

DE ANIMA » BROOK ANDREW

RMIT DESIGN HUB

12 DECEMBER 2014 - 14 FEBRUARY 2015



DE ANIMA

Brook Andrew

This exhibition is the outcome of an experimental process between Brook Andrew and RMIT Design Hub to develop a new body of work – *Horizon I, II, III and IV* – specifically for the Design Hub Project Rooms. The two-channel version of the video *De Anima*, originally produced for *The Cinemas Project*, now includes a new third video channel. The experience is one of a merging of fiction and truth, challenging and blurring the space between sculpture, video and performance. This exhibition also includes live performances by Justin Shoulder and Mama Alto who appear in the *De Anima* video.

Andrew is a conjurer of processes and has spent his career researching, collaborating and divining architecture, photography and museological archives to create immersive experiences.

Horizon I, II and III is an installation of found films and a 'living archive' that appears in a state of transition: set-like and yet ready for activation. The exhibition also includes *Horizon IV*, a collaboration with RMIT's School of Fashion and Textiles to produce a set of veils that can be worn by exhibition visitors.

De Anima embodies the concept of reflective design research – of revealing the social and cultural experiences that influence one's practice. Like many of the designers who research from and exhibit within Design Hub, Andrew's creative practice is transformed and characterised by its ongoing self-reflection.

A Conversation with Brook Andrew and Fleur Watson and Kate Rhodes, Design Hub Curators.

Design Hub: Brook, can you describe the ideas that have informed the development of *De Anima* and the starting point for the work?

Brook Andrew: Remnants of the past, and how these effect and inform us has influenced my work for some time now. This occurs through the framework of archives such as cultural objects, post-cards, photographs and books and, more recently, through film and public archives and art/cultural object collections and interventions such as my recent exhibition at the Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid. I'm interested in the meanings that are embedded in these collections and how they relate to us today and how images of people and landscape are created in an often-Western dominated view. This creates biased views of other cultures. This historical action erases and suppresses alternative views of the world.

With *De Anima*, my starting point was my curiosity around a collection of glass lantern slides from the late 19th century by Stephen Spurling and J.W. Beattie – some of the earliest photographers of Tasmania. I was very curious about how the horizon line – which is a principle of Western landscape painting – was depicted and the country documented. This horizon line, the forming of a 'doctrine' on this new landscape, to me, symbolised hierarchies of class, society, culture and the idea of an 'opposite', pitting Western man as superior to this new land, taming it with a new spirit. This is curious for me, and at odds with many Indigenous and alternative perspectives of the landscape and how it is interpreted. I am skeptical of this narrow view of the 'world' and its power over the land and us. As a boy of mixed culture from the Western suburbs of Sydney, I had a very different view of the so-called imagined 'Australian' landscape, one that does not even represent an 'Aboriginal' landscape that we promote to tourists. I didn't understand these techniques of nationhood or culture building, let alone a horizon line. It wasn't until I went to art school that I understood this idea (unless you came from a family who passed on that kind of belief system). I was curious why the horizon line or a particular way of capturing the landscape – this Western action of power, to capture, gather and record which consequently involves a complex, arguably distinctive way of defining the 'other'. This, of course, brings us back to how collections are moulded through exploration, invasion and documentation and hence display. My version of the cabinet of curiosity with my collections in it reflects the mess of our world.

Before curator Bridget Crone approached me for *The Cinemas Project* I hadn't extensively made work that engaged with cinema at the scale of the *De Anima* video. But it excited me and offered an opportunity to use my film archive and to collaborate with a composer, editor, cinematographer and performers – it was challenging. It also interested me that the cinema is a kind of nostalgic experience yet there's a ghost-like legacy to that experience which prompted me to think about the way in which we consume images through a particular experience that is often imagined, false or playful, yet somehow we believe it, we are seduced by it. Cinema does something to our emotions and psyche, almost like it's in cahoots with our inner trickery that revels in the fact that truth is anything and it doesn't care for our external life, pain or what we are attached to – and this is powerful because it makes us understand that we can re-write a history or experience which we may believe is not represented, to see the world anew. I'm also very interested in propaganda and the disciplines of capitalism and fascism and how they persuade and seduce us to consume, love, desire, hate, despise and judge so rampantly. In some ways, the

horizon line is selling a particular and very rigid view of our experience; its two dimensional praxis is problematic.

DH: *De Anima* references the title of Aristotle's philosophical treatise *On The Soul* (Latin: *de anima*) – can you talk about how the title and this reference permeates the work?

BA: The title is again a response to the Tasmanian glass lantern slides but also the archives I have of Indigenous peoples – photographed as 'types' mainly from c.1900s – as a form of documentation that was not trying to document the harmony of nature and its relationship to the cosmos and culture, but divide and control nature, keep it fixed. I wanted to visually skew the depiction of the colonial man in one of the Tasmanian slides. I was experimenting with how much of an angle would trick our eye regarding our balance and perception of this division of man and nature, to slip the man back to nature, be swallowed by it. I was also informed by documented views of architecture through the development of a recent exhibition WITNESS for the Lyon Housemuseum. WITNESS integrates images from my archive, which includes an image of the Liverpool Town Hall, UK, upon which two Amazon men from c.1900 are standing. At the opening of WITNESS, Nikos Papastergiadis spoke about the way Western cultures have appropriated other cultures as an expression of development and power and how this problem is the confusion of how Greek philosophers inform us. He said:

Let me address this challenge by recalling a phone call between Brook and myself where he rather nervously asked me about the division between nature and culture in Western thought and its origins in classical Greek philosophy. He kept saying through the phone call that he didn't want to slander Aristotle. Nor was it his intention to somehow pull down the whole of Western philosophy. However, he could not ignore the profound dichotomies that underpin Western civilisation and the profound damage that was inflicted upon Indigenous cultures as a consequence of this very specific system of thought.

Quite rightly, he could not overlook that the idealised claims of Western beauty, the body, art, architecture, and the ideas of Western rationality, science and philosophy were not only derived from Greek philosophy, but that this link was appropriated to legitimize the civilizing mission of colonialism in the modern period. It is impossible to ignore the alignment between those philosophical ideas and the colonial project in Australian history. In this context, we can see that the colonial project not only set out to conquer the world in a territorial sense, but also establish a certain way of being in the world. So it was domination of a cultural as well as of a territorial kind.

Now these colonisers tried in a sense to create a direct continuity between that golden age of ancient Greece and this new world vision that they constructed for themselves. The direct consequence of this was that they tended to denigrate, marginalise and in effect dispense to the rubbish bin of history all the other cultures that they encountered.

Now in our phone conversation I expressed solidarity over the way Greek ideas and ideals were appropriated in the colonial project and stressed

that this process of appropriation was also an act of perversion, of over simplification and a brutal truncation of Greek philosophy. The Greeks did not assume that they had achieved the pinnacle of thought and beauty. Such hubris would only have tragic and comical consequences. The historian and explorer Herodotus constantly marvelled at the superior customs, practices and ideas of the so called neighbouring 'barbarians'. While the relationship between the human form, cosmic perfection, and the natural environment is constantly debated in Greek philosophy, the place and form that was given to the human condition did not privilege or mirror any racial notion of a Greek, as if this were an inherently superior on the spectrum of cultural progress.

So this, in turn, brought me to thinking about Aristotle and Plato and their roles as influential thinkers for Western doctrine. Talking with Nikos, I realized that it was Plato who pushed boundaries of perception and suggested 'you have to feel more than think' – things are not fixed. This helped confirm my own journey of trying to understand a Western engagement with spirit, the cosmos and nature. It is not as fixed as I thought it was – as struggling to work through the mess of a Western political system mixed with Wiradjuri belief systems. So, for me, it's not to compare systems, but to bring them together on a level platform and ask: 'why is there conflict?'

DH: At this year's Venice Architecture Biennale directed by Rem Koolhaas, the central exhibit was called *Elements*. Each room in the pavilion was broken down into a series of architectural elements: floor, ceiling, wall etc and researched in terms of its history and development. One space, in particular, was dedicated to the balcony and this room really resonated with people because you could clearly see that the public balcony has historically been used to reflect hierarchies, dominance and political power within society. Do these ideas have a crossover with the Liverpool Town Hall image and the layers of cultural meaning embedded within the architecture?

BA: Absolutely, I'm very interested in the way the body is confined and restricted at times through architecture, and the way our movement is planned through urban design. The intent is about creating a 'better' lifestyle yet it's ultimately controlled. Our experience of space – within an interior or in the landscape – is restricted, even arguably in the way we are gendered through dress codes. If we glance at Zen and Western botanical gardens, these philosophies symbolise meditation/control and collection/personal pleasure of nature, but there is inevitably the control of nature and the spirit. In Wiradjuri spirituality, we believe certain natural water holes are spirit pools – these are reincarnation sites, the spirit returns when we die and are born from there too – we have a relationship with the landscape which is more than a two dimensional representation i.e. the photograph. If you have a child and they die,

even though it's sad, we know they are going to come back when they are ready to and then we are mere custodians of them, not controllers. I'm very curious of the politics of representation of people with nature and the cosmos, and which cultures demand and perform this dominant view of how the landscape is interpreted and controlled. The three channel video work *De Anima* has been created through an edit of found archival films that arguably represent the mess of human interpretation of our world through war, death, desire and voyeurism. And like film, architecture arguably attempts to represent views of how people interact with the world around us and position us as 'gods' – we try to create order, but it's still a mess.

DH: RMIT Design Hub is a building dedicated to research across a wide spectrum of creative practices with an emphasis on unraveling process, speculation, testing and experimentation. What do you think is the difference for the presentation of the work here at the Design Hub, as compared to what it might be in a more traditional museum or gallery environment?

BA: *The Walter Van Beirendock: Dream The World Awake* exhibition was my first experience of the excitement of this space. I was very interested due to Walter being an interdisciplinary fashion designer, artist, collector and material scientist. When I first entered the exhibition – it was exciting, colourful and tough, there was complexity and desire. I think the way in which Europeans deal with ethnographic desire is very exciting because it's problematic. I think we've silenced ourselves in Australia – we don't want to step on toes because of our traumatic history and complex changes of ownership over representation; Australia still hasn't had our version of the South African truth council. We still don't have monuments to the genocide of the frontier wars, not just for Indigenous people, but for Chinese people and others. It's complex, but I think that the European process of unpacking the complexity of colonial desire and creating museums and monuments to genocide (i.e. WWII) is powerful and creates an intelligent and engaged society, responsible for their past and their present, yet, ultimately problematic in the way it aims to deal with unity. There is discussion and action that looks fear, blame and ridicule in the eye. I'm not saying it's the best process for Australians – it's just different and we could learn more from these actions.

Seeing *Dream The World Awake* within the Design Hub spaces made me feel like I could push the three installations of *De Anima* in terms of the way it was represented. Design Hub is an experimental hot-hub; one is able to test ideas without the anxiety of an art market. Within my own practice, I test ideas of history, politics, community, cultural tradition and institu-

tional representation through exploring trauma and hidden histories – often with issues of traumatic stress due to colonisation and international historical conflict and erasure of histories. The way in which we, as a community, deal with issues of cultural representation is really a complex matter and cannot be reduced to one person or community's experience, it's a case by case scenario. So in order to find alternative pathways, it's important, essential even, to have the ability to experiment in order to create a better understanding without guilt and fear.

DH: Your previous work suggests an interest in the carnivalesque and anthropological images – how do these ideas relate to the performances within the exhibition space by Justin Shoulder and Mama Alto?

BA: Indigenous and exotic peoples were often included in touring circus shows, human exhibits and freak shows throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. The documentation of these events appear in early etchings like the etching in the installation at Design Hub *A Wild Indian Show* (by Paul Meyerhei, 1876, *Illustrated London News*). To start the process of developing the performance I talked about these themes with Justin and Mama Alto along with some film source material. The 1931 film *The Blonde Captive* also included Balinese and other Pacific cultures. Mama Alto took this as a starting point for a narrative about colonialism and drew upon experiences of her own Javanese grandmother and her own experience as a person of colour in Australia today. Justin developed a series of characters from the idea of the spirit and cosmos, and heavily influenced by the site of Hanging Rock in the Macedon Ranges where components of the newly shot video was made for *De Anima*. I encouraged them to develop their own responses to the themes. Both Justin and Mama Alto have mixed cultural backgrounds. I practice from the perspective of my mixed cultural ancestry, I do not put one before the other. People can be quite curious and even critical about this. *De Anima* is not about reducing the self to a single form or moment.

DH: RMIT Design Hub is keen to exhibit and discuss research projects at all stages of their development. What does research mean for you as an artist?

BA: Research is a life long journey. My first experience of 'research', and hence an idea of 'truth', was when I was at high school. I was about thirteen and our biology teacher stuck out his thumb and proceeded to tell the class that Aboriginal people have a swirl characteristic thumbprint and there were only a few surviving in the Central Desert. I went home and expressed this to my mum. I remember her grinning. Yet this was a defining moment in my life. This so-called evidence-based research was essentially expressing

Darwin's *Theory of Evolution*. This information was presented to children as government-sanctioned education that ignored the fact that Aboriginal people have diverse national communities and cultures.

My distrust of the education system was set at that young age. I began my first artistic research project in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, on the very 'types' my biology teacher lectured on: ethnographic images and ideas of representation. I came across a Charles Kerry image of the man that appears in my work *Sexy and Dangerous* (1996) that went on to win the RAKA award. I was young, part of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artist Cooperative and curious. My view on research is that it is not always fixed; perspectives and viewpoints change as their meanings develop and expand – especially when one needs to unpack skewed views of a representation that is often driven by prejudice or misinformation. So research is not just about my personal experience; it is also what is in my community, the views of other Indigenous communities and beyond – I think that's where it becomes incredibly complex but also elastic, especially when people change their minds on representation and who can and can't represent. This if anything reveals anxiety, reclamation, progress and sadness – it's not a fixed journey.

DH: This is very interesting in terms of our remit here at Design Hub where we think of design research as being practice based and reflective. One of the trail blazers in this thinking is Innovation Professor Leon van Schaik AO who talks often about the idea of mapping your 'back story' or understanding your spatial intelligence such as early experiences growing up, the peers that have influenced your way of thinking, definitive spatial experiences – these are all part of your reflective practice. Understanding these individual particularities of your practice allows a researcher to identify the new knowledge, which is particular to you as a practitioner. This allows the body of research and the contribution of knowledge to be 'unfixed' and expand. Does this reflective practice resonate with you?

BA: Yes. I think you could see this approach especially within the recent exhibition *The Future is Here* at Design Hub because it was an immersive, propositional experience – much more so than *Walter Van Beirendonck: Dream the World Awake* although I was particularly drawn to Walter's use of the archive and the excitement and rawness in that. I think *The Future is Here* nudged this way of thinking more clearly. Also I think the challenge with exhibitions generally is that a person walks in and expects to view an exhibition as fixed – a "this is where we are" experience. From my perspective *The Future is Here* definitively resisted that because

there is action, there are people building on a 3D printer and experimenting in the spaces – making food sculptures – it feels active and engaging. The opportunity to use the Long Room with eight projectors, in addition to the main project space, is very exciting for me. When *De Anima* was installed at Bendigo Art Gallery a particular filmic edit may come up for only a few seconds so the mash-up became more like a dream or fleeting visual experience. But with the eight projectors at Design Hub, and many source films, there is an opportunity for people to understand the full context of the material and immerse themselves in a different process, which may help them unpack the archival material.

DH: In the context of reflective practice, in what ways do you feel this iteration of *De Anima* has tested and pushed your process? What unexpected trajectories have emerged here that, in turn, informs your larger body of work?

BA: Collaboration is the real essence of *De Anima*, collaborating with filmmakers and actors and everyday people through their films which I have re-used. The earliest film is from 1908 – it's like diving into other worlds across a spectrum of time. I'm asking what does that mean? How is it actually made, what is its legacy and what does it mean, if anything, to us today? It's like observing at a cellular level the effects of genetic mutation or change through generations – that's the only way I can think about it. I wonder, have our thinking and actions changed that much? It is like taking the cell and looking at it under a microscope.

DH: This process of collaboration was also integral to the development of the veils that have been developed for this iteration of *De Anima*. The initial workshop provided a starting point for what became an intensive and fluid process. The form, materiality and positioning of the veils emerged through a series of conversations with Robyn Healy and Ricarda Bigolin from Fashion & Textiles and Natalie Keileithner – a fourth year fashion student along with yourself and us as curators. Together, we talked through and conceptualized a series of iterations resulting in 3 dimensional shapes and colours for the veils that we envisage being worn while viewing the films and neon installation in Project Room 2. This is a response that has been developed specifically for the Design Hub spaces and is a real connection and reflection of the extended research community here.

BA: Yes, it was a similar experience when I was working with Theodore Wohng in the studio on his moving and interstellar score for *De Anima*. It felt like the process of digitizing a film, but digitizing the universe into a small set of speakers for us to hear, like reducing nature through speakers. His view of the world and how he thinks

was completely inspiring and informed the work so I asked him to contribute to the archive, which is in the vitrine, as have the performers for the work Justin Shoulder and Mama Alto. Collaborating with Justin and Mama has been inspirational, cross-generational and allowed for truly different thinking about gender, spirituality, the body and storytelling. I feel very privileged for the time they have spent investing in this shared work. The question for me is, what is the *De Anima* archive? What is the process and purpose of it and this final work? So with the idea of creating a cabinet for these objects within the exhibition, to view the film archive with a strike of coloured neon through it – forming a possible non-two dimensional landscape. My original idea for the vitrine was something that looked more like a church, a circus and a coffin – the life and ceremony and death of all things simultaneously, like that spirit pool. The circus is a nod to my interest in human exhibits and the display of objects of another culture. A recurring idea in my work is that you always see yourself; you are always being looked at.

Acknowledgements

RMIT Design Hub Curators:
Kate Rhodes, Fleur Watson
The Cinemas Project Curator:
Bridget Crone

Part of Experimenta Recharge: 6th International Biennial of Media Art

A NETS Victoria exhibition curated by Bridget Crone for *The Cinemas Project*.

CATALYST: Katherine Hannay Visual Arts Commission

Brook Andrew is represented by Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

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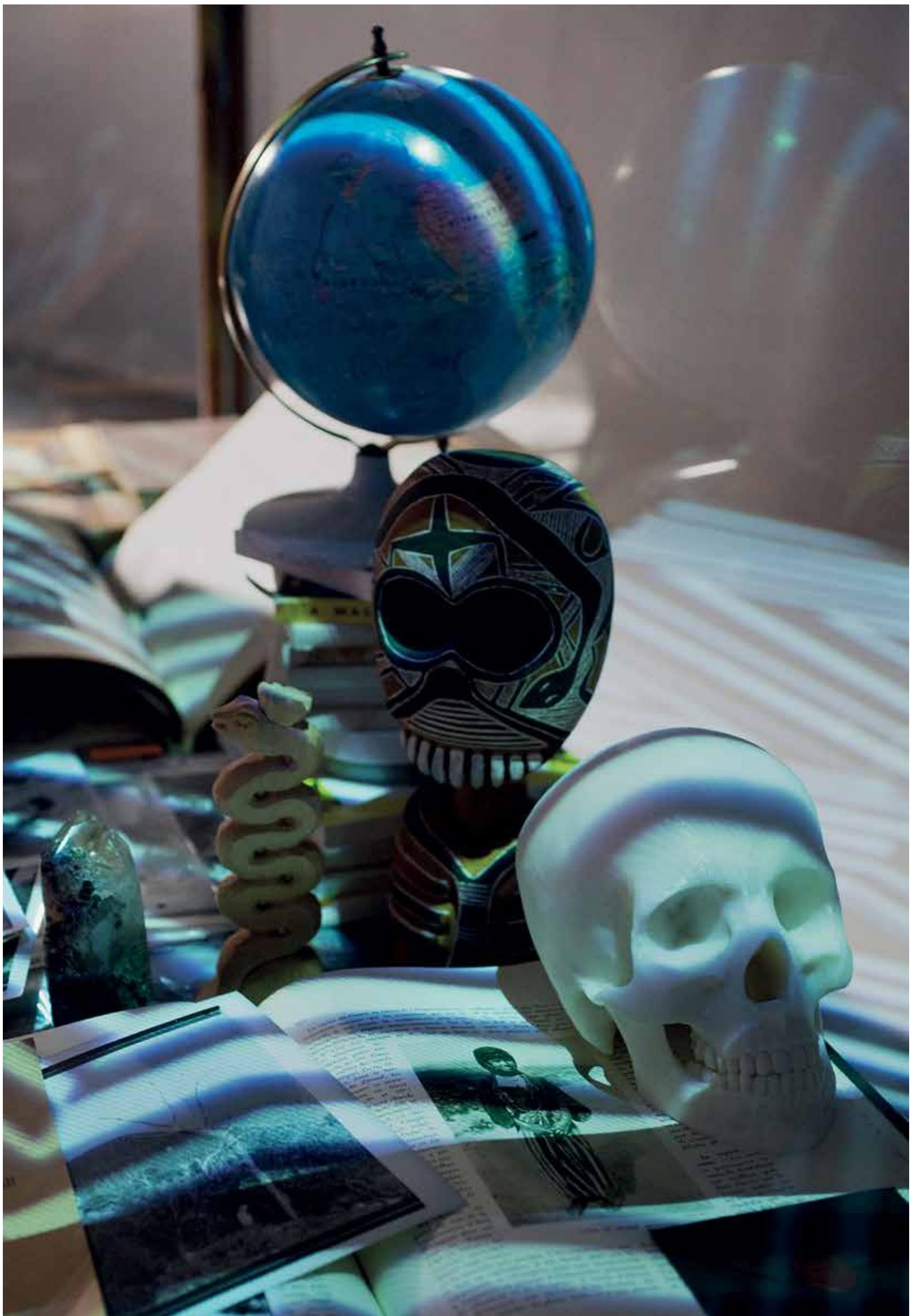
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Mama Alto

Mama Alto is a countertenor diva, jazz singer and cabaret artiste.

As a singer, my involvement in *De Anima* has been an exploration of my own mixed race identity in a selection of four songs that trace the story of my Javanese ancestors and their colonisation by the Dutch. My personal connection to Java has always been through a passing comment of my father's that my singing is a talent that comes from my grandmother. He told me that she sang a Javanese lullaby, which he sang to me as a small child; she sang a Maori song popularised across the Pacific as a generic islander song; and she sang Dutch hymns in church. To me, these three types of songs connect to the way colonial European powers misconstrued the notion of the soul or anima to impose social Darwinist hierarchies over different racial groups.

The narrative that these songs draw upon follows that constructed hierarchy of souls, from primitive native, to interchangeable, homogenised islander, to civilized-westernised Christian. Of course, by the mid twentieth century, Indonesia had gained its independence but I grew up far away from that world, in an Australia where the racist legacies of colonial thought are all too apparent in our politics and society even today. Growing up with the constantly horrifying disrespect our political leaders hold for the humanity of the brown body has shaped my identity as a mixed race person and my artistic practice as a singer.

Is it any wonder that in a society that so highly values whiteness that I turned to the strength and glamour of black American jazz singers to help comprehend my place in the world? These women called to me from the past, emphasising that black was beautiful, providing role models of power, elegance, success and determination without ever compromising their identities. My fourth song in *De Anima* comes from their repertoire, deconstructing the illegitimate hierarchies of racial superiority imposed upon my ancestors as I embrace my soul as equally valid and equally human: brown is beautiful.

In *De Anima*, Mama Alto sings:
Nina Bobo (traditional, Indonesian)
Pokarekare Ana (traditional, Maori)
Wilt Heden Nu Treden (religious, Dutch)
Summertime (George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, DuBose Heyward).

Justin Shoulder

Justin Shoulder is an artist and performer who is interested in creating urban mythologies. Since 2007, he has been creating a family of 'fantastic creatures'.

For the past seven years I have focused on the creation of myths relevant to my

personal history and community. I describe the work I do as mythopoesis – the act of inventing mythologies. This includes the creation of detailed worlds with well-ordered histories, geographies and laws of nature. Within the mythic canon I'm particularly interested in mythical creatures. The Fantastic Creatures for me are an interface to talking and communicating with spirit. For the collaboration with Brook and responding to the text *De Anima*, I was interested in creating a figure that became a conduit for the anima of flora and fauna.

In conversation with Brook, Mama Alto and listening to Theodore's music we considered a dualistic narrative for Mama and my figure Sissy Satellite of cyclical oppositional forces: day/night, sun/moon. To Mama's golden sun diva, Sissy Satellite forms a silver lunar nocturnal counterpart. Thinking about the moon as a natural satellite Sissy's gestures become the transmissions of the soul.

The forms of Sissy Satellite's wings draw from the landscape of Hanging Rock where we filmed elements of the film. This rock is igneous, formed from the cooling and solidification of magma or lava. Sissy Satellite's winged prosthesis are covered in Brook's silver canvas materials from previous works. I enjoy how this embeds this figure within the ecology of Brook's works as well as considering a sense of camouflage to the rock.

Sissy Satellite is a figure of resistance. Like Phasmids (Stick Insects) from which Sissy is related, this being employs its own forms of Deimatic behaviour to respond to threatening or startling behavior from predators. Like the moth that displays conspicuous eyespots or the Octopus *Macropus* which generates an intense red colour with white spots when disturbed, Sissy Satellite uses camouflage and amplified shape-shifting gestures to defy capture.

Theodore Wohng

Theodore Wohng is *De Anima*'s composer

Aristotle's concept of *De Anima* embodies an almost quasi religious notion: soul as a form of possession in living things. When writing the music for the project, I was thinking of super massive structures and randomness that human minds can never comprehend. Nebulas, chaos, ocean currents, plate tectonics, weather systems, nuclear fission all that have logics and systems, or perhaps "anima" of their own, but they remain in many ways, unfathomable to us. When galaxies form from gas, and around nothing, star dusts and clouds give birth to new worlds.

The composition for *De Anima* has no overall structure of its own. It is built of blocks of ideas that could be turned into some-

thing much bigger. Like gas clouds and small dense areas in a nebula, there are hints of forms and logic. I wrote the music in segments in the space of two weeks, in-between meetings, interstate travels and preparation for overseas trips. The interrelation is rather schizophrenic. I hoped to bring some of those confusions and interruptions into the score by writing basic ideas down straight after whatever I was doing or thinking moments before, which in general was completely unrelated, yet somehow still connected in the unconscious instinctively. As a result the music has many contrasting elements: it is modal, tonal, chromatic, aleatoric, atonal and musique concrete-esque. Similar to our subconscious, it is a very dark and wild place filled with ontological riots, no matter where you are from, who you are, what you believe in or how you were brought up.

The 20th century was filled with wars on ideology. The archival footage in the project derives from clashes of civilisations as well as socio-economic conflicts. Entirely different cultures trying to understand each other from their own perspectives and belief systems; reality being distorted by desires, and in the process we confront our innermost dreams, fears, memories and guilt. Originally I planned to write a full orchestral piece with a choir, however my studio was not ready at the time. Hence the instrumentation is rather simple - Moog Voyage XL, Roland Jupiter 80, Roland V-Synth & Prophet 12.

In terms of orchestration, I wanted to incorporate organic sounds on cutting-edge electronic instruments, so certain elements of the score resemble voice or strings with timbral twists. The piece ends with a tuning fork - 'A' for 'Anima'. I was considering how the possession of knowledge / soul is akin to 'tuning'. Galaxies, stars, planets and lives are all results of a kind of 'tuning' that we can never understand, yet we appreciate the elegance, purity and beauty of it. I gave Brook 'the last note' of the composition in the form of a tuning fork, so the artist can finish and 'fine-tune' the entire piece, free of duration and time. As repetitions occur in the video, the beginning becomes the end and the end becomes the beginning.

Texts by Mama Alto and Theodore Wohng are extracts from Brook Andrew, *'De Anima'* in *The Cinemas Project Book*, edited by Bridget Crone, Melbourne: NETS Victoria, 2014.



**dressing bodies and space;
haptic / embodied designing strategies**

*Gestures of cloth concealing a face, a body
A limb that softly extends and shadows lightly
and crumples transparent gauze
Pulse and concede against the light
the historicity of functions and meanings woven in
implied presence, pretense in textured white, veils
An enclave between you, me and others
and how we see things*

Students in the final year of the Bachelor of Design (Fashion) (Honours) program participated in a workshop around the archetype of the 'veil' with artist Brook Andrew, facilitated by RMIT University School of Fashion and Textiles and RMIT Design Hub. Initiated by Associate Professor Robyn Healy, the program developed a series of workshops directed by leading artists and researchers to stimulate expansive, performative and critical approaches to fashion design processes. The role of the workshops was not to simply generate ideas around the direction of projects; but more so for students to be engaged through active, embodied studies and experiments. Through the actuality of doing/wearing/making/seeing/touching/moving a lived experience casts a different type of understanding and thought process onto designing. In addition, working across disciplines encourages students to examine notions of dress, body and space in a variety of different conditions, intentions, compositions and hierarchies.

The workshops were conducted over two sessions at the Design Hub in the beginning weeks of first semester. Preceding the workshop, Brook had presented a lecture on his practice, particularly the body of work leading to the development of

De Anima. Students were asked to bring in materials expressing transparency; classic archetypes of the veil such as gauze, muslin, voile, organza, chiffon but also knitted materials, papers, plastics and acetates. Minimal construction devices were requested, but students were asked to bring either materials, or examples of work that represented the essence or 'materiality' of their practice. The premise of the sessions was simply to explore the ideas or the synonyms for the veil or 'veiling', and distill down a sequence of ideas that contribute to the potency and poetics of using such simple wearable articles. In doing so it revealed by the process of engaging through materiality the simple but pertinent question of what happens when you cover the face and /or the body?

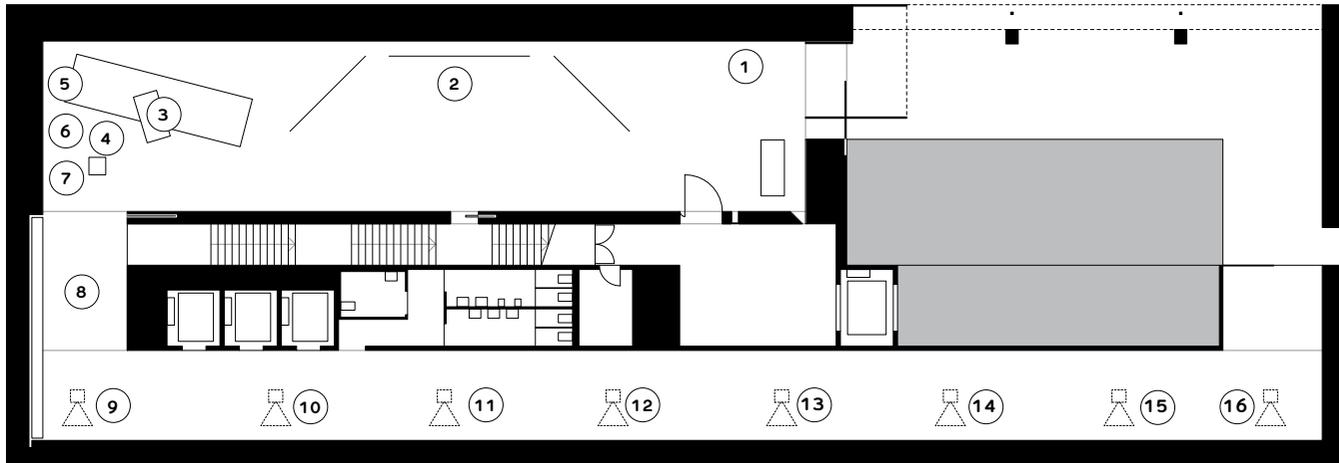
Within the field of fashion design, it is sometimes taken for granted the power and presence latent in the intimate exchanges between body, space and dress. Related to this example, it is a simple equation to cloak or conceal a figure in fabric, to veil them. However even with such simplicity – a piece of transparent fabric draped over a figure – it produces a relatively dramatic gesture and affect for both the viewer and the wearer. Brook implored the students to engage deeply with the conditions of what this affect imparted to the actions of covering, hiding, escaping, playing, seeking and also 'seeing'. By limiting or impeding sight, the amplification of other senses occurs depending on how this experience is designed. With differing dynamics of sight; the transaction of seeing becomes a more considered process; with deficiency in one sense, others such as touch and sound are all the more noticeable. Does the veil cloak and protect, and produce its own environment? Or is it a divisive barrier between oneself and the outside world? Encountering these questions within the workshop yielded interesting responses

due the distilled essence and propositions inherent in the veil.

Students worked towards the articulation of cloth, defining the subtleties of drape, and the compositions and tensions between body and cloth with respect to their own interests and practices. Within performative and engaged workshops such as these, there is a natural deviation from the formalized notions of design processes for fashion. Instructions that direct a set of conditions that empower the participant as both wearer and designer are pivotal to strategies explored in several approaches to design pedagogies from the School of Fashion and Textiles. These strategies are affiliated with art practice as there is a gradual and quiet engagement with materiality and its suggestive potential, something often neglected in design processes for fashion that omit such phases. This interaction, therefore, also prompts further and subtler questioning around the role and intention of the dressed body, how it can demarcate and articulate space and the relationships between these.

Such strategies represent emerging directions in practice based research for fashion and particularly from the School with a fundamental concern with questioning the medium itself, and naturally the processes and methods that lie central to it. Strategies for how we design and encounter the body, dress and space are key new ways to approach the design process for fashion and its outcomes. To consider these interactions in an abstract sense, prior to the articulation of form, provides fruitful questioning of the medium and its relevance to everyday lived experiences.

Ricarda Bigolin (PhD),
Designer and Lecturer,
School of Fashion and Textiles
RMIT University



Level 2 Floorplan

Project Room 1

Horizon III

- ① Framed print and neon.
James Gillray, 'Political Dreamings! Visions of Peace! Perspective Horrors!', etching with hand colouring, published by H.Humphrey, London, November 9th, 1801
- ② *De Anima*, 3 channel video, 2014

Horizon II

- ③ Cabinet: See drawing for details
- ④ Trolley: See drawing for details
- ⑤ John S. Davis, 'Mr HM Stanley's Anglo-American Expedition for the Exploration of Central Africa-Bumbireh Hospitality' - From *The Picture*, Illustration for *The Graphic*, London, 2nd February, 1878
- ⑥ Paul Meyerhei, 'A Wild Indian Show', *Illustrated London News*, London, 1876
- ⑦ 'Immigrants Attacked by Indians', *Illustrated London News*, London, c.1870

Horizon IV

- ⑧ Brook Andrew and Natalie Kieleithner, *Horizon IV*, silk organza and laser cutting, edition of 30, 2014

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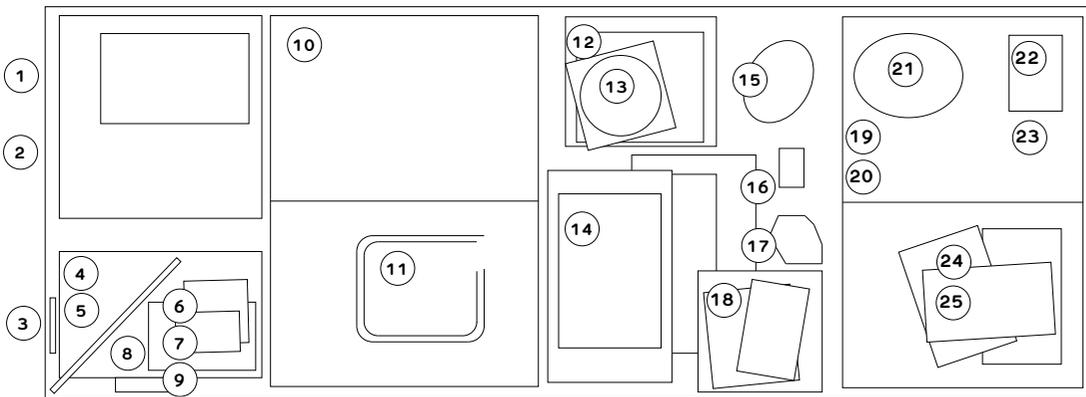
Project Room 2

Horizon I

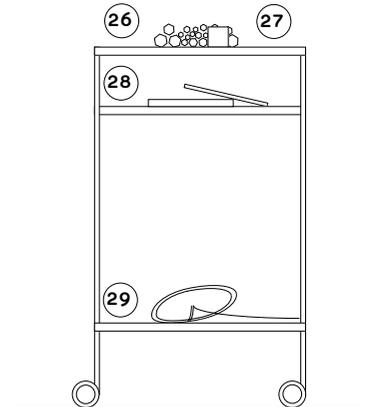
- ⑨ *Ministry of Home Security Training Film - Technical Training of Rescue Parties*, Produced by Cinit Films, UK. c.1920. *Armand and Michaela Denis On Safari (Part 2)*, c.1960
- ⑩ *Apollo 11 - the first men on the moon*, A Walten Film, 1969
- ⑪ *American Family*, home video, sound footage, Lithia Park Ashland, Oregon, c.1970
- ⑫ *Unknown film clip*, Columbia Pictures, 1973. *Armand and Michaela Denis On Safari (Part 1)*, c.1960
- ⑬ *Bullfighting*, Spain, c.1970
- ⑭ *Love by Appointment*, standard 8mm, black and white, silent, c.1960
- ⑮ *My Japan*, War Finance Division, Compo films, Chicago, USA, 1945
- ⑯ *The Blonde Captive*, Capital Pictures, USA, 1931

**Design Archive
Archive Window**

Channel I of III, *De Anima*, 2014



Cabinet



Trolley

Cabinet

- ① Brumberger case with film reels
- ② N. Poivre, *Fils et Filles S’Afrique, Adapte de Sons of Africa et Daughters of Africa* de G.A. Gollock, Societe Des Missions Evangeliques De Pari, Paris, 1946
- ③ 6 glass plate transparencies (6 of 54), *The Hub, Mt Wellington, Tasmania*, by Tasmanian photographers J.W. Beattie and Stephen Spurling, c.1910-1930
- ④ Grandma McKemish, *Poem* (‘God made...’) (archive of Mama Alto)
- ⑤ Portrait - Nenek Priscilla (archive of Mama Alto)
- ⑥ Indonesia dancing girl ethnographic postcard, c.1930s (archive of Mama Alto)
- ⑦ Raymond Firth, *Human Types: An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, first published 1938, this edition c.1960s (archive of Mama Alto)
- ⑧ Small case - Rush Motion Picture films, Washington Finance Department
- ⑨ Spiny Leaf Insect (Macleay’s phasmid) *Extatsoma tiratium*, Queensland (archive of Justin Shoulder)
- ⑩ *Encyclopedie du Siecle, L’Exposition De Paris 1900*, Paris, 1900
- ⑪ Purple square spiral neon
- ⑫ Stack of 12 film reels in boxes, including titles; *Town Stud, The Dolls – 2 Girls, A Walton Film* and *Ring up for Love* and other found films
- ⑬ World globe, c.1950s
- ⑭ Stack of black and white press photographs, including *Korea 2C3 ½ P2 (PN)*(1951) and *The Supremes, Motown Recording Artists* (1967)
- ⑮ Skull Sculpture, Yirrkala Arnhem Land artist unknown, c.1989

- ⑯ Snake with crown, hand carved wooden ornament, Vilnius, Lithuania
- ⑰ Quartz crystal
- ⑱ Stack of small, found, black and white photographs, unknown artist and date, including *Man against building* and *Man amongst large boulders*, captioned “Up the rocky canyon at Silraw Lake. Unknown man in foreground. Mrs H.E children higher up and indistinct. Camera moved a little”
- ⑲ *Notre Belle France D’Outre Mer, Volume 1 and 2*, Maurice Allain, Paris
- ⑳ *Le Tour du Monde, 1870-71, Nouveau Journal Des Voyages*, Paris, 1871
- ㉑ 3D printed skull
- ㉒ Letter with wax seal, from Theodore Wohng, composer of *De Anima*
- ㉓ Tuning fork
- ㉔ 2 printed black and white photographs of James Watt Beattie and Stephen Spurling, 20th century
- ㉕ H.H. Scott and R. McClinton, *Royal Society of Tasmania Papers and Proceedings, 1925 - Some Notes Upon a Tasmanian Aboriginal Skull*, The Mercury Printing Office, Hobart, 1925

Trolley

- ②⑥ 2 glass plate transparencies (2 of 54) by Tasmanian photographers J.W. Beattie and Stephen Spurling, c.1910-1930
- ②⑦ Assorted quartz crystals
- ②⑧ *My Japan*, War Finance Division, Compo films, Chicago, USA, 1945
- ②⑨ Blood cell neon

