

# The Hand of Man

Produced in conjunction with an exhibition and talks of the same title organized around the topic 'Strategies toward authorship and collaboration', held at Y3K, Melbourne, Australia, May 2010.

Talks by Lisa Radford with Kati Rule, Alex Martinis Roe with Emily Cormack and Fiona Macdonald, Georgie Roxby Smith, and Masato Takasaka and new work from Daniel Munn and Huffer with Miss Crabb.

*Many thanks to Huffer and Miss Crabb for generously supplying their garments for this exhibition. Huffer: 31 Sackville Street, Collingwood, VIC 3066, Australia. Miss Crabb: 41 Ponsoby Road. Auckland, New Zealand.*



## Guy Benfield

INTERVIEW BY JAMES DEUTSHER AND DANIEL MUNN, MAY 2010

DM. Regarding your recent exhibition and performance Night Store you stated that you prefer to instigate a work then 'back off and let other people be involved.' You have also said that you write scripts for performances then partially ignore them. Given the strong formal qualities of your sculpture, do you reign things in, in terms of your own and other people's participation, at some point in the performance?

GB: Usually yeah. The thing is it starts off with my own personal vision or whatever you want to call it, or idea, and then, that can only work to a certain point, and then I really have to let it go. For example with The Night Store, that was like a year of nutting it out. I had this storefront space, the show was on for two months, and I had to do these, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten performances, it became like this really over the top project. So I did all the work for it, and talked and curated about it, bla bla bla and then basically I set the show up in a format that could be used and abused by other people in a way.

So who was around... Constanze Zikos was in town in New York at Green Street Studio. I hadn't seen Constanze for like 15 years or something but we went to New York in 87 together. Somehow we started talking about The Night Store show and I started listening to music that he makes and it just seemed, completely out there, but fitting to what I was doing. So we ended up collaborating on the performance aspect of the show and basically I just allowed his input, his aesthetics or whatever, they're kind of like the opposite of what I'm into... but I just basically gave the show over to him. And it worked out really well. And then, you know, other people get involved as well. It just gets too bogged down about my own issues and stuff and it becomes really heavy and not fluid enough and I just like to sort of explode that.

DM. In another recent show Expanded Ceramithèque Drug Time Present you exhibited the Freemantle Art Center collection's ceramics alongside your own. This aspect of community, interactions between works and between individuals, has been a focus of your practice. Is this still an element that you're working with?

GB: The thing about the Freemantle show is, it was basically just dealing with people, and other people's work, and my own work, and then Constanze again was involved. Yeah I suppose there was a community that materialized out of this whole thing. It's hard to say that that's got much to do with childhood experiences or anything; it's just more about trying to let the project go. I mean using the gallery collection was kind of wrong, you know, it was a bit weird. I mean not so much weird but I saw lots of work that was like thrift store Freemantle, this really bad pottery and crochet weavings and weird etchings. Although I suppose these are all local artists so it was kind of interesting using their work, but a lot of the work was very loaded with people's egos and stuff, you could really feel it. It was quite difficult to use in the show, and people took it very seriously, where I didn't really take... I mean their work my work, it was on equal par, I wasn't taking either one too seriously... but it did create a bizarre relationship.

JD. In both those shows, Freemantle and Night Store, you mentioned that you were working with works that were kind of against... say Constanze's work being at the other end of the spectrum to what you doing, and these highly valued thrift store objects. So

is it matter of, in each show, trying to negotiate a situation in a circumstantial way, depending on who you bump into or what friends are in town at the time, or where you happen to be working, what kind of community there is there, what you can pick up on and engage in for each particular project?

GB: Yeah exactly. It's trying to let go of, not ego, but the anxiety. It's like negotiating anxiety, my own anxiety. I suppose in the past everything was about dredging up something, trying to get it out there. You have this idea which is kind of like a few crystals floating around and it's just this brain melting kind of scenario where you're trying to get this idea to form. And then you're trying to present it... and you know I just got so sick of working that way. And things change, like just being here in New York; there are so many different factors that allow me to let go of a lot of that stuff.

DM. Was this approach to authorship of the work important in your earlier exhibitions such as Club Nepenthe, for example which presented highly distinctive consumer products, which I guess also weren't your own?

GB: With that show at Uplands, I mean, I've never made stuff like that before. I've never sat down and made trinkets. I was looking at a lot of Puerto Rican cars. Basically they have all this stuff hanging off their rear vision mirror inside the car; beads and feathers and rabbits feet and shit all dangling. And I suppose they influenced these objects. I don't know, I just started making them, it was the last thing on my mind. I suppose I also had to have a narrative, some kind of story that went along with the work, a fictional story... but that was really just for my own benefit. It felt like it produced that work and some kind of context for myself. And then I allowed those stories about keys to Miami club owner's doors and offices to become the content of the work.

JD: With regards to the way you generate a fiction or situation within the work, a fictional element, it's maybe creating some kind of center in the work. You've used various objects as what you called 'centers' in your performances and installations; the kiln in Ceramithèque Drug Time Present, the house and the pottery wheel in Maximum Commune, the pagoda in the Shanghai work. How do feel those centers operate in the nuts and bolts development of these pieces, both as a physical object that you have to negotiate in the performance and also as a symbolic object?

GB: I think the central component was always just a formal idea to negotiate the space I was using. But then it also became this kind of, not temple but, kind of shrine that you gravitate towards and work around; it's like a meditation point... In Freemantle the central object was gone, I've kind of stopped using any heavy central object now. These objects seem to suck all the energy... it's like they become this acned face and take all the anxiety. Also I don't believe in a center, so it's about this central thing becoming very dirty and angst ridden and then I try and explode that again and remove that. For Night Store I really needed some kind of central thing to work with because the show was evolving and changing and this was a constant in the work. But it's very related to the performances as an object to use and abuse.

JD: In terms of the way you talk about the shaman then, and this kind of meditative center in a way, and the way you use functional objects that suck up the energy of the space or the scenario that you've marked or finished, is that like the way a shaman is making more of something than is actually there, creating more of this center, then what comes out the other side is an evidence of that in this mark-making on the objects?

GB: Yeah that's a pretty good analogy of it. It's definitely just using these objects, giving them some sort of fake life for a period of time and then they get tainted, they get touched, they get manipulated a little bit. But I think that through this process I'm really trying to distance myself from any attachment towards... I mean I find myself getting more and more detached from these objects, were originally I used to be so involved, I had so much investment in them. I think that's just from being through art school, you really do invest a lot of energy into these things. So by this process I can just disenfranchise myself from most of these objects... and especially with the painting aspect, like if paintings come about through this process or whatever's made through this process. With the Night Store show a friend of mine who doesn't really make any art made most of the objects for me. So that was kind of nice, seeing these strange things that he'd made, then I could put my own buzz on them.

DM: Could you talk about your approach to translating artistic and craft influences into your own work. What do you hope will result when you channel an artist or artwork?

GB: I suppose the influences were a catalyst to investigate performance. I was really interested in performance art from history and seeing what it means now and how I can contemporize it, or what works and what doesn't in this day and age. I'm not so much interested in that kind of process any more, but that gave birth to my approach now. I'm more interested in developing a community through my work than some kind of a rational factory. An irrational factory with a schizophrenic assembly line, that's more what I want things to be like and through that [I want to] develop a community and let the performance not talk about the history of performance but use it as some kind of object.

DM: What is your logic when inter-meshing works. Do you use different influences for different parts of a work and are they all on a level playing field for you in terms of the whole scenario, or is there a hierarchy?

GB: That's a tough question. I think my influences now are more through collaboration. The influences come from the other people I work with in these shows, and what they do, and how they can change what I do, or invigorate it. The whole point of it would be not to have hierarchy because that would be against what I'm trying to do. I'm just allowing other people to make decisions. It's just like an open forum, setting up an environment where these things can happen. People could do something completely against my aesthetics or whatever but I let it go, because it just works that way.

JD: Do you feel like you could have let it go in the way that you can now in the past, or do you think that that's a place that you've come to?

GB: No, I had so much more emotional investment. I think that basically comes from a painting background. I was kind of naive because when I was young I was looking at all the German Expressionist painters from the 80s, Markus Lupertz... I mean he was quite

a conceptual artist. He painted the same painting for years and he does stories about how he painted that painting, he'd give talks and then these talks were filmed... you know what I mean, it wasn't like he was going to his studio and turgng around his canvas. But yeah, I had much more anxiety towards the work back then.

DM: At the exhibition Satellite in Shanghai you mediated Markus Lupertz. Were you interested in Lupertz' questioning of the boundary between figuration and abstraction?

GB: I think it was more about himself personally. I saw this video when I was in Portugal. The professor at the school, he was German, showed this video, it was all in German, of Markus Lupertz going to the studio every day. And he'd wear a different hat on his head and he'd just be bashing these sloppy canvases around and then he'd sit back in this big lounge chair with these huge rings in his suit and watch the video of himself painting with this weird teardrop coming down one side of his face... it was all very bizarre, it was pretty humorous, but it was a really interesting vision. I think I was more influenced by that video than the work he was making. In China I had the opportunity of using this information kiosk. No one said I could use it but no one said I could use it, it was kind of a language thing where the curators couldn't say no, or yes, so I just used it anyway. I wasn't sure if the work was going to be thrown out in the middle of the night. At the time this character developed while I was setting the show up and it just kept going to back to this Markus Lupertz character in this video that I saw, Twittering with Power, 1984.

So I basically operated in the manner of Markus Lupertz in this film where I went to this pagoda every day for a week and I made some paintings that were what I though Markus Lupertz would make, then I did that painting performance with the beard and all that sort of stuff. So yeah it was just like an ebb and flow, allowing these ideas to flow out. My idea in the end to have this information center where people could come and ask me questions about that period of the Cologne art scene, or Markus Lupertz, or German Expressionism of the 80s (laughs). I mean, it sounds stupid but when you're there, sitting in this kiosk all day long... it could have worked but no one came and asked me anything, they just took a lot of photos from a distance... I had a full time security guard as well.

JD: You have mentioned Viennese Actionists as an influence in your work. I've been told this group had a distinctly anti-establishment tone; they tested social taboos and questioned 'art as commodity' through their use of materials. Do you see your work as acting against certain limitations? You've mentioned that you work against the limitations of your own anxiety, where do you feel your work is at now?

GB: I suppose I find limitations are kind of everywhere; curators limitations and intellectual limitations and art scene, art world limitations. That's how I feel but it's not like a whinge or anything. I suppose originally I saw the Viennese Actionists as quite marginalized. When I was first investigating this stuff and was looking at Eastern European performance and Chinese performance; it all seemed very marginalized to me and I was interested in that area. And I suppose a lot of that performance stuff, when I was younger, seemed pretty uncool, so that limitation of what I should be looking at or making was something I wanted to go against originally. I feel like I'm always working with limitations, trying to develop some kind of process I suppose, where I can deal with all that stuff.

JD: Who are some of the artists or architects that you're interested in at the moment?

GB: Well I've been watching a lot of the Circular File Channel on YouTube, have you seen that? I think you'd like it. It's a group of people here in New York and they have a cable access channel on YouTube. It's kind of like that cable access kind of work, Lower Eastside, downtown scene back in the 70s, early 80s. But yeah that's really interesting stuff and they make really good work as well. I like all those Cologne artists, Michael Krebber, Jutta Koether, and Merlin Carpenter... all the bad people, all the bad boys and girls. Genesis P-Orridge, he's doing some amazing work now... or she. Genesis P-Orridge from Throbbing Gristle.

JD: You were going to do something with him at some stage? Was that a rumor?

GB: Yeah that was a... actually a friend of mine is his tattooist so I could have easily met him. I could possibly meet him one day... her (everyone laughs). She's around a lot, she just had a show of thirty years of collage work and that was pretty fucking amazing.

JD: What about architecturally? With these centers and objects where you use an existing object and transform it, in the case of the Shanghai work, or the kind of platforms and scenarios that you create, where are the architectural or design influences coming from?

GB: I suppose when I spent a year in Portugal there was a lot of that kind of crumbling post communist or modernist architecture, and that's when I really started getting involved in it. I mean they have Siza, that incredible architect. I was really interested in a lot of office buildings and weird pavilions that were kind of moss covered, this crumbling modernist myth. I had sort of encounters with that architecture and these encounters were filmed on video, I'd do these weird kind of rituals with the actual building.

Design? Tony Duquett. He's a Los Angelos interior designer from the 50s, 60s, I've been looking at a lot of his interiors. There was a show dedicated to his work at New Jersey gallery in Basil, not dedicated but Wade Guyton and all these people responded to his stuff. It was a good show, his stuff's pretty amazing.

JD: What are your plans for the rest of the year?

GB: I'm just working on the catalog for the Art in General exhibition. I don't know why but they like to do the catalog months after the show. I think basically it's like this weird overlapping and flow going on. You do a show, then you do a catalog later, then they launch the catalog.. it just keeps on rolling like that. So that's pretty exciting and it's quite hard work, quite a big process... I mean it's a small catalog but it's got a lot of pages. That'll incorporate a comic book I made and lots of images and scripts. I've been working on a lot of scripts with Constanze. Constanze usually writes the scripts and then I add to it, so we have this writing dialogue going on as well outside the showing and all that sort of stuff. So these scripts are put away in a file, maybe we'll work on a video project from it or whatever.

But yeah that's about it, just the catalog, I don't know about shows. The Kaliman gallery closed down so I won't be showing there again. I'm trying to organize a show for Uplands with Shana Moulton and these two guys, Chuck Yatserk and Justin Ranthorp. They're from Florida... these guys are really into it, I couldn't believe it. I just sort of mentioned it and they were like "Yeah let's show in Melbourne!" They were like, pumped.

JD: So you'll get out here later on in the year then?

GB: Yeah hopefully, probably the beginning of next year. It's just hard to plan anything here. I mean who knows if we'll ever be able to fly again, if these volcanoes keep going. They could be cooking for like two years those things... I think Rob McKenzie's going to come out, do you know Rob?

JD: Yeah he's coming out to do a show here and at Uplands with Kain Picken in July. Do you see a lot of Rob?

GB: Yeah I do, he's washing dishes at the cafe I work at. I'm like, making coffee and he's washing dishes (laughs), it's pretty funny. You don't have any pride over here, you just do whatever.

DM: Maybe we can ask one more question. What kind of coffee do you drink? JD: Yeah how do you take it?

GB: Milk and one sugar from the local deli.

JD: And what's the most popular coffee that you make?

GB: At the cafe? Flat white. People don't really know what flat white is but they order it. [faking an American accent] "I'll have a flat white what's that?" Fat white? What? They don't understand a word I say, so I just ramble on and say all this stuff, no one understands me. I always say "Egg-white latte!" (everyone laughs) No one even turns their head.

**Exhibitions reference**

*Expanded Ceramithèque Drug Time Present*, Freemantle Art Centre, 30 January - 14 March 2010  
*Night Store*, presented by Art in General for Performa 09, 01 - 22 November, 2009  
*Maximum Commune (Ugly Business... on the basis of disbelief.)*, Artspace, Sydney, 05 July - 18 August 2007  
*Institutional Critique Boutique/ Failure Without Fluro (Markus Lupertz in China)*, Satellite: a project with the Shanghai Biennale, 2006



### Martyn Reynolds/ Guy Ngan

*Proposal to light "Star" by Guy Ngan, 1973 (Auckland), after B&M Electrical lighting of "Cityscape" by Guy Ngan, 1980, (Palmerston North), 2010*  
artist's impression, full color

Project: Martyn Reynolds in consultation with Guy Ngan

# Wears Blank

DANIEL MUNN

When New Zealand fashion labels Huffer and Miss Crabb collaborated late last year for Huffer's Winter 2010 collection it was not only a successful marketing strategy but also a coming together of two unique design philosophies. In the media furore that followed this collection's unveiling at New Zealand Fashion Week 2009 attention centered on the conversations that had brought the two designers together.

Miss Crabb creator Kristine Crabb states that she wanted to see if she could apply her own way of working to Huffer's market, "Part of the challenge for me wanting to do it was to apply my quite classic ideas to this Huffer brand. People were surprised, but then it makes sense really."

The Miss Crabb label, established in 2004, is known for its bold silhouettes, luxurious fabrics, and the versatility of its garments. Not surprisingly their range attracts a wide spectrum of people. "Most people are between the ages of 14-30, the younger ones with their mum's or mum's credit cards." Miss Crabb store manager Katie Melody Rogers says, "then we have some really loyal followers who are a bit older like 50ish who love the more classic Miss Crabb styles."

Huffer's roots lie in designing clothing for board sports however they are now much more focused on creating streetwear. Their designs stand out from the crowd with their no-stress sense of humor and relaxed wearability. Formed in New Zealand in 1997 when skateboarder Dan Buckley and snowboarder Steve Dunstan met, the label is now distributed in Japan, Europe, the United States, Australia and the team has learned a lot along the way. "We've figured out that it's really important to back yourself," co-founder Dunstan says.

Buckley goes on to explain that Huffer was led astray a little by range advisers who offer advice on what the US market wants."We realized that really, at the end of the day, it's all just opinion. After all, for us the original idea was our point of difference, everything from our design identity to the style of our photography. And you have to believe in what you're doing.

The new Huffer/Miss Crabb collection is very much about being customizable. Roll it up, tuck it in, fold it, unfold it, collar up, collar down, buttons done or undone, ruche it up, tie it up, mix it up. It seems fitting then that this collaboration showcases the ability of these two labels to maintain flexibility in their design process.

"Yesterday afternoon I had an insightful conversation with our very commercially-minded New Zealand sales manager." says Buckley, "He's working the coal face, chipping away you know, he's with our buyers on a daily basis and he understands them implicitly." It turns out that the general idea of the collaboration freaked him out a little.

"He understands what Kristine is, it's high fashion and it's fewer garments sold, but then Kristine's interpretation of what Huffer requires and what Huffer wants and who a Huffer customer is has, you know, kind of worked. Seeing what's hanging on the rack now he's really quite excited with what's happened."

**Sources**

Email correspondence with Katie Melody Rogers, 03 March 2010

Dan Buckley and Kristine Crabb talk about the upcoming revelation of the Huffer - Miss Crabb collaboration at Air New Zealand Fashion Week '09, Fashionz TV, 08 September 2009

Huffer: Cool for cats by Cathrin Schaer, New Zealand Herald, 02 October 2008

Unlimited - One cool company, http://unlimited.co.nz/unlimited.nsf/growth/one-cool-company

# Jen Berean and Pat Foster

INTERVIEW BY DANIEL MUNN, APRIL 2010

**DM:** You have recently taken part in a residency at Fire Station Artists' Studios in Dublin, Ireland. Could you talk a little about the work you produced there?

PF: Well we made one main sculpture and then a handful of wall based works. The sculpture is a pedestrian barricade kind of object that then has a piece of glass that goes through it. We kind of tend to research a specific place but not necessarily actually make work that's specific to that place. So our ideas will be generated by our time spent somewhere. We were really looking at the history of the place and stuff like that and it's kind of a history of protest. But these were things that were feeding our research rather than the actual works that we created, so the work's a lot broader. JB: Yeah so we looked at a lot of images of protests in Dublin and took kind of the idea of the barriers as an object meant to kind of stop people from being aggressive and violent, but then at the same time a lot of the images have people using the barriers as weapons, which is kind of interesting.. PF: It's like, the object that's there to stop the aggression becomes a tool for aggression, so it was this nice flipping of the function of the object. A lot of our work is really based on ideas of how objects are used or how spaces are used, particularly public spaces. JB: More how they're misused.. PF: Yeah used and misused, and ideas of prescribed functions to certain places or objects and how that can be undermined. So in the [sculptural] work there's this piece of glass that's going through it, it has this real kind of tension basically, so the barrier's kind of being supported by the piece of glass, but it's also about to break the piece of glass at the same time, it has a real kind of tension in it.

**DM:** In addition to your work in sculpture and installation, you have also carried out interviews and commissioned writings. Do you see these activities as a way of introducing your work to a larger audience, perhaps to individuals who aren't interested in the visual arts specifically?



### Rod Schaffer/ McCann Erickson

*RMIT: I am taking my own path*, 2010 double billboard advertisement, full color  
Photography: Rod Schaffer, Creative: McCann Erickson

JB: The library project definitely was about introducing regular users of the library in that region to artists they might not of heard of and also texts they might never have come across. So making connections between artists and these texts as well. The idea was that you'd stumble across a book on the shelf and read more about the artist or about the book. Do you know much about that project? DM: A little bit, maybe you could describe it? JB: Yeah so we were asked to do a public sculpture for Frankston, and we decided that we didn't want to make a monument or sculpture in the traditional sense, so we looked at this idea of creating sculpture within the library that was dispersed throughout it, an exploded sculpture. We asked 40 artists to choose a book that supports their practice and then write a bit about why, or a piece of writing that related to it. Then those books were bought and put into the library, and with each of the books the artist's text was put on the cover. So when you look up one of the books you either get the artist's text as a surprise or the other way around.

PF: The other writings, the ones we did for Evergreen, we'd done a couple of projects that were specific to... well one was specific to the VCA gallery office and one was specific to what was meant to be a reading room at Monash but had been turned into a storage area. At Monash we turned that storage area back into the initial idea of what that space was meant to do. At VCA the office was kind of a mess of junk so we used all that junk to create a large workstation that the staff have been working at since 2005. So those interviews were a way of looking back at how people had used the spaces, the successes and failures of those spaces. JB: Because they weren't public projects, they were in private areas, it was good to ask how people actually used it, the office workers and staff. And it was interesting because the one at Monash, through that interview with Max we all agreed it was a utopian failure. But then Vicky's, at the VCA, has been really active and working the whole time and they find it really useful and functional.

**DM:** What role do you see these interviews and these kinds of projects as having in the broad scope of your work, in the wider picture?

PF: Well those writings are specific to those projects which are perhaps slightly less relevant to the work that we've made over the last three or four years. Perhaps there's been a shift, I mean it's still kind of forms a basis for [our] basic ideas of use and function of spaces and stuff like that.. JB: Yeah I think maybe what we were doing then, now that's part of our research rather than an end result. I guess they work alongside what we do. PF: They're quite different as compared to the show in Ireland, or shows in the last couple of years, they certainly look a lot different, they're different types of projects.. But maybe they share a foundation.

**DM:** Your work often acts to reorganize or recondition something which exists at a specific location. How do you decide what is important in a given area in terms of developing a new work?

JB: The VCA and the Monash projects were really explicit examples of that, where we just used what was in that space. In those projects everything was important, we had to take into consideration everything down to pencil sharpeners, bookshelves... so that was really broad. In Christchurch as well, reorganizing their collection, that was about exposing work that wasn't really accessible to the public. PF: I think these days, sometimes we may use things that already exist and bring them into our work. More often than not though it's a recreation of things that we see. So like the black smashed works that we do are a direct reference to the smashed windows that we see... the barrier's obviously a real object that was found and kind of re-purposed into an artwork. There's an obvious shift when you reference something that's quite real and something that people exist with, so broken windows, street barriers, whatever. And then when you go and paint that black or have it powder-coated you really shift the object into a stylized realm, which is really of interest to us because then it's about how something gets understood for it's value. DM: So would you say that in recent work your influences are more fragmented than previously? PF: Our tendency is towards a kind of urban aesthetic and a very base level of that, so these days there'd be a lot of raw aluminum and glass, and this fascination we have with spaces being transitional or.. Beggar: Excuse me gentlemen (PF: Sorry man) have any loose change please, (PF: Sorry man) I'm trying to get a bottle of port that's all (PF: Sorry man), couple of dollars short (PF: Sorry man) have a good night right...I only just got out of the Jack shop mate.

**DM:** You mentioned in regard to your work at New 09 at ACCA that you wanted to be

**true to the materials you used; the joinery, the aluminum bench, etc., and not only in terms of raw materials, but also in their installation and the craft of the tradesmen involved. Could this be seen as leaving space for other creative individuals within your piece?**

JB: I think it's quite the opposite where, the reactions from tradesmen is, they don't want to have any input, they think it's ridiculous to put something up that's that temporary, and so they don't want to have anything to do with it. PF: Yeah I talked to someone about this recently who was saying that it's a type of collaboration, but I don't really see it as a type of collaboration. JB: Well that's what the premise of the New 010 is isn't it? That all these tradespeople are working together. Have you been in there? The tradesmen, they have an input, but they have no interest in that, creative input... generally. PF: It's just kind of a means to an end. We want something built and we attempt to make sure that these people build it how we want it to be built. JB: Although you know, when you're building anything it's a back and forth, asking 'Will this work', 'How do we make this look like this.' That's where you definitely get input from the people who make it. We're doing a show in Shepparton next week and we've been working with a bricklayer and we rely a lot on them to tell us what's possible, how things will look as well... DM: And what's standard? JB: We specify what standard we want. I work as an architect often outside of art practice, and that's what I do all day is just, you know, get things made.

**DM:** For your contribution to Scape 08 in New Zealand, "instead of operating purely as sculpture the work looked at the [Christchurch Art Gallery] collection's artworks differently by placing them on specially designed plinths." Your work often has a presence which is organizational so that your intervention is supplemental and ultimately dependent. Is it important to you that you 'relinquish' authority in your work?

PF: Ah, how do you mean? DM: Good question... you used relinquished in a recent press release so I just used relinquish. I guess in the way in which the Christchurch work was basically just supporting someone else's work. PF: I think maybe that's more authoritarian than anything really, it's selecting things and presenting them out of how they'd normally be presented, and also not listing who the work is by. JB: We tried to kind of erase them and obscure them, they were really high on the plinths, you couldn't really see them, the lights were blaring... So it wasn't about creating monuments out of them, it was more about our work dominating, the plinths being the work rather than what we traditionally know as the sculpture. PF: Yeah, so if anything it's a heavy handed authoritarian role, and that piece was very specific to the Scape Biennial and to Christchurch at the same time. JB: The way we selected them, we didn't look at anything, we wanted to just look on the internet at their collection and make assumptions about pieces based on [our] ideas of a monument and a public sculpture and a traditional bronze cast and... we just made choices based on those things. We didn't want to know who the artist was, why they made the work, what it was about, these generalizations that we make as a public looking at public art.

**DM:** You have mentioned that you are interested 'in how public space is designed with a certain in-built anxiety, an anxiety predicated upon a fear and expectation of misuse.' Would you say this is the defining characteristic of design for public space?

PF: No I think it's just something that's built into the design of public spaces. There are also aesthetic, formal considerations that come into it. But it interests us how that fear, that anxiety, does actually play a role in shaping spaces. JB: There's been a lot of text written and theories about designing out crime and ways that, from the outset you can design these spaces to stop crime, which is kind of an interesting starting point and which is where that anxiety comes from. You're the designer but you know that people are going to fuck with it, so how do you preempt it. PF: It's like any vandalism or misuse has already affected a space before it's even been built, and then it will go on to affect it again and, you know, there's this ongoing kind of unwanted collaboration that occurs.

**DM:** There seems to be a tendency for your work to describe the quieter or less violent forms of civil structuring; safety glass or pedestrian barriers as opposed to say, sandbag walls or police equipment. Would you say that this reflects a particularly Melbourneian or Australian experience of the urban environment?

JB: I think it's really universal, that's why it works. PF:..You know, maybe in a Western urban context it's universal. There's something about sandbags that would be a little too dramatic or distant for people. JB: We want things to be really recognizable. I

remember in Dublin, a lot of the street furniture and the mechanisms for crossing the street... the buttons [laughs], a lot of the companies who make those here, make those in Dublin; it's the same thing, they're universal things now. They're mostly made in Germany or something. It's like us getting trains from Germany.

**DM:** In your work you take the forms of public space, the hardware, street furniture etc., and enforce on them your own particular visual style, the selected forms are then moved into smaller spaces, the public gallery, the dealer gallery, someone's home... How would you say this process affects these distinctly 'public' materials, and what do you see as the pros and cons of making work for these various spaces?

PF: The work kind of needs those spaces to operate. It's really important for it's function to shift into being an object to be looked at, so when something's positioned in a gallery... JB: It's function becomes defunct or confused PF: So we often use the benches in a gallery setting because people want to sit on them. It immediately makes the function problematic, I guess that's what the gallery space offers. The broken glass also works nicely. Elsewhere it's flawed, but in the gallery it's something kind of beautiful. DM: So the criteria for valuing objects changes in a way that works for you? PF: Well, it's not really about ideas of the found object or any Duchampian kind of thing, but it just basically puts a spotlight on this idea of function. So if the bench for example, is operating as a sculpture rather than as a bench, it's function's changed: it's something to be looked at rather than sat on. It's something to be considered in a different way. But that kind of collapses in a gallery setting when people sit on, so they've kind of done the wrong thing, but they've activated that problem immediately. It brings the focus onto what we're interested in in public spaces, in how they're designed to be used in a correct way. So the gallery can let us hone in on that by using the constructs of how the public should engage with the objects within an art gallery. DM: What about a private home? PF: Well I guess glass works the same way in a home, where a broken window pane in the house would be something to be repaired, but a broken window pane on the wall is something to look at and enjoy.

**DM:** Who are some of the artists, designers, or groups you are interested in at the moment?

PF: Mostly sculptors probably. JB: When we were traveling recently we saw this show, Oscar.... PF: Oscar Tuazon JB: Yeah, just the materiality of his work... PF: I guess it has a slightly similar aesthetic to us, but this show at Macarone Gallery really kind of receded into the architecture of the gallery, steel structures that were up at ceiling height that felt like they could have just been part of the natural gallery space anyway. Broken sheets of glass on the ground... And then also a sculptor like Tom Burr is quite important to us, in that he uses known, architectural objects, bits and pieces of urban or domestic scenarios that are really stylized and then charged with, well, he would say they are really to do with sculpture and homosexuality. But I really like the basic idea of bringing these known things, pulling them apart a bit, really stylizing them, and presenting that as something that's really loaded, when it's maybe just banal objects that have been brought together. JB: Liam Gillick as well has always been a big influence. He actually did a talk last night in Dublin, we missed that. PF: Gillick's been someone that we've looked at a lot for quite a long time. And again it would be the way that he uses, in terms of his sculpture, a really pared back, known thing that leans towards something functional, but is never really letting you know what is going on. So there are a lot of embedded histories or thoughts within this very plain simple form.

**DM:** What are your plans for the rest of 2010?

JB: We've got a show in Shepparton next week, this is a regional tour that ACCA's put on of three different galleries, so we're doing a commissioned, site specific piece for that. Then we're going to Sydney for a residency at Artspace, then we've got a show at Murray White at the end of the year. PF: October. DM: So is there a theme for this Shepparton show? JB: Well, Hannah Mathews curated shows of artists who ACCA has worked with before that would work with each individual space. One of them's a group video show, one's Brendan Lee, then it's us and Nathan Gray, Justine Khamara, and Nick Devlin. So yeah its quite loose really. PF: We're kind of making quite a large sculpture which is... JB: Don't describe it yet cause we haven't made it PF: But the drawings are done. JB: Don't describe it... [everyone laughs]

**DM:** Do you have different strategies for these different things coming up? Like, the one at the end of the year, is that a dealer show?

JB: Yeah it is. No we don't usually work differently. Well I guess because we've shown a couple of times before we know the space, so maybe it is a different approach because you're showing again... PF: Because it's the gallery that we show with, we probably don't really think in term of site specificity there. When we show there we tend to think more in terms of specific pieces. Also if we're showing in that kind of situation we tend to make some framed works that we've been thinking about. Not for the sale potential but because they kind of work in that setting for us. When we're not being site specific it allows us to do those kinds of things.

**Exhibitions reference**

ART#1, Shepparton Art Gallery, Victoria, April 17 - May 30, 2010

The Problem with Stability, Pallas Contemporary Projects, Dublin, Ireland 30 January - 13 March 2010

New 09, The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 17 March 2009 - 17 May 2009

Scape Biennal 08, Christchurch Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand 19 September - 2 November 2008

The Library Project, White Street Projects, Frankston City Library, Victoria, August 2008 - August 2010