the body.

the ruin
the body.  

the ruin
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‡ Laylah Ali
‡ Diann Bauer
‡ Ian Burn
‡ Christian Capurro
‡ Joy Hester
‡ Joan Jonas
‡ Ruth Maclellan
‡ Tom Nicholson
‡ Santiago Sierra
‡ Aaron Williamson
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The human body has the strange quality of being a given. It’s as if the body is so fundamental to our existence that we take it for granted. At the same time, when pressing social, political and ethical issues are considered, the body is spoken of as an abstract entity. This exhibition addresses both of these blind spots by reminding us that the body is the concrete basis of experience and a real site where the impact of contemporary society is felt.

In *The body. The ruin*, we see the body in space, we see its shape and its movement. We see the traces left by the body, both physical and psychological. We gain a sense of the loss of the body: not as something to be celebrated in the brave new world of cyberspace, but as something to be lamented and, hopefully, recovered.

As this exhibition is staged, we are simultaneously seeing and reading of real people subjected to the most heinous trials inflicted by human society and nature. Sadly, these two forces seem to form unholy alliances dedicated to increasing suffering. Can art do anything about this? Certainly none of the artists claim to have the answers. But they do allow us a space for reflection. This is not meant as a soft answer. What links all of the artists in this exhibition is a desire that we reconnect with the body and, through it, with our consciousness of other people. The artists are offering an opportunity to confront the body *in extremis*, to reflect on what anodyne newscast phrases like ‘body count’, ‘identifying bodies’ and ‘recovering bodies’ really mean.

Significantly *The body. The ruin* reminds us that artists have been attempting to establish this reflective space for decades. I recall that in undergraduate tutorials, time and again, students would consider Andy Warhol’s early 1960s *Death and disaster* series screenprints—suicides, car smashes, atomic bombs—and conclude that we had all become anaesthetised by over-exposure to such horrors. This exhibition reveals a counter-tradition: a succession of artists who see an encounter with the body as the first step towards recovering an ethical consciousness.

The Ian Potter Museum of Art is proud to present this exhibition, and we thank our guest curator, Bridget Crone, for her dedication and considered approach to the project. Thank you to the artists and their representatives, and to the National Gallery of Victoria and Heide Museum of Modern Art, who have loaned artworks for the exhibition. Sincere thanks also go to Maria Tumarkin and Lebbeus Woods for their valuable contributions to this catalogue. *The body. The ruin* includes the work of artists and writers from four countries, and would not have been possible without the support of the Australia Council and the British Council Australia. And, finally, many of the Potter’s staff across all divisions have again provided their expertise to ensure the successful realisation of this ambitious project.
the RUINED BODY?

Bridget Crone

It's a late summer evening, and I am standing in a small piazza in northern Spain watching a group of local boys break-dance. They dance in the porch of an elaborate, classically inspired building that dominates the square. I watch as they move, weaving their bodies around and through the solid columns of the portico. I am watching from the edge of the action but am caught up in the fervour of their movement. Closer into the action their girlfriends and young protégés stand, the straight guys to the dancers’ funny-guy antics; they are the subjects around which the action unfolds. During lulls in the proceedings, a younger boy occasionally breaks out of the circle of onlookers and moves closer to the centre to try out some moves. At other points, a dancer will invite one of his admirers through the imaginary periphery into the limelight and a complex push-me-pull-you dance of courtship will ensue. For a long time, I am completely absorbed and without thought, captivated by the daredevil stunts, laughing at the earnest peacock-like displays and appreciating the beauty of bodies in motion. I begin to think of the body itself—the efficiency of its movements and the way that we read the dancers’ gestures, the way that bodies have their own language and speak to us.

This moment brings its bittersweet associations around the body: images of bodies in various states of discomfort and distress have become overly familiar, particularly images of war or of natural disasters. I am struck by this disjunction between the reality of the dancers’ bodies and the seemingly less real state of the body at war or in crisis.

The body. The ruin addresses the body on two accounts. One concerns the way in which artists use the body as a tool for description or for experimentation in response to their own present moment (that is, a single moment of time with all of its personal, historical and cultural resonances). The second concerns the way that the body is able to operate as this tool—the way in which we read, understand and play with the languages of the body.
Agamben’s statement gives a good entrée into a moment at the beginning of the twentieth century that saw the beginnings of industrial psychology in which the body was initially addressed as a mechanical entity only. To a large extent it was World War I that prompted the research and development of industrial psychology. The war effort—the production of enormous quantities of munitions in Britain—meant that workers were enduring extremely long hours, which affected their health and efficiency. As a result, government, philanthropists and industrialists alike became concerned to assess the process of work in order to increase the efficient working of the physiological body.

Calling all workers addresses the way these experiments with people’s bodies and minds pop up under very different political and economic circumstances, under opposing ideologies, and at different times. It articulates a connection between the current corporatisation of health (‘wellness’), work and lifestyle (the maintenance of happy and productive workers), and early twentieth-century experiments into the efficient movement of the body at work. Calling all workers contains references to callisthenic exercises in Soviet and British factories in the 1930s, modern dance, army drills, and the sounds and movements of contemporary offices and factories. It relishes the experience of group movement (for the participant and the observer) and the pleasure that it induces. Yet it also offers an important point from which to question the difference in the operations of power through health and exercise. The early twentieth-century collective maintenance of health and fitness was encouraged and patrolled by industrialists and government and was motivated by a sense of responsibility to ensure the health (and therefore productivity) of the worker populace. In contrast, today the maintenance of health and well-being is still a governmental concern but the responsibility for this is diffused, spread among individuals as an almost moral responsibility.

This tension between the individual (personal) and collective body is also explored in Tom Nicholson’s ongoing banner project, which involves a series of banner marches undertaken at dawn. The marches trace the lines of national boundaries (created through partitioning, but not only partitioning) onto the place in which the march is to be performed. A comparison between Nicholson’s dawn marches and his new work for this exhibition, Flags for a Trades Hall Council (2005), highlights an important articulation between the individual and the collective body. The carrying of a banner involves

Ruth Maclellan's Calling all workers (2004–05) draws upon early twentieth-century research into the body at work and particularly the activities of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology (NIIP). Realised as a participatory performance involving staff and students of the London School of Economic and Political Science, Calling all workers draws upon research into bodily efficiency in manual labour as well as later developments that recognised that the healthy worker-body was related to the healthy worker-mind—what we now call ‘wellness’, expressed through group exercise classes and the promotion of health and fitness. In ‘Notes on gesture’, Giorgio Agamben related the rise of the utilitarian over the symbolic importance of gesture to the loss of naturalness. He writes:

For human beings who have lost every sense of naturalness, each single gesture becomes a destiny. And the more gestures lose their ease under the action of invisible powers, the more life becomes indecipherable. In this phase the bourgeoisie, which just a few decades earlier was still firmly in possession of its symbols, succumbs to interiority and gives itself up to psychology.
The material of the actor’s art is the human body, i.e. the torso, the limbs, the head and the voice. While studying his material, the actor should not rely upon the anatomy, but upon the possibilities of his body, as a material for stage performance.

And again there is a tension here between the unified collective language of gesture and the audience group reaction to these gestures, and the individual understanding (as in ‘feel’ or ‘be conscious of’) of the body both as a mechanical entity and also as a thing that feels and expresses itself as an active protagonist in the construction of meaning and sensation. Gilles Deleuze, for example, describes the body as having a language of its own and being able to ‘speak’, and therefore having a subjectivity of its own (rather than simply serving the mind).

This is further articulated in Christian Capurro’s *Compress works* (2005), in the way that their lyrical beauty escapes a sense of empiricism and containment (the machine) by transforming the subsumed image of the body as found in pornography or in fashion magazines into something unexpected. The images are given a life and power outside of ‘the system’. Similarly, the orchestrated bodily performances depicted in Laylah Ali’s visually spare gouaches offer, at first glance, a uniform approach to the ritualistic or ceremonial. Yet through a perversion or distortion of bodily forms, Ali returns the focus to the individual body in a way that is reminiscent of Felix Guattari and Anthony Negri’s statement, ‘here the body is’, which plays on the idea of the communist collective tradition as a corpse but also a coming-together, a place where being is at its most intense.

Capurro’s *Compress works* (2005) are delicate traces of gesture, impressions of a body’s presence and movement through space. They are literally the result of the pressure of a hand erasing an image from another page; they are like the ink blotter, the page that sits behind another, quietly recording, bearing witness to the action taking place elsewhere. Gesture and the potential for the expressive qualities of gesture are translated into a secondary medium in Capurro’s work, which operates as a kind of trace of gesture. In this way his work often exists between image and anti-image—having a kind of iconoclastic potential to be read as an image but also to subsume the image within its related action. Capurro describes the *Compress works* as the ‘fastidious labouring of the body against
The works operate through the tension between the presence of the body and absence of the image, and the action of the body. In this manner they could be seen as being an empirical form of evidence or measure of the body’s movement, like the apparatus used by workplace assessors to measure the labouring body.

The tension and causality between the action of the body and the presence and absence of the image is implicit in Tom Nicholson’s *Flags for a Trades Hall Council* (2005). On the most basic level, a flag is activated by the body in a way that is similar to the manner in which the pressure of the hand creates the image in Capurro’s *Compress* series. The association of the flags with activism (human agency) directly relates to the site where they are displayed, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) building, and it is also drawn out in the imagery used in the flags themselves. Nicholson bases the flags’ imagery on the face of Marat depicted in Jacques-Louis David’s *Death of Marat* (1793), and he begins the process of constructing the imagery through a series of charcoal drawings which are then printed onto the flags through a commercial print process (again a translation from an individual process that takes place ‘on the body’ to an industrial, mechanical manufacture). In addition, the use of the image of Marat articulates a very particular moment in history—revolutionary France. Making reference to this moment coupled with the reference to trade unionism activates a complex political resonance. The complexity here is again one of differing states of collectivity and defiance; while the traditionally black anarchist flag represents the freedom of individual association and action (it is carried by hand and therefore activated by the body), the flag flying on the flag-pole can also be seen as a declaration, almost a staking out of the territory of a shared value system (and is not sited on the body).

There is another neat indexical relationship between the formal content of the imagery and the physical operation of the work in *Flags for a Trades Hall Council* that is echoed in Santiago Sierra’s *Polyurethane Sprayed on the Backs of 10 Workers* (2004). For example, Nicholson’s use of Marat’s face connects breath with life and with movement—both the movement of the flag, the movement of the individual body and the movement of the collective body as change. *(Lorsque les désirs d’avenir ou les regrets de souvenir s’éveillent dans une partie quelconque de ce crâne géant, le Globe—le vent se lève. When the desires of the future or the regrets*
of memory awaken in some part of this giant cranium, the Globe, the wind blows. Saint-Pol Roux). On a formal level, David’s Marat has an ambiguous relationship to life and breath; his portrait of Marat apes the form of a death mask and one of the painting’s French titles is *Marat a son dernier soupir* (Marat’s last breath). The way that the image centres around breath is important for the life of the image as a flag, which never stops moving ever so slightly in the gallery space and is, of course, constantly in motion when flying on the flag-pole. Of POLYURETHANE SPRAYED ON THE BACKS OF 10 WORKERS, Sierra writes:

Ten immigrant Iraqi workers were hired for this action. They were protected with chemically resistant clothing and a thick sheet of plastic, then they were placed in various positions and sprayed on the back with polyurethane until large formations of this material had been obtained. All of the elements employed in the action were left in the space.

The look of the resulting sculpture references and mimics minimalist sculpture. Sierra empties out the content of the image and plays with the expected connections between aesthetics, content and form. By enacting this reference to minimalism, Sierra leads us to have a certain expectation of the work; minimalism was after all intended to explore a new physical and spatial relationship between the viewer and the object. But what if this object is literally constructed from and by the human body? Suddenly, what we thought was a clever play on form has become a powerful political statement about the invisibility of a particular group of people within our society. This invisibility evokes Capurro’s statement concerning the presence/absence of the image within his *Compress* works as being a case of the ‘image working against the image’, as the resulting sculptural forms both resist and swallow up their ‘human content’. Yet the knowledge of the identities and the context that underlies the act of erasure have the effect of forcefully articulating the socio-historical context that the work operates within.

The ruin is a useful conceptual tool or metaphor for fixing the body within a particular context or environment. The work in *The body: The ruin* activates a series of ‘nows’, which up until this point I have been describing in terms of the body—action and sensation. And yet, the ruin is itself a perfect example of a unit that is located in the present moment but with a complex, labyrinthine relationship to the past. The ruin exists in the present but can only exist because of the past—an event or events in the past have caused the state ‘ruin’; conversely, the relationship between this past event and the ruin is only able to be kept alive by the present. As Maria Tumarkin suggests through her definition of the ‘traumascape’ (which is connected to the ruin), they are ‘places with non-linear time and the categorically intertwined time and space flows, which are set apart from other or real or imagined places by (a) history’.⁷

The radical architect Lebbeus Woods writes, ‘architecture is at the very centre of the event and the broad range of controversies around it’,⁸ and in Diann Bauer’s *Meijius* (2004), architecture can be seen as an organising principle within the work itself. Woods is interested in spaces of violence or of trauma, what he calls ‘zones of crisis’⁹ that he characterises through the metaphor of ‘the fall’: spaces of extreme change and trauma in which the human presence is extinguished.¹⁰ Woods’s approach to post-war architecture challenges expectations of how such spaces may be inhabited, acknowledging the life experience of buildings rather than seeing rebuilding as an act of erasure. He proposes a process of ‘architectural healing’ that involves the ‘injection’—whereby ‘freespaces are injected into sites of destruction’, the ‘scab’—the ‘first layer of construction’; and the ‘scar’—a deep level of construction that fuses the new and the old.¹¹ In this way, time and space, history and memory are layered and disjunctive.

*Meijius* draws us into a swirling confusion of space and time using tricks of perspective, fractured spaces and layered imagery so that our eyes are drawn into a seeming vortex of violence and horror. Bauer creates this confusion through deliberately crafted and controlled manipulation of the visual triggers that we use to ground or locate ourselves. The perversion of space in *Meijius* is phantasmagoric rather than cinematic: rather than looking onto a visual construction of illusionary space, we are taken up into that space as if we are present within it, rather like being caught up in a dream from which we cannot escape. This division between being ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ the space of the image, and between being an onlooker and being *present* within the chaotic temporal moment is made evident in Bauer’s *Uchi Jini no uchi* (2005), a colourful wall-painting depicting a swirling, violent eruption of movement around a central figure, a fierce warrior who has just impaled his victim with a spear. As we move closer into the image, we are drawn into the vortex that culminates at the warrior’s eye, itself a window through which we see a silent modernist metropolis. We are led towards...
among other hierarchies, but as a viewer it is extremely difficult
to draw constant and consistent lines to demarcate these ethical
boundaries of good/bad, dominant/oppressed.

While Ali’s work articulates a sense of ‘being there’ by absorbing us in
its conundrums, Williamson’s *Lives of the saints* (2002) translates the
‘live’ moment in performance art into documentation and ‘dubious
witness accounts’. Rather than provoking a sense of involvement and
agency, he sees the documentation of these moments resulting in a
legacy that ‘sustains the narratives of individualism’. Ian Burn’s *Four
glass/Mirror piece* (1968) further articulates this tension between
our presence and absence in relation to the work. Comprising a
mirror placed behind four sheets of glass, *Four glass/Mirror piece*
simultaneously affirms and denies our presence in relation to the
work. We look into the work and our presence is acknowledged
through our reflection, which in turn obstructs our ability to see
into the work; we attempt to look into the work and our view is
curtailed and denied by the mirrored surface and the repetition of
our own image. The dual effects of this invitation and denial affirm
our presence within our own moment; it is as if through disavowing
our ability to escape into the space of the image we become more
conscious of our own present. Conversely, Williamson performs and
films his performances in isolation, building and crafting each work
as he plays back and watches the previous footage. In this way, our
role as a viewer in the ‘live’ moment is denied and we become of
secondary importance. In removing the viewer from the immediate
action as it unfolds, Williamson makes clear the ambiguous
relationship between performance and documentation by essentially
delight in his own bodily play.

The body. The ruin

is primarily concerned with the question of the
body as a unitary measure for reading, recording or experiencing
what is going on around us. Yet in exploring and reflecting on the
expressive potential for the body, we must not ignore questions
around the broader social status of the body. In a recent series of
gouaches, Laylah Ali addresses the state and status of the body today
with images that seem to exist in a crossover space between human
and object, or the devaluing of the human (subjectivity, autonomy)
into object. For example, in one gouache, three red forms (two round
on either side of one conical) sit in a row along the bottom of the
work; their legs, clad in long white socks and black lace-ups, kick up
into the blue sky above. It is as if the rotund little bodies have been

Laylah Ali
*Untitled 2003*
gouache on paper
26.5 x 37.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York
it curls awkwardly across the paper. It is almost as if a sympathetic
physical recognition is communicated in a bodily rather than visual
manner. It is this that best highlights the ‘stuff’ of Hester’s work, the
sense that the physical, visceral and sensual body is at the centre of
things.

In his essay on Francis Bacon, Deleuze writes of sensation that:

... it is Being-in-the-World, as the phenomenologists say: at one and
the same time I become in the sensation and something happens
through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other. And
at the limit, it is the same body which, being both subject and object,
gives and receives the sensation.12

And it is to this body as both ‘subject and object of sensation’ that
I would like to finally return. I’ve wanted to reflect on the way we
ourselves might understand (as in ‘feel’ or ‘be conscious of’) our
bodies as a mechanical entity but also as a thing that feels and
expresses itself, as an active protagonist in the construction of
meaning and sensation. Deleuze describes the body as having a
language of its own and being able to ‘speak’, and this sense of the
body that speaks a language expressed through gesture (and through
our reading and shared understanding of this gesture) can be seen
as both a continuum of and reaction to various modernist attitudes
to the body. The twentieth century almost began with the Futurists’
cry—‘the body is a machine!’—and the body has certainly been a
continuing human preoccupation. The wounded body, mutilated by
war, could be seen as the fulcrum around which the status and value
of the body have revolved since this time. Questions of the natural
and post-natural body, of the relationship between the body and the
image, and the fundamental experience of the body as ‘Being-in-the-
World’ cannot but be invigorated by the war-pornography created by
US soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, the posting
of images of the bodies of people they have just killed or maimed on
the internet.13

The powerful thing about this work is what is not revealed: What is
the exact form of these bodies? Are they simple mounds with legs
(and stick-like arms)? What does it mean if they are? What ‘type’
of bodies are they (all the legs are brown but some of the stick-like
arms are pink and some are brown)? In another work, a small blue
and white football form sits motionless. It is a neat, compact little
texted head in white swaddling clothes or perhaps bandages with
its bottom in blue and white striped cloth. Along the top of its body
are six stick-arms that poke out the top of visibly striated skin. A thin
black belt is passed between each arm down across the body, having
the effect of holding the body together, of control and confinement.
The whole effect is one of vulnerability, of a contained little object
that looks easy and handy to pick up (those arms are so grabbable),
a little something to take home. But there is also an air of the sinister
and violent that is constructed through our own questioning of the
presence of the bandages, of the black belts, and through the bodily
forms themselves.

Joy Hester’s drawings make an immediate expressive connection to
an historical moment. After the newsreels showing the first footage
of the concentration camps, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen, was
shown in Melbourne in May 1945, Hester made two works, Victim
and Victim by a fence (both 1945), which show the rawness and
immediacy of her emotional response. She later made Mother and
child (c. 1945) after seeing footage from the Ravensbrück camp.
Like Victim and Victim by a fence, Mother and child gives a literal
depiction of the horrors of the war—emaciated and skeletal bodies
lie or are suspended. The energy and sense of immediacy of Hester’s
brushwork in these works convey a sense of ‘being there’, so much so
that we feel an almost visceral physical sensation. And yet the power
in Hester’s work is the closeness of sensation as it is related to the
body, to visceral and corporeal senses, the emotional and spiritual.
Hester’s response to war was raw and it was spiritual—Mother and
child and The agony in the garden (c. 1945) express this. Hester’s
work strongly communicates a sensation; it conveys a strong feeling
of the body and about bodily states that we almost feel rather than
see. From an incredible night dream (c. 1946–47) shows the body in
an uncontrolled or perhaps ecstatic state caught mid-motion as
rolled onto their backs and are kicking in the air to right themselves.
Or, lying on their backs with their bodies hidden by a screen, their
cavorting legs just visible, are they performing a ‘legs alive’ cabaret
show?

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1 The National Institute of Industrial Psychologists was founded by Charles Myers, a doctor turned psychologist, and Henry Welch, a company manager, in 1921. Myers is known for being single-handedly responsible for the development of British psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the rise of industrial psychology as a discipline for research was dependent on a number of factors, including Myers's manifesto, 'Mind and work: the psychological factors in industry and commerce' (1921); the government's interest in the welfare and productivity of munitions workers and the formation of the Health of Munitions Workers Committee during the war; and the progressive labour policies of Quaker industrialist, Serbohm Rowntree, who appointed the first psychologist to his factory in 1922. (See Geoff Bunn, 'Charlie and the chocolate factory', The Psychologists, vol. 14, no. 11, 2001.)


5 Email correspondence from the artist, 25 April 2005.

6 Tom Nicholson's Flags for a Trades Hall Council is a two-part work. The sites for the work are the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) building and the Ian Potter Museum of Art. The proposal to fly the flags on the VTHC building is set into the context of the current situation in Australian politics in which the Federal Government is preparing radical industrial relations legislation. This will affect the function of trade unions to organise and act collectively and to articulate symbolically—through images, words, actions—a conception of work, indeed all economic relations, alternative to that which dominates under capitalism.


10 Woods, 'The fall', loc. cit.


‡ Diann Bauer
Mejiura 2004
pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper
5 panels: 240 x 1050 cm, each: 240 x 206 cm
Courtesy the artist
I am in Rome. After New Orleans, Aceh, New York and Sarajevo, here are the ruins as God intended them—vast, ancient, breathtaking. Colosseum. The Roman Forum. Trajan’s Market. I take them in as Alice takes the ‘drink me’ potion from the little bottle on the three-legged table made of glass. One sip and I am the size of a keyhole. Against the world’s most celebrated and spectacular ruins, I watch myself turn into an ant, a black dot, a puff of hot air.

You would think that the idea of benign, lavish, titillating ruins would be losing its ground by now. Not because of any profound shifts in collective consciousness but because ruins no longer belong either to eternity or to the distant, pedagogical past. They belong to this morning when another suicide bomber has called it a day, when another natural calamity has torn apart a sleeping place. So why do I gasp for air in Rome? Why do I sweat with reverence and awe?

A Finnish documentary in Melbourne’s international film festival a month earlier: Three rooms of melancholia. I really like the name. The film is about the war in Chechnya and what it does to children, not that we don’t know what wars do to children or maybe the point is precisely that we don’t. The three rooms are: in a Russian military academy for boys; in the Chechen capital Grozny; and in a makeshift refugee camp in the neighbouring Ingushetia, where surviving children, most of them orphans, are taken. Not by officials, of course, by private citizens.

Look at the images of Grozny taken from the car. This place, once upon a time a capital city and a nice-looking one at that by all accounts, is finished. Its buildings are ruins at best (at worst, they have disappeared without so much as leaving a brick behind). Its streets are abandoned battlefields. It is impossible to imagine this city peopled again, ordinary, alive.

And then you notice, in this terrible heap of rubbish, tiny bent backs. The camera moves in and you see that these are the skinny, grey backs of children playing alone, in pairs, in larger groups, mainly boys but there are some girls too. Playing on this miserable, insane, bombed-out street, in these ruins, which your mind instantly wants to forget.
places devastated by war, terrorism or natural disasters, the body is central. A place savaged by death evades the eyes, shuts down the imagination and turns the mind into a shapeless cripple. Only the body is left. It—running, hiding, sleeping, bleeding, playing—is precisely how you get to know these ruins.

That's why, among thousands of other reasons, the tiny backs bent over the wreckage and mud matter so much. A child at play is involved in what cultural historian Bill Brown calls 'a highly charged reproduction of the material world'.2 In Darwin, Grozny, Sarajevo, Berlin, Beirut, children building cubby-houses out of debris, playing to their hearts' content with the remnants of devastation, are engaged in the task of reconstituting their destroyed cities. As children remake the material world around them, what Brown calls the 'unforeseeable potential' of objects is released.3 In the hands of playing children, destroyed and damaged objects are re-energised, and ruins become sites of life and engagement, not simply of destruction and death.

For the past eight years, I have studied the fate of places marked by violence and loss, and I have come to see that cycles of destruction are layered in most of our lived spaces. Places are transformed and thickened, not unmade, by destruction. Cities, in particular, absorb and rework their ruins. In post-World War II Berlin for example, the whole 75 million cubic metres of rubble, short of swallowing up the city, became integrated in its ecology, topography and daily life. The highest elevation point within Berlin's boundaries, Teufelsburg (Devil's Mountain), was, in fact, formed out of the rubble from 80 000 buildings painstakingly piled together shortly after the war. In Sarajevo during the longest siege in modern-day history, all kinds of artistic projects were compelled into existence by the omnipresence of ruins and debris: sculptures, stylish furniture, life-size models of a pre-war Bosnian house. The ruins were not the dead weight of the surrounding city, not the apocalyptic dust covering its savaged streets; they were used practically and creatively to make things. New things, previously unthought of things, things you can only make from, with, because of, the remnants of devastation.

Why does it matter so much, this playing?

Maybe it's because an encounter with the colosseums and forums is, for all intents and purposes, an out-of-body experience. As a go-between, the body fails me in Rome. It is too small, too limited, and unlike the mind it cannot travel in time. In Grozny and other places devastated by war, terrorism or natural disasters, the body is central. A place savaged by death evades the eyes, shuts down the imagination and turns the mind into a shapeless cripple. Only the body is left. It—running, hiding, sleeping, bleeding, playing—is precisely how you get to know these ruins.

That's why, among thousands of other reasons, the tiny backs bent over the wreckage and mud matter so much. A child at play is involved in what cultural historian Bill Brown calls 'a highly charged reproduction of the material world'.2 In Darwin, Grozny, Sarajevo, Berlin, Beirut, children building cubby-houses out of debris, playing to their hearts' content with the remnants of devastation, are engaged in the task of reconstituting their destroyed cities. As children remake the material world around them, what Brown calls the 'unforeseeable potential' of objects is released.3 In the hands of playing children, destroyed and damaged objects are re-energised, and ruins become sites of life and engagement, not simply of destruction and death.

For the past eight years, I have studied the fate of places marked by violence and loss, and I have come to see that cycles of destruction are layered in most of our lived spaces. Places are transformed and thickened, not unmade, by destruction. Cities, in particular, absorb and rework their ruins. In post-World War II Berlin for example, the whole 75 million cubic metres of rubble, short of swallowing up the city, became integrated in its ecology, topography and daily life. The highest elevation point within Berlin's boundaries, Teufelsburg (Devil's Mountain), was, in fact, formed out of the rubble from 80 000 buildings painstakingly piled together shortly after the war. In Sarajevo during the longest siege in modern-day history, all kinds of artistic projects were compelled into existence by the omnipresence of ruins and debris: sculptures, stylish furniture, life-size models of a pre-war Bosnian house. The ruins were not the dead weight of the surrounding city, not the apocalyptic dust covering its savaged streets; they were used practically and creatively to make things. New things, previously unthought of things, things you can only make from, with, because of, the remnants of devastation.

Why is it then that it is hard to see anything but the end of the world in modern ruins? Is it because so often we approach ruins with our bodies out of the picture? Ruins as images of devastation hovering over our newspapers, web portals, television screens, disembodied and unreachable, just like the ruins of Rome.
In his book on sites of memory and trauma in Los Angeles, cultural historian Norman Klein writes that in our eyes all ruins, no matter how real, recent or raw, turn fake. ‘No matter how authentic the ruin’, he writes, ‘it is received, or read, as simulated memory: phantasmagoria, dioramas, arcades. Every building is faintly warped to the eye, as if by glaucoma’. For Klein, ruins most closely resemble the welts of old scars. The hand touches the welt on the side of the face, yet the ‘mass feels unnatural. It bears the memory of surgical violence—a physical piece of evidence, but evacuated of meaning’. Klein’s wonderfully articulate vision of ruins makes clear why having been to Rome before, if over a decade ago, I was startled anew both by what I saw in the city and by my mind’s remarkable inability to preserve the past memory of magnificence and history unlived by my body. Yet what Klein sees cannot tell us about how modern-day ruins created in an instant by evil or great misfortune become animated and brought to life by destruction and trauma. It cannot make us see ruins as much more than old scars or even as new brutally unhealed wounds, as sites that are vitally important and unmistakably, irreducibly alive.

In my writing about trauma and lived experiences of place, I have chosen the word ‘traumascape’ to speak about places marked and transformed by violence, suffering and death. Maybe the word itself is tacky, but it is useful too simply because it tells us that ruins and sites of destruction give rise to the new and distinctive order of experiential reality, that they are tangible, enduring and demand to be reckoned with. Everything fake and phantom about traumascapes, just like the glaucoma, is in the eye of the beholder.

As to the images of children playing with ruins, so present in this essay, they are neither sugary nor quietly evocative (a.k.a. ‘people are basically good’—poor Anne Frank). No, it is not like that because on the ground unexploded mines are waiting for these children, because on the hill nearby snipers clean their kalashnikovs, because anything, literally anything, can come down on them from the sky. The image of children and ruins does not remind us of the survival of the human spirit against all odds, far from it. But it does tell us one critical thing. It tells us that we can do things with ruins. We can live with, not despite them. Besides, most of the world already does.

Maria Tumarkin’s first book, *Traumascapes. The power and fate of places transformed by tragedies*, was published by Melbourne University Press earlier this year.
Joan Jonas
Songelay 1975
16 mm film transferred to videotape
black and white, sound
18:35 minutes
Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

‡
Laylah Ali

*Untitled 2003*

Gouache on paper

20.3 x 19.8 cm

Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York

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Laylah Ali

*Untitled 2004*

Gouache on paper

39.3 x 38.4 cm

Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York
Diann Bauer

Melius (detail) 2004
pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper
5 panels: 240 x 1050 cm, each: 240 x 206 cm
Courtesy the artist
Ian Burn

*Four glass/Mirror piece* 1968

mirror; glass, wood; book: 22 pages, photocopies, cardboard and cloth cover, metal binding

overall dimensions variable;

a: 93.8 x 65.1 cm,
b: 40.5 x 71.2 x 2.8 cm (open)

Collection of the National

Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

Purchased through the

NGV Foundation with the

assistance of the Rudy Komon

Fund, Governor, 2001
Christian Capurro

Compress 2005
ink and correction fluid on paper, pins
drawn under the pressure of erasing other images
50 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist
Joy Hester
The agony in the garden [formerly Compassion] c. 1945
brush and ink and watercolour on paper
26.4 x 20.2 cm
Collection of Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
On loan from Barbara Tucker 2000
© Joy Hester/Licensed by VISCOP, Australia, 2005

Joy Hester
Mother and child c. 1945
brush and ink on paper
29.6 x 24 cm
Collection of Barbara Tucker, Melbourne
© Joy Hester/Licensed by VISCOP, Australia, 2005
Ruth Maclennan

*Calling all workers* 2004–05
digital videotape transferred to DVD
colour
11 minutes
Courtesy the artist

Tom Nicholson

*Flags for a Trades Hall Council (detail)* 2005
digital prints on synthetic fabric,
timber flag-poles, Type C photographs,
metal wall fittings, wire
dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

One of four flags sited at the Victorian
Trades Hall Council, corner Victoria and
Lygon streets, Carlton
Santiago Sierra
POLYURETHANE SPRAYED ON THE BACKS OF 10 WORKERS.
Lisson Gallery, London, U.K., July 2004
DVD
black and white
66:08 minutes
Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery, London
Aaron Williamson
St Catherine from Lives of the saints 2002
digital videotape transferred to DVD
11 minutes
Collection of the Arts Council England
Courtesy the artist
Flashed around the world in September 2001, the pictures of the World Trade Center towers lying in ruins were both horrifying and—though few would openly admit it—strangely stimulating. The former because we instantly realized, with despair, that many people had died in the towers' collapse, and that many others would suffer as a result of it for the rest of their lives. The latter because such a grand scale of destruction evoked an essential truth about human existence, a truth so disturbing that it is usually cloaked in denial: we are all going to die.

Not only will we die, but so will all our works. The great buildings, the great works of art, the great books, the great ideas, on which so many have spent the genius of human invention, will all fall to ruins and disappear in time. And not only will all traces of the human as we know it vanish, but the human itself will, too, as it continues an evolutionary trajectory accelerated by bioengineering and future technological advances. What all of this means is that we cannot take comfort in any form of earthly immortality that might mitigate the suffering caused by the certainty of our personal extinction.

It is true that through works of art, artists can live on in the thoughts and actions of others. This, however, is more of a comfort to the living than to the dead, and while it may help a living artist maintain a denial of death effective enough to keep believing that working and striving is somehow lasting, it is an illusion, and a pretty thin one at that. In contrast, the solidarity that develops between people who accept the inevitability of oblivion is more substantial and sustainable. When we witness an accident or disaster, we are drawn to it not because of 'prurient interest', or an attraction to the pornography of violence, but rather to an event that strips away the illusions of denial and reveals the common denominator of the human condition. For the moment of our witnessing we feel, however uncomfortably, part of a much larger scheme of things, closer to what is true about our existence than we allow ourselves to feel in the normal course of living.

of art and ruins

Lebbeus Woods
Taken together, these earlier conceptions are a long way from the fresh ruins of the fallen Twin Towers, the wreckage of Sarajevo, the blasted towns of Iraq, which are still bleeding, open wounds in our personal and collective psyches. Having witnessed these wounds—and in a palpable sense having received them—gives us no comfortable distance in which to rest and reflect on their meaning in a detached way. Hence, works of art that in some way allude to or employ these contemporary ruins cannot rely on mere depictions or representations—today that is the sober role of journalism, which must report what has happened without interpretation, aesthetic or otherwise. Rather it is for art to interpret, from highly personal points of view, what has happened and is still happening. In the narrow time-frame of the present, with its extremes of urgency and uncertainty, art can only do this by forms of direct engagement with the events and sites of conflict. In doing so, it gives up all claims to objectivity and neutrality. It gets involved. By getting involved, it becomes entangled in the events and contributes—for good and ill—to their shaping.

Thinking of Goya, Dix, Kollwitz, and so many others who bore witness and gave immediacy to conflict and the ruins of its aftermath, we realize that today the situation is very different. Because of instantaneous, world-wide reportage through electronic media, there no longer exists a space of time between the ruining of places, towns, cities, peoples, cultures and our affective awareness of them. Artists who address these situations are obliged to work almost simultaneously with them. Those ambitious to make masterpieces for posterity would do well to stay away, as no one of sensibility has the stomach for merely aestheticizing today's tragic ruins. Imagine calling in Piranesi to make a series of etchings of the ruins of the Twin Towers. They would probably be powerful and original, but only for a future generation caring more for the artist's intellectual and aesthetic mastery of his medium than for the immediacy of his work's insights and interpretations. Contemporary artists cannot assume a safe aesthetic distance from the ruins of the present, or, if they do, they risk becoming exploitative.
How might the ruins of today, still fresh with human suffering, be misused by artists? The main way is using them for making money. This is a tough one, because artists live by the sale of their works. Even if a work of art addressing ruins is self-commissioned and donated, some money still comes as a result of publicity, book sales, lectures, teaching offers and the like. Authors of such works are morally tainted from the start. All they can do is admit that fact and hope that the damage they do is outweighed by some good. It is a very tricky position to occupy, and I would imagine that no artists today could or should make a career out of ruins and the human tragedies to which they testify.

Adorno stated that there can be no poetry after Auschwitz. His argument rested on the fact that the Holocaust could not be dealt with by the formal means of poetry, owing to poetry's limits in dealing with extremes of reality. Judging by the dearth of poetry about the Holocaust, we are inclined to believe he was right. Looking at a similar dearth of painting, sculpture and architecture that engage more contemporary holocausts, we are inclined to extend his judgement into the present. Still, if we concede the impotence of plastic art in interpreting horrific events so close to the core of modern existence, we in effect say goodbye to them as vital instruments of human understanding. If we concede that, because of their immediacy, film and theatre have been more effective, then we consign them to the limits of their own traditions. And so, we must ask, how have the arts dealt with the ruins of Sarajevo and Srebrenica, of Rwanda and Beirut and Iraq, of the Twin Towers site? How will they deal with the new ruins to come? Time itself has collapsed. The need is urgent. Can art help us here in the white heat of human struggle for the human, or must we surrender our hope for comprehension to the political and commercial interests which have never trusted art?

Today's ruins challenge artists to redefine both their roles and their arts. People need works of art to mediate between themselves and the often incomprehensible conditions they live with, especially those resulting from catastrophic human violence. While not all works of art are universal, they share a universal quality, namely, the need to be perceived as the authentic expression of the artist's experience. Without the perception of authenticity and the trust it inspires, art becomes rhetorical, commercial, and, by omission, destructive. What are the authentic forms of interpreting ruins today?

Let us see what the artists do.

artists’ biographies
and further reading

‡ Laylah Ali
‡ Diann Bauer
‡ Ian Burn
‡ Christian Capurro
‡ Joy Hester
‡ Joan Jonas
‡ Ruth Maclean
‡ Tom Nicholson
‡ Santiago Sierra
‡ Aaron Williamson

‡ Laylah Ali was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1968. She lives and works in Williamstown, Massachusetts, but during 2005 she has been residing in Melbourne. Ali’s drawings and gouaches use a subtle and disturbing language based on the ambiguity of gesture, but involving violence, division and conflict. Her works draw the viewer into a moral and ethical involvement through their uncomfortable narratives of power. Ali has held numerous solo exhibitions, including at 503 Gallery, New York (2000, 2005); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts (2001); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (Projects 75: Laylah Ali, 2002); the Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York (2005); and Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne (2005). In 2004 she was included in the Whitney Biennale at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and Ten commandments at KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin. She was included in the Venice Biennale Arsenale in 2003.


‡ Diann Bauer was born in New York in 1972. She currently lives and works in London. Bauer has become well known for her large wall-based works that reference images by contemporary architects Zaha Hadid and Lebbeus Woods, and the Japanese wood-block printmaker, Utagawa Kuniyoshi. Solo exhibitions include Scramble and dissolve, Fine Art University of Hanoi, Vietnam (2005); Mejius, Vamialis, Athens (2004); and Uchi Jini no uchi, One in the Other, London (2005). Bauer has exhibited in several group exhibitions in London, Los Angeles and New York. Group exhibitions include: Expanded painting, Prague Biennale 2 (2005); Post notes, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2005); New British painting, John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, England (2004); Kingdom, the Market Gallery, Glasgow (2004); Gewalt, Loushy Art and Editions, Tel Aviv (2004); and Secrets—the spectacle within, the Queens Gallery, British Council, New Delhi (2005).

Ian Burn was born in Geelong, Victoria, in 1939. He died at Bawley Point, New South Wales, in 1995. Burn lived in New York from 1967 to 1977, during which time he was an important figure in the development of conceptual art practice, as a member of Art & Language and, with Roger Cutforth, as founder of the Society for Theoretical Art and Analysis. Along with other New York-based members of Art & Language, Burn was also involved in publishing Marxist analyses of power relations, commodity production and exchange within the art world in the journal *The Fox*. On his return to Australia, Burn became active in the trade union movement. The question of how to link his art practice with his political activities became of paramount importance, and from there his role as cultural organiser in the trade union movement developed.


Christian Capurro was born in Dampier, Western Australia, in 1968. He is based in Melbourne. Capurro’s *Another misspent portrait of Etienne de Silhouette*—a five-plus year collaborative piece involving more than 260 people each writing a page from a 1986 *Vogue Hommes* magazine and recording the time and the cost of the labour performed (erasing)—was shown at multiple venues across Melbourne in 2004–05. The conceptual and political operation of this work as well as the role of images and image-making was explored through a series of lectures by invited speakers in various art and non-art venues. Capurro has had a number of solo exhibitions including at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, and West Space, Melbourne. He has also shown in exhibitions such as *Cycle tracks will abound in utopia*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2004); *Performance anxiety*, Ocular Lab, Melbourne (2004); and *Raw hin: Christian Capurro, Choi Sung Youn and Soyoyang Kang*, Gallery Kobo Chika, Tokyo (1999).

- Clemens, Justin, ‘Getting off your face with a destructive character: Christian Capurro’s “Another misspent portrait of Etienne de Silhouette”’, *Artlink*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2005.

Joy Hester was born in Melbourne in 1920 where she died in 1960. She is one of Australia’s most significant artists, and also wrote and published poetry. Hester was one of a group of artists (members of the Contemporary Art Society and Angry Penguins) associated with the patrons John and Sunday Reed, with whom she developed a close friendship and lived for some time during World War II. Much of Hester’s work takes the form of sketches or works on paper; she rarely worked in a studio and her work has an emotionally descriptive spontaneity, as if based on an immediate or intuitive response. Hester was a member of the Contemporary Art Society and exhibited in their annual exhibitions from 1959 to 1946 and 1954 to 1957. During her lifetime she held solo exhibitions at the Melbourne Bookclub Gallery (1950), Mirka Café, Melbourne (1955); and the Contemporary Art Gallery, Melbourne (1957). Posthumous solo exhibitions include *Joy Hester: commemorative exhibition*, Museum of Modern Art and Design, Melbourne (1963); *Joy Hester retrospective*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (1981); and *Leave no space for yearning*, *The art of Joy Hester*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne (2001).


Joan Jonas was born in New York in 1936, where she lives and works. She is professor of visual arts in the Department of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston. Jonas is a pioneer of video/performance art. Her experiments and productions in the late 1960s and early 1970s were essential to the formulation of the genre. Jonas's most recent work continues to explore the relationship of new digital media to performance. Most recently her work was seen in the major exhibition, *Joan Jonas: five works*, at the Queens Museum of Art, New York, and in 1994 a major exhibition of her work was held at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. In 2004, *Lines in the sand* (2002) and *The shape, the scent, the fell of things* (2004) were shown in an exhibition at John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, England; and the exhibition *Mirror works: 1969–2004* was held at the Wilkinson Gallery, London.

‡ **Ruth Maclean** was born in London in 1969. She lives and works in London. Her practice investigates the complex and ambivalent ways art shares the cultural sphere with science, business, the media and other institutional and social structures. To this end she has devised residency projects at the BIAS Centre, London School of Economic and Political Science (LSE), and in the archives of the LSE, and recently produced a video and a bookwork, *Re: the archive, the image, and the very dead sheep*, with Uriel Orlow in association with the National Archives of Great Britain. She has shown in exhibitions at the Wellcome Trust, London; the John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, England; the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand; and Artspace, Ontario, Canada.

- **Smith, Stephen**, ‘Mr Stephens goes to ... the archive’, *New Statesman*, 25 February 2002.

‡ **Tom Nicholson** was born in Melbourne in 1973, where he lives and works. Nicholson has become well known for his ongoing banner project, which involves marches at dawn along prescribed routes that are based on lines of annexation between countries or within cities. The participants in Nicholson’s marches, carrying large banners modelled on early twentieth-century trade union banners and bearing large generic facial portraits, are an eerie and odd presence, activating the human or social body in ‘zones of crisis’. In 2004, Nicholson exhibited in the group exhibitions *New04*, at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; and *Performance anxiety*, at Ocular Lab, Melbourne. Other group exhibitions include: *Curiosity kills the glib*, Artspace, Auckland (2003); *Video loop: actions*, Performance Space, Sydney (2005); and *Critical response*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney (2000). He has held solo exhibitions in Berlin at Humboldt University and the Australia Centre (both 2005), and in Melbourne at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, West Space and Ocular Lab.


‡ **Santiago Sierra** was born in Madrid in 1966. He has lived and worked in Mexico City since 1995. Sierra is known for controversial works that often involve subtly articulating the plight of vulnerable or hidden social groups, and his approach often highlights his participation in the very structures that oppress the people he is working with. Sierra has shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions all over the world, including representing Spain at the 50th Venice Biennale with *Hooded woman seated facing the wall*. Other solo exhibitions have been held at the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2004); Lisson Gallery, London (2004); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2002); New Street, Birmingham, England (2002); and Kf Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin (2000). Sierra has shown in group exhibitions including *This peaceful war, the Jamez Collection*, Tramway, Glasgow (2005); *Stretch, the Power Plant*, Toronto (2005); and *Hardcore: towards a new activism, Palais de Tokyo*, Paris (2005).

- **Lamm, April Elizabeth**, ‘Santiago Sierra’, *Tema Celeste*, no. 92, 2002.

‡ **Aaron Williamson** was born in Derby, England, in 1965. He lives and works in London. Williamson’s work is primarily concerned with communication in its many forms, facets and problematics. Williamson is the artistic director of 15mm Films, a disability artists’ collective that was awarded national touring funding for *The staircase miracles to be exhibited in 2005 at the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, and the Serpentine Gallery, London. He is currently the Arts and Humanities Research Council Fellow in Creative and Performing Arts at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, University of Central England. Aaron Williamson has recently shown the solo durational-performance installation *Wild boy* at The Showroom, London (2005). An earlier version of this work was presented at Gallaudet University, Washington (2005). He has also presented performances at the Electric Renaissance Festival, Halle, Germany (2005); DaDao Festival, Beijing (2004); Glass Curtain Gallery, Columbia University, Chicago (2005); the Tate Modern, London (2005); and in Nuuk and Sisimiut, Greenland (2005).

List of works in the exhibition

† 1 Laylah Ali
Untitled 2005
gouache and synthetic polymer paint on paper
18 x 15 cm
Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York

2 Laylah Ali
Untitled 2005
gouache and synthetic polymer paint on paper
18 x 15 cm
Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York

3 Laylah Ali
Untitled 2005
gouache and synthetic polymer paint on paper
18 x 15 cm
Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York

4 Laylah Ali
Untitled 2005
gouache and synthetic polymer paint on paper
18 x 15 cm
Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York

5 Laylah Ali
Untitled 2005
gouache and synthetic polymer paint on paper
18 x 15 cm
Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York

6 Laylah Ali
Untitled 2005
gouache and synthetic polymer paint on paper
15 x 18 cm
Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York

† 8 Diann Bauer
Meijius 2004
pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper
5 panels: 240 x 1050 cm, each: 240 x 206 cm
Courtesy the artist

† 9 Ian Burn
Four glass/Mirror piece 1968
mirror, glass, wood; book: 22 pages, photocopies, cardboard and cloth cover, metal binding
overall dimensions variable; a: 95.8 x 65.1 cm, b: 40.5 x 71.2 x 2.8 cm (open)
Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of the Rudy Komon Fund, Governor, 2001

10 Christian Capurro
Someone complained 2000–05
off-set print
unlimited edition
59.4 x 42 cm
Courtesy the artist

11 Christian Capurro
Compress 2005
ink and correction fluid on paper, pins
drawn under the pressure of erasing
other images
50 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist

12 Christian Capurro
Compress 2005
ink, correction fluid on paper, pins
drawn under the pressure of erasing
other images
50 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist

13 Christian Capurro
Compress 2005
ink, correction fluid on paper, pins
drawn under the pressure of erasing
other images
50 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist

14 Christian Capurro
Compress 2005
ink, correction fluid on paper, pins
drawn under the pressure of erasing
other images
50 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist

15 Christian Capurro
Compress 2005
ink, correction fluid on paper, pins
drawn under the pressure of erasing
other images
50 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist

16 Christian Capurro
Compress 2005
ink, correction fluid on paper, pins
drawn under the pressure of erasing
other images
50 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist

17 Christian Capurro
Compress 2005
ink, correction fluid on paper, pins
drawn under the pressure of erasing
other images
50 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist

18 Christian Capurro
On being and being done with 2005
steel table, magazines, rubber erasings, metal ruler, lamp, correction fluid pens, pencils, erasers, scalpel, paper
dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist
Joy Hester
The agony in the garden [formerly Compassion] c. 1945
brush and ink and watercolour on paper
26.4 x 29.2 cm
Collection of Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
On loan from Barbara Tucker 2000

Joy Hester
Mother and child c. 1945
brush and ink on paper
29.6 x 24 cm
Collection of Barbara Tucker, Melbourne

Joy Hester
From an incredible night dream c. 1946–47
brush and ink and gouache on paper
25.1 x 31.5 cm
Collection of Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Gift of Barrett Reid 1990

Joy Hester
European c. 1945
brush and ink on paper
29.7 x 24 cm
Collection of Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
On loan from Barbara Tucker 2000

Joan Jonas
Songdelay 1973
16 mm film transferred to videotape
black and white, sound
18:55 minutes
Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Ruth Maclean
Calling all workers 2004-05
digital videotape transferred to DVD
colour
11 minutes
choreography: Susanne Thomae soundtrack: Quentin Thomas using sampled sounds from offices, factories and Eric Coates’s tune, Calling all workers, which was broadcast daily on BBC radio in 1940
 Courtesy the artist

Tom Nicholson
Flags for a Trades Hall Council 2005
digital prints on synthetic fabric,
timber flag-poles, type C photographs,
metal wall fittings, wire
dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist
This artwork is installed at two Melbourne sites: the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne; and the Victorian Trades Hall Council, corner Victoria and Lygon streets, Carlton.

Santiago Sierra
POLYURETHANE SPRAYED ON THE BACKS OF 10 WORKERS. Lisson Gallery, London, UK, July 2004. Ten immigrant Iraqi workers were hired for this action. They were protected with chemically resistant clothing and a thick sheet of plastic. Then they were placed in various positions and sprayed on the back with polyurethane until large formations of this material had been obtained. All of the elements employed in the action were left in the space 2004
DVD
black and white
66.08 minutes
Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

Aaron Williamson
Lives of the saints 2002
digital videotape transferred to DVD
11 minutes
Collection of the Arts Council England
Courtesy the artist