then what of the labour of waiting for Centrelink? Of meeting "mutual obligations" that include attending a Jobactive provider or applying for twenty jobs a month to be paid an allowance, in that time between semesters when you're paid nothing? What value is this sort of labour being ascribed under the governmental mantra of "jobs and growth"?

When Darkson was approached for this exhibition, he was in the throes of resolving a robo-debt he'd received from Centrelink. The now-condemned program—currently the subject of a class-action lawsuit against the government—was a punitive structure intended to shore up the budget by some \$2.1 billion dollars<sup>4</sup>, a "productive" scheme when we measure our progress through Gross Domestic Product.

To generate robo-debts, an automated algorithm would match the fortnightly reported earnings made by a Centrelink client against their yearly earnings reported to the Australian Tax Office, averaged over 26 fortnights in the year. If there was a discrepancy between the reported earnings and the calculated averaged amount earned at any point in the year, a debt would be generated. The algorithm didn't account for the fact that workers without the safety net of fixed hours earn different amounts fortnight to fortnight.<sup>5</sup>

This process seems farcical in its punishment of those whose labour isn't ascribed its due worth. The rollout of robo-debt occurred at the same time as the hold times to talk to a person at Centrelink grew. In 2015-2016, out of 68 million attempted calls, 28 million received the busy signal. Of the 39 million that got through, more than 7 million were abandoned before the issue was resolved. In 2016-17, the number of calls met with a busy signal practically doubled, blowing out to 55 million.<sup>6</sup>

These countless hours of waiting appear to be a punishment for those who require a social safety net because their labour falls outside of our understanding of productivity. This imposed state of helpless uncertainty is seemingly aimed to scare people off this safety net, to direct them towards different forms of activity that are more economically sound within the narrative of the GDP and progress.

'FUCK' is etched onto the brickwork out the front of Job Prospects, the Jobagency provider that Darkson previously frequented. This is a place where you come up against the full force of a bureaucratic system, of institutionalised walls that block you from doing work outside of the labour deemed valuable within its normative logic. You'll be starved out if you don't do what they say, and, from reports from the inside, it's a ruthless process of cutting people off payments, whatever their circumstances may be.

Sara Ahmed writes cogently on the ways we experience institutional structures as walls.<sup>7</sup> For those for whom an institution wasn't built, our experience of coming up against walls is different to those who manage to easily pass through these spaces. For many who are seen as a recalcitrant entity within a system of bureaucracy – those who exist outside of its values – existence could be defined as constantly *banging your head against a brick wall*. For those whose labour is viewed as unproductive and who require the assistance of a governmental bureaucracy, there would certainly be a lot of head-on-brick-wall-banging.

The signs that we leave on the walls we encounter can be wayfinding points or signifiers that others have trodden these paths before. Making visible the stories of those who navigate these spaces reveals the hidden dynamics of power that lie at their foundation. It is an important element of building resistance, of working towards a point where the brick walls and barriers that define how many inhabit bureaucratic and institutional spaces might shift. Darkson read the word 'FUCK' on a brick wall out the front of his Jobagency provider and felt like there was the sign of a person who'd come before who understood.

Listening to *Hold Me*, installed as it is on the side of the Samstag Museum – itself embedded within an architecture of bureaucracy – is a way of listening to the kinds of hidden stories that permeate these spaces. Precarious work conditions of artists and academics are well-documented through the labour of organisations such as the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and National Association of Visual Arts (NAVA). We know that the welfare conditions within these industries are unsustainable, that the welfare of artists needs to be discussed out in the open.

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Image: Brad DARKSON, *Hold Me*, 2020, installation view, 2020 Adelaide//International. Photo: Sam Noonan

2020 ADELAIDE//INTERNATIONAL  
SAMSTAG /

Zoë  
Croggon,  
Helen  
Grogan &  
Georgia  
Saxelby

## Effect in Three Movements

Gillian Brown

*Effect in three movements* views architecture as a generative source of material. Through moving image, collage, installation and performance Zoë Croggon, Helen Grogan and Georgia Saxelby draw upon the affective power of form, enacting and occupying architectures in ways that foreground subjectivity, the relational, spatiality and movement. How does our movement through architecture affect our understanding of the world? Together these works reveal the gendered and directed nature of the spaces we inhabit and the ways in which—through interventions and acts of imagination—we respond, resist and claim them for ourselves.

Working across Australia and the United States, these three artists share an understanding of the performative nature of constructed environments, where bodily and psychological encounters with structures can shape our way of being. We regulate our behaviour—our pace, our volume, the exuberance of our gestures—in response to our surroundings, often unknowingly. The three artists in this exhibition look to the choreographic as an antidote to our subconscious or unconscious responses to constructed space, to consider why we move the way we do.

Choreography—both in the sense of a sequence of steps or movements to be performed and the practice of designing those sequences—is the act of paying attention to movement. Choreographed movement is deliberate and controlled, a conscious consideration and response to the rhythms of sound and form. In understanding the impact of architectures on the collective and the individual, paying attention to movement is informative; by observing the body in dialogue with its surroundings we can interpret or convey attitude.

A trained dancer, Zoë Croggon is alert to how a focus on the body in space creates formal and conceptual links between choreography and architecture. She considers architecture as unnatural space for a natural body, and is therefore interested in how deeply our surroundings inform the cadence of our lives. Carefully reduced and minimal, her collages splice the human body with constructed forms, toying with and highlighting coordinates of materiality. The resulting images rest somewhere in between compression and suspension, parallel and division. They have taken the disciplined body—often those of dancers and gymnasts—and found empathy between the curve of a back and the sweep of a Neimeyer-esque staircase. These moments of mutual expression create a continuity of line and energy, loosening perspective and depth—a new whole made from objects in disparate times and places.

Croggon's assemblages have, until now, taken subjects with three dimensions and compressed them into two, but for *Effect in three movements* she has directly referenced the visual, sculptural and social qualities of the source of her images. Found fashion magazines have been folded, curled and tucked to choreograph stylised bodies in duet with stylised spaces. In Croggon's studio, unyielding modern architecture and the polished and disembodied female form take on the textural pliancy of fabric, conflating, as the artists states, 'the body with its micro and macro architectures - from the clothes we dress it in to the structures that house us'.<sup>i</sup> Her reference to dressing is notable in that it directs us to the fact that these are women's fashion magazines, lending a gendered slant to the question of how we, as soft bodies, occupy the folds and angularities of architectures in the broadest sense. This social aspect strikes a chord with the theories of architectural historian Jane Rendell, whose research has deepened our understanding of how we might perceive space not just physically but as practiced or socially produced. Drawing upon the philosophies of Henri Lefebvre, Rendell writes: 'It is not ... simply that space is socially produced, but also that social relations are spatially produced.'<sup>ii</sup> Put simply, the spaces we inhabit are both influenced by and an influencer of our behaviour. With this thought in mind, we can read Croggon's *Magazine* series as a consideration of how we accept the conditions of architecture, of how we lend ourselves to the environments we build, and vice versa. Architecture, like choreography, and like Croggon's bodies and buildings, is intrinsically relational. In their source and their construction, these five works illustrate the social space of architecture as an ongoing negotiation between structure and flexibility.

Like Croggon, Helen Grogan's background in dance informs her understanding of space as process of exchange. Rather than architectures of the body, however, hers is a practice that considers architecture *with* the body. Grogan considers her materials as apparatus, instruments of direction and examination. Accordingly, *SET AND DRIFT (3-4 constellations for Samstag Museum of Art)* makes sculpture from museum equipment—shelving, storage and audiovisual apparatus—arranged to encourage and guide the viewer's movement through the gallery. Timing is kept by monitors and photographic prints which fold the installation process back into the display, making public the conversations and procedures of transformation normally held behind the scenes. Scale and interest are used as stage marks—where a large monitor might play a carefully edited dance of construction, another smaller less-obviously placed screen will undermine it by repeating the footage at a second designated viewing point. Similarly, the mundanity of photographs and sketches hold the viewer's curiosity just long enough that they lose interest and notice a new sightline. The point of the work is not the content but the context.

Designed by John Wardle in 2007, the Samstag Museum galleries were purpose-built for the display of contemporary art. The placement and organisation of items such as power boxes, rigging points and concealed storage tell of a building built for purpose. But galleries are never used the same way twice; exhibition space, like all space, is not neutral, however much it aspires to be. In foregrounding the secondary architectures of display, Grogan records another dialect of design, one that adapts over time in response to use. The bright yellow steel fixtures that the artist has overlaid these items with represent the negotiation between objects and artist. It is not intended as conceptual conceit; in this work architectures and systems are exposed, not hidden. Scuffs and marks of use are shown. The steel supports are a part of a gestural language that can be read across her practice—a method of mediation she frequently employs—but are also an answer to the practical questions of construction. How to accommodate bodies, to consider safe movement and longevity, to predict use?

Grogan speaks of ‘sensing thinking’, wherein kinetic understanding is as important as an intellectual one. In using choreography as a directive to observe, she encourages us to take note of the specifics of spaces we occupy, and, like that of successful architecture, her purpose is revealed in sequence. Accordingly, as the title suggests, over the course of the exhibition the work at Samstag will shift to continue the conversation with the architecture. In doing so, Grogan suggests that space is always performing, and that considered and deliberate movement might offer a way to reciprocate.

If buildings perform over time—and we in response—how do we reconcile the inevitable gaps that form between the original intention of design and social attitudes over time? *Lullaby*, by Georgia Saxelby, asks what must be done with civic architectures as civic consciousness evolves.

The historic 2017 Women’s March, held in Washington DC in protest of the inauguration of the Trump presidency, was an event that set the might of collective womanhood against the backdrop of monumental architecture. Taking part in the march spurred Saxelby to consider the infrastructures of culture, what it means to engage with public space, and the role of architecture as a support mechanism.

In the two-channel video, three women (the artist and two collaborators) perform at five of the monuments on the Mall. They wear neon red Grecian-style robes in a nod to the grandiose style of the buildings they act on, maintaining a steady and determined gaze throughout. Their movement is coded and gestural; in one scene, they recline on an impressive sweep of steps, running hands over the smooth treads and then their own legs; in another, we see a close-up of a performer’s hands, wrung as if washing, backgrounded by a cascading water feature. Saxelby has spoken of the work as an excavation of how our rituals and symbolic spaces embody and perform our value systems. Performed in front of, on top of, and within grandiose architecture, in *Lullaby*’s gestures it is not difficult to decipher a message of the strength and history of women, to interpret a symbolic cleansing, a readdressing of overlooked endeavour. However it is not a need to correct or fill in the missing half of history that this work speaks of, but the labour involved in resetting our course. In consciously employing a system of considered movement, *Lullaby* presents not a protest but a proposition. The inherent repetition and systemisation that choreography calls upon is posited as a practical way to embed behaviour and change the way we relate to imposing architecture.

At its core, Saxelby’s work is a deliberation on the difference between habit and ritual. If we take that a building—or, perhaps in reality, its architect—attempts to direct the behaviour of those who inhabit it, is it possible to meaningfully change a structural narrative by setting a new gestural relationship? It is an interesting hypothesis. We are unlikely, for good reason, to demolish our built history simply because attitudes have changed. But we still receive the messages encoded in architecture, even if our experience is lived in opposition to those narratives. There is certainly something in the fact that men have buildings named after them on the National Mall—large, edifying buildings—while women have generally been honoured with gently landscaped gardens. It is one thing to begin the task of correcting the constructed archive by commissioning new monuments, but the question of how to reconcile an uneven historical record will persist. Saxelby suggests that the answer might lie in conscientious resistance, in attempting a ‘reverse engineering’ of our body of architecture.

In the context of the *2020 Adelaide//International*, with its starting point of architecture as choreographer of experience, Croggon, Grogan and Saxelby make an important riposte to the idea of architectural command. In each of their works is an understanding of intersubjectivity, of how we can affirm our own presence and sense of self within a context of relatedness and connection.<sup>3</sup> It is possible to recognise the ways in which we are influenced by and respond to the directives of architecture without being subsumed and controlled by it. Likewise, a building or system is its own entity, persisting against prevailing attitudes and adapting to use. How are we to understand one without distancing the other? As the artists in *Effect in three movements* suggest, one strategy might be to pay attention to the way we move through space and time.

3 In writing of Minimalist artist Robert Morris's practice, Virginia Spivey gives a neat summary of intersubjectivity as defined by feminist psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin. Spivey, Virginia. "Sites of Subjectivity: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and Dance." *Dance Research Journal*, 35/36, 2003, pp. 113-130. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/30045072](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30045072).

ZOË CROGGON, HELEN GROGAN  
& GEORGIA SAXELBY /



Image: Zoe GROGGON, *Effecti in three movements*, 2020, installation view,  
*2020 Adelaide//International*. Photos: Sam Noonan

ZOË CROGGON, HELEN GROGAN  
& GEORGIA SAXELBY /



Image: Helen GROGAN, *SET AND DRIFT* (as 3-4 constellations for Samstag Museum), 2020, installation view, 2020 Adelaide//International. Photos: Sam Noonan.

ZOË CROGGON, HELEN GROGAN  
& GEORGIA SAXELBY /



Image: Georgia SAXELBY, *Lullaby* (stills from video performance), 2017, in collaboration with Viva Soudan and Bailey Nolan, installation view, 2020 *Adelaide//International*. Photo: Sam Noonan

### ROBERT COOK

Robert Cook is a curator at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

He recently (2019) worked on a history, in exhibition and book form, of the near-Brutalist AGWA 1979 building.

Other shows for the AGWA include: *Family resemblance* (2019), *Comic Tragic: the shifting language of contemporary Comics* (2015); *Ryan Trecartin: six movies* (2015); *That seventies feeling* (2019), etc.

In 2013 he curated *Primavera* at the MCA. In 2008 he did the *Octopus* show at Gertrude. He's been a curator at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, UWA. He's written for most Australian art journals and has had partial lives as a heritage historian and as an art and theatre critic at *The West Australian*. When *Broadsheet* was a thing he wrote a lot for that, and misses those days in a way, but not the self who wrote for it. Over time (too late?) he's come to realise he curates and writes in such a way that makes meaning in reverse.

### DR RACHEL HURST

Dr Rachel Hurst is Senior Lecturer and Design Coordinator in Architecture at UniSA. Her research investigates transformative practices in contemporary architecture, including the role of the everyday, analogue craft and curatorial agency. She has an extensive exhibition and publication background in practice-based design, and architectural criticism, with over 25 shows and 100 text works. Her PHD by project at RMIT was awarded three national awards for art book publishing. She is a contributing editor for *Architecture Australia* and regular juror in national and international awards and competitions. In 2019 she was made a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects.

### GILLIAN BROWN

Gillian Brown is Curator at Samstag Museum of Art. Her projects there include solo exhibitions by Laurie Anderson, Daniel Crooks, Shaun Gladwell and Fiona Tan, as well as group exhibitions *Quicksilver: 25 years of Samstag Scholarships* and *Countercurrents*. In 2019 she was the curator of Louise Haselton's exhibition *like cures like* and co-author of the accompanying monograph. Holding a Master of Arts (Art History) from the University of Adelaide, Brown was co-founder and co-editor (2014-19) of the online writing platform *fine print* and a member of the editorial advisory committee for arts journal *Artlink*.

### ANDY BUTLER

Andy Butler is Program Curator at West Space, Melbourne. As a writer, curator and artist. He sits on the board of the Emerging Writers Festival and SEVENTH Gallery, and is a co-director of Mailbox Art Space. Andy recently undertook an Asialink Creative Exchange to the Philippines and a Writers Immersion and Cultural Exchange to Indonesia. In 2017 he participated in Footscray Community Art Centre's Emerging Cultural Leaders program.

### ROSS GIBSON

Ross Gibson is Centenary Professor in Creative and Cultural Research at the University of Canberra. He has created a dozen books, several films and radio feature programs, exhibition installations, and live performances.

He was inaugural Creative Director at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (1998 - 2002) after being Senior Consultant Producer for the establishment of the Museum of Sydney (1993 - 96).

He has also served as a member of the Foresighting Working Group for the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council.

**2020 ADELAIDE//INTERNATIONAL**  
**28 FEBRUARY — 12 JUNE 2020**  
**SAMSTAG MUSEUM OF ART GALLERIES 1, 2, 3**  
**AND FENN PLACE**

*2020 Adelaide//International* curators: Erica Green and Gillian Brown

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