

O

L st Octopus 15

and

Pro -

f_ound

Octopus 15

Tina Havelock Stevens

Peter Maloney

Tara Marynowsky

Sam Phillips

Patrick Pound

Elvis Richardson with

James Hayes

Giselle Stanborough

Curated By

Daniel Mudie Cunningham

Gertrude Contemporary

22 May – 4 July 2015

Lost and Profound

Daniel Mudie Cunningham

Nostalgia isn't what it used to be
I can only picture the disappearing world
*When you touch me*¹
 — Sam Phillips, 2001

In *The Museum of Falling*, Patrick Pound unpacks a large selection of found objects and photographs that come under the taxonomy of 'falling,' forming part of his ongoing exploration of the human impulse to categorise, order and curate. One of its curiosities is a found vernacular photograph of a woman falling from a bike and reaching out towards a viewer standing in for a photographer unknown. Frozen mid-accident, her facial expression is a half-smile and her outstretched arm forms a wave. That it is printed on matte photo paper in saturated colour with rounded corners is a clue—along with her retro attire—of a timestamp indicating that it is a 'happy' snap from the 1970s.

Fast-forward some four decades and countless photographs just like this one are snapped on digital handheld devices every minute, proclaiming the minutia of our lives to anyone who will follow on social media apps like Instagram. Dipped in retro filters bearing names like Earlybird and Low-Fi, such pictures reveal, as Helen Grace writes, 'how it is no longer simply light that is filtered but time itself.'²

The perpetuation of retro filters that enable the present to masquerade as the past shows how much of our understanding of digital media is a 'remediation' of analogue forms. In their book *Remediation*, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin argue that the ideologies of 'newness' that underpin new media are based on modernist rhetoric that insists new technologies cannot make significant contributions to culture unless they dispense with the past.³ Digital media never really break with the formal considerations that structure past technologies; instead they become subject to a process of remediation.

Defined as ‘the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms,’⁴ remediation relies on the contrasting strategies of transparent immediacy (where representations efface the ‘presence’ of the medium) and hypermediacy (where representations foreground the ‘presence’ of the medium). According to Bolter and Grusin, the ‘double logic of remediation’ is set into action by these dual strategies, whereby ‘[o]ur culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them.’⁵

In a sense, remediation is a process of ‘falling’ back on something from the past. The action of falling: moving from a higher to lower level implies depth rather than linearity, suggesting that time is understood by drilling down rather than looking back. Certainly what is found when digging up or drilling down is the stuff of dead media: relics of planned obsolescence now constituting layers of the earth’s crust. What Jussi Parikka describes as: ‘A planet unearthed by human technologies and then covered with the ruins of those inventions. The earth feeds that process and disappears under it.’⁶

The relentless persistence of the analogue past in present digital forms is a prevailing condition of contemporary visual media culture. To fetishise the past through collecting or curating relics of the past, or making new things in the past’s image, is suggestive of ‘muscle memory’: motor tasks forever imprinted mnemonically through repetition. Once some things are learned, they can’t be unlearned. ‘Like riding a bike,’ to use a truism ripped from Albert Einstein’s aphorism, ‘Life is like riding a bicycle, to keep your balance you must keep moving.’

Frozen in time, the anonymous woman in Pound’s image is mid-fall, implying and defying gravity. Trapped like an insect in amber. Found by an avid artist-collector like Pound, her image ruptures with new meaning now indexed in a ‘museum’ of secondhand things possessed with like-minded ideas.

Lost and Profound considers the interface between obsolescent and new media technologies, exploring themes pertaining to memory, inscription and nostalgia. Most of the artists work with found objects or old media formats—lost fragments of the material world—and subject them to profound renewal and reformatting through video, collage, painting, photography, sound and music. Artists who respond to the material culture around them through collecting and repurposing material illuminate how those objects are devices for memories with uncertain origins, or, signposts for future forms of nostalgia.

The disappearing world where images go to die is the terrain that *Lost and Profound* navigates. The work in *Lost and Profound* suggests that memory is a fiction kept warm by the blanket of amnesia that settles as time closes in and obsolescence triumphs. Broadly speaking, the works in *Lost and Profound* attempt to remember something of the past so that they might re-new the present.

In *Lost and Profound*, Elvis Richardson scrutinises the visual clues from an anonymous 1950s photo album that she found at a Sydney flea market twenty-five years ago. In studying this collection of black and white photos and their handwritten inscriptions, the artist forms a portrait of Tony, the photogenic figure who presumably owned

the album. Some photos suggest that Tony is a migrant who arrived in Sydney by boat and who enjoyed the attentions of numerous women (he photographed them all). Contrasting these images of sexual conquest are pictures of Betty, his daughter who lived in Panama. On the back of each photo are brief notes to her absent father. Richardson boils the narrative down to two blown-up portraits, one of each figure collaged with handwritten notes. In an unexpected twist, a sound component by James Hayes is embedded into the images and heard through headphones jacked into the frames. Titled *Episode 1: Dear Daddy*, the melodrama of Tony's compartmentalised, 'episodic' life is amplified through a revisionist history intersecting fragments of truth with the manipulations of affect typical of theme music scored for television or film.

Music is a strong thread connecting much of the work in *Lost and Profound*. Its most performative expression manifests in the work of Tina Havelock Stevens. Often performing under the moniker, White Drummer, Havelock Stevens stages site-specific, endurance-based percussive actions using rock n roll drum kits. A White Drummer performance is not framed by its location, but inhabits it visually and sonically tuning into the frequencies of site and place, the inexplicable and the other. In *Up There*, Havelock Stevens reflects on personal family mythologies of flight, particularly as they orbit around memories of her father, a pilot in the Malayan Auxiliary Airforce in the 1950s. From the dizzying perspective of the cockpit of his Harvard fighter plane, her father shot footage with a Bell and Howell Standard-8 cine film camera. An edit of this personal archive is paired with a digital

video documenting a durational drumming action by White Drummer staged some sixty years later in the carcass of a retired plane in the aircraft 'boneyard' of the Mojave Desert in California. 'I'm up there on flat earth where it always ends,' remarks the artist in reference to an inversion that suspends personal mythologies as 'up there' while grounding present realities.

Music as a memory device is also a trope in the work of Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter Sam Phillips. *Lost and Profound* features a selection of found long play album sleeves that respond to the return of vinyl seen in recent years. Made for the release of her record *Push Any Button* (2013), Phillips adapts orphaned album covers sourced from flea markets by redacting the surface with vintage magazine collage and ink. Phillips has described *Push Any Button* in as 'an impressionistic version of the AM pop radio playing inside her head'—a way of 'looking at the future through the past.' The handmade gesture forges a personal connection between an artist and her audience. Yet the irony lingering behind this 'retrofuturistic' packaging obfuscates the reality of a digital economy bolstered by the artist's online presence through social or streaming media rather than the record store of the past.

A fascination with bygone music and its associated graphics also informs *Mister Sandman* (2015) by Tara Marynowsky. Trawling archival websites and eBay for found nostalgic images, Marynowsky scavenges the visual culture of past times. Through the gentle application of gouache and watercolour, Marynowsky imbues found text and imagery associated with vintage song sheets with an

otherworldly emotional presence: 'bringing them back to life,' as she puts it. Her creative interventions intersect the handmade with mechanical reproduction, elevating these mass-produced artefacts, while simultaneously drawing attention to the ever-changing historical representations of identity, particularly in relation to women and beauty. The placement of each song sheet in a sprawling, lyrical arrangement references a musical stave while also suggesting that each song title becomes part of a longer absurdist sentence.

Cut up text and image combinations carry through in a large selection of photographic collage and text paintings by Peter Maloney. The artist incorporates fragments from tabloid newspaper and magazine headlines with homoerotic male nudes and images of implied violence. In small text paintings, digital interfaces such as text messaging and YouTube are re-oriented, where phrases that one would usually encounter on a screen—such as 'Answer my text you dick' and 'The YouTube account associated with this video has been terminated'—are rendered obdurate, un-linked. Parochial art world commentary is also a recurring theme in Maloney's text works that isolate the clichés of artspeak with an emphasis on the artist (or perhaps painter?) as overlooked and obsolete in equal measure.

Media obsolescence and its impact on personal archives charges Giselle Stanborough's installation *That really hurts and it's still hurting* (2012). A silent digital projection depicting the artist performing a confessional vlog to camera competes with a 35mm slide projection of YouTube screen captures cataloguing home videos of children called Giselle. As the carousel progresses to the next slide of,

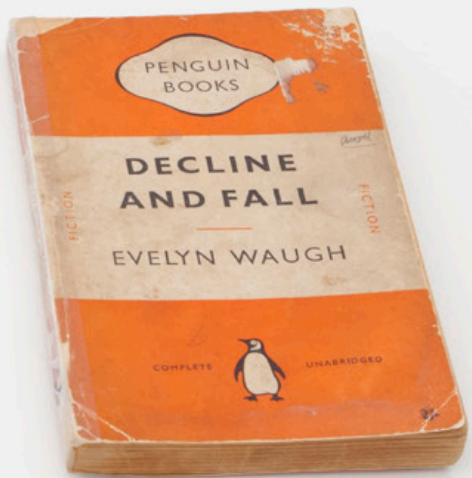
say, 'Kite flying at Giselle's birthday party with her friends,' Stanborough appears like a digital apparition, a ghost in the machine willfully inserted in the interface of the YouTube web browser. The frame where the online home video would have been is cut out in a gesture that feels like a soft violence on the many anonymous Giselles living out their lives online. Created in response to the loss of her childhood photos which were destroyed when her father remarried, her work proffers the speculation that today's digital phenomenon of 'going viral' is a flipside to photography as an analogue memory totem, susceptible to loss and ruin. By intertwining the analogue and digital, Stanborough shows how a past where visual recording was less available to the masses or easily lost through destruction or neglect, dramatically swings the other way though the obsessive documentation evident in ubiquitous user-generated recordings shared in the cloud today.

The structure of *Lost and Profound*, which is situated in both the downstairs galleries at Gertrude Contemporary and the Studio 12 Project Space upstairs, evoke online digital *wunderkammers* like Google, eBay and YouTube. It seeks to create a visually overstimulated environment—lots of things to see—in which different temporalities, and varying digital and non-digital realities rub-up against one another and inevitably fall away, akin to the experience of searching for stuff online. Catching objects that are literally falling from the edges of our lives is what these artists do.

*Call it romance or nostalgia
The hunger behind our memories
We've buried it in code*⁷
—Sam Phillips, 1994

- 1 Sam Phillips, 'Taking Pictures,'
Fan Dance, Producer:
TBone Burnett
(Nonesuch Records, 2001).
- 2 Helen Grace, 'A Sentimental
Bond with the Product':
The Veneer of Time,'
Surgeon 2 (2014): 55.
- 3 Jay David Bolter and
Richard Grusin, *Remediation:
Understanding New Media*
(Cambridge and London:
MIT Press, 1999).
- 4 *Ibid.*, 273.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 6 Jussi Parikka, *The Anthroscene*,
Minneapolis: University of
Minnesota Press, 2014, n.p.
- 7 Sam Phillips, 'Strawberry Road',
Martinis and Bikinis,
Producer: TBone Burnett
(Virgin Records, 1994).





explosions
rattle the
capital

WHAT'S A
NICE BOY
LIKE YOU
DOING?

ARTISTS:
CAN'T
LIVE WITH
THEM CAN'T
LIVE
WITH THEM

I was never
lost, says
Maloney

HOW DID THEY
GET HIM SINK
INTO A LIFE OF
DEPRAVITY?

Artists
paid
"Now I'm
confused"

THIS PAINTING
IS AN
INTERACTIVE
SOUND WORK
CURRENTLY
EXPERIENCING
TECHNICAL
DIFFICULTIES

I FELT
FINE UNTIL
THAT LION
ATE ME

heute
Kunst

The YouTube account
associated with this
video has been
terminated due to
multiple third-party
notifications of
copyright infringement

Melbourne
returns
to
normal
again

"I was
a teenage
heterosexual"

The word
"asshole"
has been filtered
from this search
because
Google SafeSearch
is active

SORRY
GIRLFRIEND
YOUR
CONCEPTUAL
ART GIVES ME
THE PIP

Sydney
'time bomb'

Dear NATIONAL
GALLERY OF
AUSTRALIA,
I HATE YOU!
Love PETER

Tasmania
'sick of
obscurity'

HOLT HAS
PROBLEMS
HOW TO MAKE
A FRIEND
OF FISH

drug may slow progress of
culture here
in Sydney

ICED UP
Artist found guilty
of skulduggery

THEY
GOT
THE
teenage boy
Rocking the
Excess Fluid

Judge
denies
sex with
rentboy

ONE TRIP
NEVER FO

HOSPITAL
FOR THE
INSAN

FOR THE I

THIS PAINTING
MAY HAVE BEEN
REMOVED OR
THE PERSON
WHO SHARED IT
MAY NOT HAVE
PERMISSION
TO SHARE IT
WITH YOU

DON'T
IN
SAME
AS CH





XA-5WH

DT



explosions rattle the capital

I was never lost, says Maloney

Tasmania sick of obscurity

ARTISTS CAN'T LIVE WITH THEM CAN'T LIVE WITH THEM

WHY I'M NOT IN THE SWY

SO WHAT GODS A CHANGER OR ALL SWY

THIS PASTORAL IS THE ONLY ONE COMING TO THE CONVENTION IN THE CONVENTION

HOLY HAS PORNERS AND IS A MAN IN A MAN

CALLER CANNOT BE REACHED



Artists

Dr Daniel Mudie Cunningham is a Melbourne-born curator, artist and writer based in Sydney. He is currently the Assistant Director and Head Curator at Artbank, and Editor of *Sturgeon*. Previously he has held positions at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and University of Western Sydney. Whether curating or making, his interests tend to unify along the lines of an abiding interest in remixing the image streams of art history, queer politics, pop culture, performance and music. He has curated exhibitions at Museum of Old and New Art, Carriageworks, Artbank, Alaska Projects, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Blacktown Arts Centre, Performance Space, Plimsoll Gallery, Firstdraft and MOP Projects. In 2015 he curated a major exhibition and authored a book on the work of Australian artist Kathy Cavaliere (1972–2012). His art practice has been widely exhibited and is held in the collections of Museum of Old and New Art, Macquarie University, DLUX Media Arts and Campbelltown Arts Centre.

Tina Havelock Stevens is an interdisciplinary artist based in Sydney. With a sturdy start as a drummer in post-punk bands, she then moved towards observational documentary, video art, installation, performance art, improvisation, composition and sound design, and has been compelled to play a spontaneous composition on a full drum kit while fully submerged underwater; she does so under the moniker of 'White Drummer'. She screened her work *White Drummer Detroit* at Bulletspace, NYC in 2014, and on returning to Australia completed the durational performance work *White Drummer Rewind Room* for Performance Space's Day for Night at Carriageworks, 2015, and exhibited *White Drummer Ghost Class* at Alaska Projects, 2015.

Peter Maloney was born in Western Australia, and lives and works in Canberra. He adopts a variety of techniques and approaches in his painting practice, including William S. Burroughs-style cut-ups and punk graphics. His subject matter is often derived from tabloid newspapers and magazines, and his work is often characterised by its 'post-gay, post-AIDS sensibility'. Recent solo exhibitions include: *A Focus*, Newcastle Art Gallery, New South Wales, 2014; and *Radar & Other Fabulous Colours*, Utopia Art Gallery, Sydney, 2013. Recent group exhibitions include: *Loose Canon*, curated by Daniel Mudie Cunningham, Artbank, Sydney, 2014; and *Test Pattern*, curated by Geoff Newton, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne and Sydney University Art Gallery, New South Wales, 2012–13. Peter Maloney is represented by Utopia Art Sydney.

Tara Marynowsky lives and works in Sydney. Her painterly interventions on found artifacts including vintage photos and song sheets respond to cultural stereotypes and mythical archetypes – particularly of women and beauty – collapsing a strangely familiar past with an unsettling present. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Tide is High*, Edwina Corlette Gallery, Brisbane, 2015; and *Venus of Venus*, Chalk Horse Gallery, Sydney 2014. Recent group exhibitions include: *Sealed Section*, curated by Miriam Kelly, Artbank, Sydney, 2014; and *Sense of Surround*, Edwina Corlette Gallery, Brisbane, 2014. Tara Marynowsky is represented by Chalk Horse Gallery, Sydney, and Edwina Corlette Gallery, Brisbane.

Sam Phillips is a singer-songwriter based in Los Angeles, California. Since her acclaimed debut album *The Indescribable Wow* (Virgin, 1988), Phillips has released eight albums including the Grammy-nominated *Martinis and Bikinis* (Virgin, 1994). In 2009, Phillips launched Long Play, an online subscription project where listeners received new work in the form of an album, several EPs, podcasts, and artwork including Super 8 films, collages and Polaroids. A low-fi aesthetic that fused analogue with the digital continued with her most recent album *Push Any Button* (2013). As part of its release, Phillips extended the visual language of her music by creating the album artwork as a series of found vintage album covers redacted with her own unique collages.

Patrick Pound is a Melbourne-based artist working across mediums. His work has the look of having been made by someone who has set out to try and explain the world and who, having failed, has been reduced to collecting it. His work is about compiling and constructing evidence and making sense of things. His work poses the world as a puzzle. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Small world*, Stills Gallery Sydney, 2015; *The Museum of Holes*, Castlemaine Art Gallery and Museum, Victoria, 2015; and *People who look dead but (probably) aren't*, Stills Gallery, Sydney, 2014. Recent group exhibitions include: *Australia and the Photograph*, curated by Judy Annear, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2015; and *From The Collection*, curated by Emily Cormack, Warrnambool Gallery and Museum, Victoria, 2015.

Elvis Richardson was born in Sydney, and lives and works in Melbourne. Her practice instinctively burrows through the sediment of obsolete and interrupted material culture dwelling in the places where the unclaimed and unforeseen meet. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Galerie Pompom*, Sydney, 2014; and *National House Search*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 2013. Recent group exhibitions include: *Dirt, Dust and Ruins*, Tin Sheds Gallery, University of Sydney, 2013; and *Regimes of Value*, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, 2013. Elvis Richardson is represented by Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide and Galerie Pompom, Sydney.

For *Lost and Profound*, Richardson has collaborated with Melbourne-based **James Hayes**, a composer who explores the interconnection between visual arts and sound.

Giselle Stanborough is a Sydney-based artist whose practice addresses online user-generated media and the ways in which such technologies encourage us to identify and perform notions of self. She has an interest in the intersection between image and ethics in the contemporary mediascape. Her work has been shown online in *The Washington Post's* 'Pictures of The Day' and in Hennessy Youngman's *Art Thoughtz*. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Interknot*, Rearview Gallery, Melbourne, 2012; and *Destiny's Children* (with J.D. Reforma), Gaffa Gallery, Sydney, 2011. Recent group exhibitions include: *Real Life Human Resources*, Firstdraft, Sydney, 2014; and *The Soft Knife*, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, New South Wales, 2014.

Works



Patrick Pound

The Museum of Falling,
2012–
Found objects and songs



Sam Phillips

Push Any Button, 2013
vinyl long play record
sleeves with collage and ink,
HMV stereogram: *Here's Art*,
Which Ones?, *Everybody's
in the Big Show*, *Push Any
Button*, *Circus*, *Living with
People*, *Below Zero*, *Musica
Famous*, *Go with the Crowd?*,
The Senses, *Magic Eye*,
Mystical Movies, *Eclipses*



Elvis Richardson with James Hayes

Episode 1: Dear Daddy, 2015
Digital prints on rag paper with
embedded looped soundtrack



Tina Havelock Stevens

Up There, 2015
Installation of videos
Left: *Sharp Shooting Dad*
Standard-8 film to digital, 6:02 min
Right: *White Drummer Ghost Class*
HD video with sound, 10:59 min



Tara Marynowsky

Mister Sandman, 2015
Watercolour, gouache,
and acrylic on vintage
song sheets

Octopus, c.1910, 2015
Watercolour and gouache
on vintage postcards



Giselle Stanborough

*That really hurts and
it's still hurting*, 2012
HD video, 35mm slides



Peter Maloney

Installation of *Untitled* works,
2013–2015
Acrylic, graphite and collage
on canvas

**OCTOPUS 15:
LOST AND PROFOUND**

Curated by
Daniel Mudie Cunningham
Front gallery, Main gallery,
Studio 12
22 May – 4 July 2015

The curator thanks the artists
and their galleries; Gertrude
Contemporary: Emma Crimmings,
Helen Hughes and staff;
Artbank: Tony Stephens and staff;
lenders of works by Peter Maloney:
Gareth Sansom and Neil Hobbs;
lenders of works by Sam Phillips:
Garrett Manry, Jill Lorenz and
special thanks to Eric Gorfain.

Photography Christo Crocker.

Design Elliott Bryce Foulkes.

**GERTRUDE
CONTEMPORARY**



**CREATIVE
VICTORIA**



Proclaim

o

ts J

bn6

- o r p

bnw f