they even thought it. Not unlike social isolation and muteness. They make connections between this world and the other and the impossibility of making a direct link to the unspeakable. Someone else’s mind certainly raises an ethical question, but A Constructed World is not dealing with Dusoirian spectatorship of the unconscious. It’s bereft of the awareness of the potential of these motivations. It’s alert to the consequences of this experience to an absolute other. Although I don’t agree with him, I believe the museum mediators, but is able to explain to female and vice versa. What we do is always a young physiologist he was baffled about destroying their testicles. Trying to find a way to the Sargasso Sea when coming over the distribution of the sensible. Whereas he was still a student, and 1974. He made a direct link to the other people. He was awarded a Fellowship Diploma of Fine Art. Early in his career Lowe received a number of prizes and grants including Art Council Visual Arts Board grants in 1974 and 1975, and the other in the United States and in France for six months in 1985.

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projects have been included in exhibitions in France, the UK, the Netherlands and Australia.

Jacqueline Riva currently teaches at Centre National de Danse Contemporaine, Angers, France, and Geoff Lowe teaches at École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, also in Angers.

A CONSTRUCTED WORLD
acw-videography.blogspot.com
SPEECH AND WHAT ARCHIVE
speechbroughtback.com

Geoff Lowe
Still life (with bullock’s heart) into landscape, 1972
synthetic polymer paint on canvas on plywood
30 x 46 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe
When we met our friend, the analyst, at an early evening party I told her, ‘I keep repeating the same mistake to the point of tears’. She said, ‘That’s OK, Lacan says you find yourself in errors, deceits and mistakes’. ‘What’s the difference between an error and a mistake?’ I asked. ‘I don’t know’, she said. JR.
John Nixon (editor)
A Constructed World (cover image)
Material, 1998
printed paper
29.7 x 21 cm
Collection of A Constructed World

A Constructed World
Death globes, 2012
synthetic polymer paint and collage on paper
4 parts, each 14–19 cm diameter
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels
A Constructed World
Player guitar, 1999
electric guitar, amplifiers, sensor,
chair, video camera
dimensions variable
Courtesy A Constructed World and
Solang Production Paris Brussels

Geoff Lowe
Self-portrait, 1995
lacquer on wood
185 x 115 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
This is a proposal about speaking to live eels. From the bottom of the Sargasso and Coral seas, tiny elvers navigate across oceans to the estuaries, ponds, streams, lakes, mud and haystacks of the world. Aristotle thought eels arose spontaneously from the mud of river bottoms and Pliny believed that adult eels rubbed their skin against rocks and the pieces that came off grew into young eels. Until the twentieth century it was thought that eels were born and died locally. Now we have evidence each surviving catadromous eel returns to where it procreates and dies in those deepest parts of the ocean. Still nobody knows what this orgiastic event that creates and extinguishes life looks like. It’s tabled as fact in biology but it hasn’t been seen. So much of the eels’ story continues to evade human knowledge.

To quote recent comments from scientific information gathering and field research:

Despite the extensive research undertaken on the Anguilla genus, major components of eel biology remain unknown.\(^1\)

The names of the major life stages [of eels] are indicated; spawning and eggs have never been observed in the wild and are therefore only tentatively included.\(^2\)

It would appear ‘we put ourselves in a position to realize that it is ourselves and not reality that is responsible for what we know’\(^3\). Yet, more likely, this project leans towards Bruno Latour where he invites us to avoid reducing ‘humans entirely to natural causes or natural causes entirely to appearances in human consciousness’\(^4\).

The eels’ instinct navigates the conduits of the world. In art what is not-known or not-understood tends to be seen as the highest capital and it is usually delivered by the instinct (of artists). So similarly this discussion of what may be real beyond the conditions of its accessibility relates to human culture. The instincts of famous artists like Van Gogh or Joseph Beuys are followed by the audiences of art. The audiences use a similar aptitude to make identification with where artists go. Through the discussion of contemporary art directed towards the eels, we show that the work-of-the-audience attracts an unfinished discussion rather than one that will be immediately consumed. A Constructed World (ACW) attempts to build and convoke a permanent space that is made possible and viable in this intersection.

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When Speech and What Archive was invited to make a Medicine Show at Caravansérail near Paris, Marie was inspired by the venue that is a movable circus tent on a large scale. Marie decided to move all over the paper room, which was on the floor, on a ball used by acrobats and monkeys. She had learned to do it adeptly when she was a young teenager. In the weeks leading up she practised a lot but couldn’t re-master the skill. We went ahead with the performance with her not being able to balance and move on the ball and being supported by others. ACW
A Constructed World
Second last second chance, 2009–12
wood, tarpaulin, iPod, headphones, mixed media
dimensions variable
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

A Constructed World
Fester live, 1997
bubblejet print
60 x 82 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World
Geoff’s 1997 Contemporary Art Archive installation—“a montage of images, references, times and places” as I described it then—was like walking into one of his paintings, as if peaking behind the scenes and witnessing his thinking and working processes—a key objective of the CAA project. Hendrix, Mary and Fester were there in one form or another; the double-necked electric guitar; speaker boxes, figurines and other assorted objects; and a blue tarpaulin with silvery swirls representing the hole in the ozone layer, a key motif from his painting at the time. The exhibition marked a key moment in Geoff’s shift away from painting and toward collaborative installation and performance with Jacqui. The poster published for the occasion featured him dressed as Fester singing the blues. SC
Geoff Lowe

We picture facts to ourselves, 1977
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
160 x 198 cm
Collection of Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery, NSW

Painted in the middle of a nervous breakdown in highly politicised and drug-ridden Fitzroy. Trying to hold on to reality (through Wittgenstein). GL

Geoff Lowe

Glinted, 1986
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
100 x 200 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

Empirical paintings
The watercolour seems a bit moodier than the painting. I can’t remember which one came first. It’s not a study for the painting. Again, I’m looking for the feel rather than accuracy. And the other thing is that it’s classic A Constructed World, ‘stay in groups’, ‘no need to be great’. JC

At this point in the lacquer studio at the Wooden House on Stilts in Hanoi, I began to think painting had more potential to anticipate something than document it. Getting it wrong was starting to have more appeal than mastering it. GL
A Constructed World with Hy Vöng
Springvale Vietnam painting, 1996
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
30 × 310 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World

Geoff Lowe
Narrative speaking to herself, 1979
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
58.5 × 45.9 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

This is a portrait of me, one of very few I have agreed to, which, although I was quite young when it was painted, looks more like I do now than I did then. It reminds me of my mother and the jumper in the painting was dark blue and beautifully knitted by Geoff’s mother. I had known Geoff since he was a schoolboy who made a very definite decision to be an artist. He had a strong painting practice and career by the time this work was painted. Geoff had become known for his idealized generic portraits but this is very particular. This painting was in the collection of my mother, Judith Tenenbaum, until she died. AS
Amateur and non-artists seemed to find it easier to paint when together in a group and if something they made was photographed or photocopied it appeared to make people less embarrassed or self-critical about what they had made. The photo depicts this. A psychoanalyst once said to me, ‘So groups and technology lower the tension about expressing something’. GL

Etienne Bernard
Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear #3, 2009
screenprint on paper
176 x 120 cm
Collection of A Constructed World
Collections

Doorways

A Constructed World and Speech and What Archive
Three-story paper room, 2010–12
wood, paper, inkjet prints, mixed media
500 x 200 x 255 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World, Speech and What Archive and Sidang Production Paris Brussels

Geoff Lowe
Internal glossary, 1972
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
182 x 243 cm
Fine Art Collection, University of Tasmania, Hobart
Empirical paintings

Collections

A Constructed World
Treesex, 2012
costumes, mixed media
dimensions variable
Courtesy A Constructed World and
Solang Production Paris Brussels

A Constructed World and DIAO
DIAO, 2012
newspaper, published by A Constructed
World and École Supérieure des
Beaux-Arts, Angers, France
38 x 29 cm, 12 pages
Collection of A Constructed World
Empirical paintings

A Constructed World
SWA skeletons, 2011
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
212 x 200 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

Geoff Lowe
Background (Camberwell quarry), c. 1981
synthetic polymer paint on canvas on plywood
35.6 x 56 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

I met Geoff on a ’6 St Kilda tram trundling down Fitzroy Street one evening in the mid-’70s; the same age, we were still fired by an optimism generated from the ’60s and the walls we had run into had not stopped us. I discovered the quarry while working with a builder on a house that overlooked it and showed it to Geoff. It seemed to satisfy his want for huge amounts of detail and a natural stage for his dramas; we drew there together quite a bit in the first half of 1980 before I headed overseas to study. TM
Geoff Lowe
Inherited models (2), 1995
laser print on rice paper on synthetic polymer paint on canvas
152 x 122 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe

Etienne Bernard
Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear #1, 2009
screenprint on paper
176 x 120 cm
Collection of A Constructed World
A Constructed World
Universal love/unconditional regard, 1996–2012
tarpaulin, wood, acrylic, found objects, mixed media
400 x 500 cm (variable)
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

I remember this work from an exhibition at Whanki Museum in Seoul. It was the perfect touring work—like a jack-in-the-box. Earlier paintings of Tower Hill, with figures ‘acting out’ in the landscape, have become a set-piece for live performance. You can see the remnants scattered across the blue tarpaulin modelled loosely on Tower Hill. It’s still best resolved through single-point perspective, but you come across it more like a campsite—or even crime scene—than a picture. I recall the live performance, the screaming guitar and my gorgeous wife dressed as Uncle Fester in a push-up bra caterwauling into the night. Created a few issues over dinner with our hosts … SK

Jacqueline Riva
A photograph, 1990
photograph
87 x 98 cm
Courtesy Jacqueline Riva

Like Las meninas—the artist and his retinue of assistants at court. Geoff’s high regard for politically incommensurate figures is clear, in this case Irene Bolger, ‘queen’ of the nurses’ strike in 1986. Otherwise the enthusiastic amateur, the photographer, the writer, the framer, the photocopier and, of course, ourselves, all caught up in the triangulation of social relations which since Velasquez has generated the meaning and purpose of secular art. But here, there’s sexual tension too, Jacqui brushing Geoff’s right arm, the very beginning of their loving partnership as A Constructed World … SK
A Constructed World
Uncle Fester sings the blues, 1997
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio
colour, sound
4:14 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and
Solang Production Paris Brussels

A weird and unexpected consignment
arrives via the MCA goods lift. Clunky
metal doors part like stage curtains
revealing a mobile theatre, a wild mix of
medievalism, howling blues, punk rock and
retro TV. Bald, capped and black-eyed,
Geoff makes a compelling Fester cast as
rock star or evangelist, an anti-heroic
caricature of manhood. He opens his gown
to reveal his stigmata or beat his chest. The
door-curtains close and the tableau vivant
departs. My memories are hallucinatory like
the grainy photos and video of the event. SC

A Constructed World
History NO!, 2000
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio
colour, sound
4:41 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and
Solang Production Paris Brussels

... the elevator door opened and a loud
and clear cry of someone came from it.
'History, NO!' a woman shouted. And
she shouted again, 'Historia, NO!'
The cry continued ... visitors and artists
came out of their studios, walked through
the hall, and approached the area of
the elevators where we were standing,
now mute. During that time, about
five seemingly attenuated minutes, the
elevator’s door remained open and the cry
was heard incessantly, sometimes shouted
in English, sometimes heard in Spanish.
Doorways

Geoff Lowe
‘Buckley’s chance’ from the series ‘Ten famous feelings for men’, 1984
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
152 x 91 cm
Private collection, Sydney

‘Buckley’s chance’ was a term used a lot when I was a kid. Buckley’s and Nunn (the name of a department store). No chance. Buckley was an escaped convict who lived with Indigenous people for a long time, even forgot how to speak English. He wrote his memoir some time after returning to settler society. John Dunkley-Smith posed for this painted-from-life in situ. I found it very hard to make anything up, so I painted from life. GL

In the mid-’70s I was living in a house with David Odell who was a PhD candidate in set theory. At the time he told his supervisors at the Mathematics Department at Monash University that he hated the abstract paintings they had on the walls there and that he knew a much better artist with better paintings, so they invited him to bring something in, which they hung. After two years David went to Cornell in the US and the department wrote to me to say they wanted me to take the painting back. I avoided them for a long time. When I became better known my gallerist advised me to gift it. Successive directors kept writing to me asking to send it back, they didn’t want it. Finally I was appointed to the board of Monash Museum and made an awkward negotiation to gift it, and still the next director wanted to return it. Then two years ago it surfaced in a group show as part of the collection. By then I was living in Europe and a young artist emailed me to say what an astonishing painting it was. GL

Hippie materialism

Geoff Lowe
Gateway, 1974
oil on plywood
91.5 x 122 cm
Monash University Collection, gift of the artist 1982. Courtesy Monash University Museum of Art

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Hippie materialism

Geoff Lowe
Sequence in measurement I, 1974
oil on plywood
91.5 x 122 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe

A Constructed World with Change Is Good
Stay in groups, 2007
embroidery on linen
47 x 65 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels
You don’t have to fear your instrument with A Constructed World because miracles are not expected from you. Or, better, miracles are welcome, but they’re not related to musical proficiency. In an exquisite set of contradictions, the arranging might be laborious, but the songs don’t need too much rehearsing; the room for improvisation is small so the performance doesn’t have to be surrounded by solid material; and finally things are fairly disciplined in order not to be too specific. It’s an uncharted musical adventure where the track list is the only reference point and your talent is measured by your degree of participation rather than the intrinsic quality of your performance. Unlearn what you have learned and make it work. Everything is just so how-you’re-not-supposed-to-do-it, it’s actually fun. MR

In a wooden boat, a series of characters with simian features rejoice, eat mussels and engage in erotic activities and music, while at the riverbank, the rest of faceless humanity seems abandoned. But why are these idle and diverted figures showing joyful and parodic new faces? FV
A Constructed World
History 3, 2000
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio
colour, sound
6 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and
Solang Production Paris Brussels

Geoff Lowe with Stephen Bush
The nature of love, 1988
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
188 x 305 cm
Collection of Elaine Baker and
John Cruthers, Sydney

The nature of love, set in the Whipstick
Forest, is about just that—aspects of love:
sexual love, married love, love of friends,
love of an art father, even love for a
collaborator ... KH
Geoff Lowe with Kathy Temin
*A constructed world I*, 1993
synthetic polymer paint, pastel
and laser print on canvas
152 x 122 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Geoff Lowe
*Interior I*, 1971
synthetic polymer paint on board
53 x 74 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe
Empirical paintings

A Constructed World
Le feu scrupuleux, 2008
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio
colour, sound
6 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

Talking Heads: 77 is the debut album by American new wave art rock band Talking Heads. Recorded during 1976 and ‘77 at Sundragon Studios, New York, and released on 16 September 1977 on Sire Records. Eleven songs including ‘The book I read’. The record cover features bright green typography in Times Bold Italic on an orange monochrome background. JN

Geoff Lowe
Date, 1986
alkyd resin on canvas
105 x 205 cm
Collection of John Nixon, Melbourne

81

71
Geoff Lowe

Interior, 1979
synthetic polymer paint on board
2 panels: 152 x 213 cm
RMIT University Art Collection, Melbourne

By others

Geoff Lowe with Elizabeth Newman
A constructed world, 1991
monotypes with laser transfer prints
2 sheets, each 50 x 66.5 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe
Geoff Lowe
Inherited models (1), 1995
laser transfer print on rice paper on synthetic polymer paint on canvas
152 x 122 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe

A Constructed World and Etienne Bernard
Speech objects, 2011
printed book, edited by A Constructed World and Anna Hess, published by Musée de l’Objet, Blois, France
16.5 x 12 cm, 244 pages
Collection of A Constructed World
A Constructed World started making video salons in 1998. We introduced mattresses mainly because our video programs were quite long and boring. We wanted the audience to sleep, to lie around in the installation, to go in and out of the video works. JR

Artfan magazine was a ten-year publishing project including people who said they didn’t know about contemporary art writing about exhibitions. With no public funding forthcoming, it was made with the goodwill of hundreds of contributors. The publication series continues to be of interest in Europe, being shown in book fairs, museums and galleries. JR
Yann Sérandour
After a portrait of Friedrich Schleiermacher by Geoff Lowe (A Constructed World) and after the wall painting ‘Language is not transparent’ by Mel Bochner, 2011
screenprint on paper, published by CNEAI, Paris
98 x 70 cm
Collection of A Constructed World

A Constructed World
Explaining contemporary art to live eels, 2004
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio
colour, sound
6:45 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels
A Constructed World
Player guitar II, 2000
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio
colour, sound
7:40 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

Speech and What Archive
Xmas card, 2010
photograph
15 x 21 cm
Collection of Speech and What Archive
A Constructed World with Jon Campbell, Ry Haskings, Lena Douglas, Elizabeth Newman, Mick Douglas and Scott Tinkler

"The hole" and "Young for you", 2012
single-channel HD video, 16:9 ratio
colour, sound
12:57 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

Elizabeth Newman

"Immaterial space isn’t necessarily ethically superior 1 and 2", 2011
offset lithographs
2 sheets, each 61 x 44 cm
Courtesy Elizabeth Newman
We used to go to a small café bistro in the Marais before we knew Paris at all. Mainly because you could always find a seat there. This world design is etched on a glass window inside. After a couple of years the window cracked; it still hasn’t been repaired. ACW
Each person in the group Rosebud painted a flat rectangle; the first with a white border left between each one, in the second the painted rectangles are butted up next to one another and in the third people wander into, violate and are hospitable to one another’s spaces. GL

Geoff Lowe with Rosebud
Next to, 1989–1992
synthetic polymer paint and laser print on canvas
185 x 117 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe

Geoff Lowe
Meaning and excellence, 1983
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
2 panels: 128 x 231 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

The eponymous title of an exhibition of Australian art in Edinburgh. Like a motto. Trying to generate opposites between rewards and being immersed or embedded in experience. GL
For it is one thing to adore a painting but it is quite another to learn from a painted narrative what to adore. I copied this in notebooks over the years from Michael Baxandall’s *Painting and experience in fifteenth-century Italy*. GL
Geoff Lowe
There is a hole in the ozone layer, 1988
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
174 x 127 cm
Collection of Roslyn and
Tony Oxley, Sydney

Speech and What Archive
Kettle speech, 2011
single-channel SD video, 16:9 ratio
colour, sound
3:15 minutes
Courtesy Speech and What Archive and
Solang Production Paris Brussels

The mother spider created the earth in
gaseous state and then sent her twins,
one using sound to grasp at the inside,
the other to shape the outside. Elsewhere
is here. Humanity makes the opposite
of photosynthesis, they take oxygen
and make light. Man’s words are God’s
dividends. Neutrinos don’t know they
have passed through the earth. Photons
bombard our retina. The man is star dust,
a fallen angel who remembers heaven. FR
A Constructed World
The darkness of your past, 2003, printed 2012
vinyl on wall
14 x 30 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

A Constructed World
The future, 1995
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio
colour, sound
2.09 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels
Singing for A Constructed World was a terrific exercise in incongruity: Lou Reed, Uncle Fester, wounded Christ, me. New York set lyrics of ‘Street hassle’, the scruffy bush of the Whipstick; private, long-held singing aspirations, my voice. JS

A Constructed World was making a film in the Whipstick Forest and wanted my partner Trudy to play a role because she’s a great actor and is really sexy. We were all traveling to stay there for the weekend so I figured I wanted to muscle in on the action. I chose to dress in a badly made tree costume because, um … the film was set in a forest. OK I’m a literalist. But I chose it also because the costume looked like A Constructed World’s form of inclusivity—a amateur costume worn by a non-actor who just wanted to be involved. CM
I first came across this image of A Constructed World on the invite card to their show at Uplands Gallery. Then I saw the video that the still came from, so wild and free, got me excited! I made the painting to celebrate this moment and our connection. I wanted the painting to try and capture the spirit of A Constructed World. JC

A Constructed World
No need to be great (Jimmie Durham font) and Stay in groups (jimmie Durham font), 2010

2 sheets, each 84.1 x 59.4 cm

Courtesy A Constructed World

Jon Campbell
Ecstatic Torino (Geoff & Jacqui), 2005
enamel on board
61 x 95 cm
Collection of Rob Furst and Linda Curtis, Melbourne


no need to be great

By others

By others
Speech and What Archive
Paper room, 2010
wood, paper, inkjet prints, mixed media
210 x 255 x 200 cm
Courtesy Speech and What Archive and Solang Production Paris Brussels

Geoff Lowe
Dance of the queen I painting, 1979
synthetic polymer paint and watercolour on paper
48.5 x 50 cm (sight)
Private collection, Melbourne

I saw this Indian fresco in a book and loved it. Someone lent me the book overnight and I hurriedly made two versions. This now serves as an entry to the next room of Indian artefacts: one-exhibition-talking-to-another. GL
Geoff Lowe
‘Impersonation’ from the series
‘Ten famous feelings for men’, 1983
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
152 x 122 cm
The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased with assistance from the Visual Arts Board, Australia Council, 1985

‘In the catalogue essay for the 1988 London exhibition in which Impersonation featured, Joan Kerr wrote about the comparison between Lowe’s masked figure and Poynter’s sentry. She described impersonation as a
“bitterly comic portrait” of a white man dressed in “nigger minstrel” Aboriginal costume and posed as a Roman sentry.
“Lowe’s caricatured Aborigine clearly implies that Poynter’s magnificent specimen of British Victorian manhood is no more like an ancient Roman than someone in blackface is a faithful portrait of an Australian Aborigine”,
write Kerr. Conversely, Lowe’s primary message is that all colonial portraits of Aborigines are similarly distorted, inevitably racist and propagandist.”
I had never seen the Poynter painting. Loved Joan Kerr though and Bronwyn Watson wrote the first ever article that linked the work of Geoff Lowe to A Constructed World, no one else had until that time in The Australian on 4 September 2010. GL

Trans-iterations

‘In the catalogue essay for the 1988 London exhibition in which Impersonation featured, Joan Kerr wrote about the comparison between Lowe’s masked figure and Poynter’s sentry. She described impersonation as a
“bitterly comic portrait” of a white man dressed in “nigger minstrel” Aboriginal costume and posed as a Roman sentry.
“Lowe’s caricatured Aborigine clearly implies that Poynter’s magnificent specimen of British Victorian manhood is no more like an ancient Roman than someone in blackface is a faithful portrait of an Australian Aborigine”,
write Kerr. Conversely, Lowe’s primary message is that all colonial portraits of Aborigines are similarly distorted, inevitably racist and propagandist.”
I had never seen the Poynter painting. Loved Joan Kerr though and Bronwyn Watson wrote the first ever article that linked the work of Geoff Lowe to A Constructed World, no one else had until that time in The Australian on 4 September 2010. GL

Geoff Lowe
‘Not touching’, 1989–92
synthetic polymer paint and laser print on canvas
185 x 117 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe

Rosebud stayed together for twelve years in a moving changing group, they were amazing how much they could talk about what they and one another were doing. At art school people tend to be paralysed by professional expectations. This is not an exquisite corpse, it’s about being open to and going to one another’s spaces. GL
I think this was first seen in Slouching towards Bethlehem at Gertrude Street? Maybe. The mind and memory play tricks. Perhaps it was made this year when we are still debating the issue of so-called ‘boat people’ and feeling heavy in the heart because of the harshness of political minds and just despondent in general about the futile, point-scoring rhetoric of Australian wedge politics. Edward Said said the twenty-first century would be the era of the refugee. He was right. Climate conditions, terror, political, religious, ethnic and social persecutions will see millions displaced, dispersed and discarded. There needs to be a global position on the status of refugees, there is urgent need of a pact between all nations. Rehousing, providing asylum and protection of those in peril is our humane responsibility, it has nothing to do with borders. My father came to Australia on a boat. JE

A Constructed World
Fresh history, 1999
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio
colour, sound
15:16 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

Not much had been going on in our backyard since the demise of the vegetable patch (and the one great harvest). So we were very pleased to host the hot tub. People responded really positively to it. A Constructed World really are the best at creating an environment in which to bring people together to talk and share experiences. I think we need more of it. Things have got a little too quiet ... CD
A Constructed World
Welcome fire, 2003
type C photograph, fibre-tipped pen on glass, wood frame
82 x 102 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

Jacqueline Riva
Untitled, 1998, printed 2012
type C photograph
75.5 x 110 cm
Courtesy Jacqueline Riva and Solang Production Paris Brussels
Made with Rosebud, each person tried to paint a flat even rectangle as evenly as possible. Though simple, it's quite difficult technically, and everyone passively paints the square in a different way. Some start it in the middle, others do it in stripes, others go round the edges first, everyone is effortlessly different in how they paint. It's kind of a waste of time trying to be unique. We were thinking about an Australian republic. GL

Geoff Lowe with Rosebud
Minimalist republic, 1995
ink on paper on canvas
173 x 92 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Geoff Lowe
A constructed world II (Bay gio), 1992
oil, synthetic polymer paint, casein, watercolour and laser transfer prints on canvas
187 x 187 cm
Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with the assistance of stART, MCA Young Patrons, 1995

Geoff Lowe
Hippie materialism

A constructed world II (Bay gio), 1992
oil, synthetic polymer paint, casein, watercolour and laser transfer prints on canvas
187 x 187 cm
Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with the assistance of stART, MCA Young Patrons, 1995
Repetitions and re-occurrences

Geoff Lowe with Kathy Temin
A constructed world II, 1993
synthetic polymer paint, pastel
and laser print on canvas
185 x 117 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Lambda prints
10 prints, each 35 x 35 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels
We were meeting the day of the performance at an RER station for one final rehearsal. We all gathered on the platform, excited about the play, it was fun ... but someone was late, missing. We started to worry about him. Trains passed by, but we were still waiting, hoping for that very person to arrive ... everybody was getting agitated. The tension was palpable. I loved and hated this hectic moment just before ...

ALS
A Constructed World

Fresh history painting
(Corporate geography), 2003
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
122 x 152 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

A Constructed World

Player guitar I, 2000
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio, colour, sound
10:47 minutes
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels
A Constructed World
Schifanoia. 2012
book, published by Publication Studio, Bordeaux, France
18.5 x 14.5 cm, 100 pages
Collection of A Constructed World

Julien Tiberi
Riristi.mes unlimited (A Constructed World), 2011
photocopy of original ink and graphite on paper
42 x 33 cm
Courtesy Semiose Galerie, Paris
Speech and What Archive
Speech and What Archive part one, Speech and What Archive part three, 2011–12 newspapers, edited by Anna Hess, published by A Constructed World 2 issues: 38 x 29 cm, 16 pages and 21 x 15 cm, 12 pages Collection of Speech and What Archive

A Constructed World
Transvestite, 1995–2012 electric guitar, iPod 26 x 60 x 3.5 cm Courtesy A Constructed World
stay in groups/no need to be great/stay huddled together/in Plato’s cave/stay wet and warm/in the equatorial rain/no need to be great/stay in school/old or/ new/stay in an IKEA cabinet/no need to be great/stay constructed/worlds apart/stay economically viable/twenty years apart/no need to be great/politics aside/emotions slide/stay with me/on equal parts. HC

There is a spelling error in this work: a use of the gerundive form of the verb ‘separate’, instead of the conjugated present perfect form. The text reads ‘from time to time the waters parting’ instead of ‘from time to time the waters part’. This gives rise to an interesting contradiction: an active process, taking place in the present (‘waters parting’) is situated within the distant, timeless and legendary temporality evoked in the use of the word ‘fable’. This work and its spelling error highlight the active, creative and collective process through which a common understanding of the present is constructed through weaving together current affairs, historical record and collective memory. Not only is the arrival of asylum seekers on Australian shores being historically reproduced over and over, but the collective understanding of this phenomenon is also actively and continually being constructed, interpreted and moralized within the contradictory form of a contemporary ever-evolving fable. EL
Probably among the first paintings I saw of Geoff’s at Powell Street Gallery. My uni friends and I were impressed with Geoff’s ‘postmodernism’ at the time, the re-enactment and re-interpretation of history in his paintings, episodes that featured family, friends and colleagues dressing up and acting out, a transparent reconstruction of events, rendering the world constructed thus. Years later Geoff would ask me to squeeze into a pair of size 8 Speedos with a picture of Uncle Fester stretched tight across the front, stand in the middle of the Whipstick Forest, and talk to camera about salvation. Callum was a tree. SK

A determined skull
Eye socket shades
A city of teeth
CDy
Geoff Lowe
A constructed world, 1992
lime wash on paper and canvas
182 x 122 cm
Courtesy Geoff Lowe and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Jacqueline Riva
Untitled (folding bed), 1996–97
Type C photograph on wood
190 x 125 cm
Courtesy Jacqueline Riva and Solang Production Paris Brussels

Maurizio Cattelan offered us his apartment in Milan for a few weeks during the heat wave of June 1996. At night the beanbag was put aside and the bed came down. JR
By others

A Constructed World with Change Is Good
laser transfer print on linen
47 x 65 cm
Courtesy A Constructed World and Solang Production Paris Brussels

Quentin Lannes
Seven nation army
single-channel SD video, 4:3 ratio
colour, sound
22 minutes
Courtesy Quentin Lannes

NO NEED TO BE GREAT

GREAT

The Vizard Foundation Contemporary Art Project
Geoff Lowe is the Vizard Foundation Contemporary Artist 2012

Curated by Bala Starr

Published by the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, on the occasion of the exhibition Based on a true story: Geoff Lowe 1972–92 and A Constructed World 1993–2012, 15 November 2012 to 24 February 2013.

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ISBN 978 0 7340 4806

Design by Åbäke with Dana Dijkgraaf, London
Printed in London by Aldgate Press Limited

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Patron
Lady Potter AC
The Vizard Foundation

This project has also been supported by the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.
Collections
Doorways
Beds
By others
Trans-iterations
Elevator
Empirical paintings
Death above
Hippie materialism
Repetitions and re-occurrences
Foreword, Chris McAuliffe
Otherwise, Sébastien Pluot et. al.
Biography
Rummaging in the bins of a second-hand record shop some years ago, I came across a well-worn LP by a British beat group. On the cover, a very retro embossed tape label read, Geoff Lowe. Surely the Geoff Lowe, I thought. Not because I could be sure but because I sensed I was in Geoff Lowe’s space: a zone where art could be everywhere, everyday, everything.

Geoff Lowe’s space—and the space of A Constructed World—appears incidental, fluid and unformed. It’s shaped by a suspicion of hierarchies; it values informality over institutions, and improvisation over rigid planning. Collaborative tactics make the artist one of the players rather than the director. Amateurism and improvisation—artworks that are deskilled, discontinuous, fragmented—suggest an approach to art that is both skeptical and idealistic.

Above all, it’s a space shaped by affect, which is why it can seem so idiosyncratic. Affect, cultural theorist Lawrence Grossberg tells us, is a ‘feeling of life’. It is ‘what gives “color”, “tone” or “texture” to our experiences’. And experiences are Geoff Lowe’s palette: the enclosure of a studio, the unruly energy of an art school, the interpersonal dynamics of a collaboration, the unpredictability of an improvised performance, the jostling voices of a fanzine, a face in the street.

This affective impulse connects a disparate range of practices. Working independently, or collaboratively with Jacqueline Riva as A Constructed World, Artfan and other projects generate what Grossberg calls ‘mattering maps’. These ‘tell us where and how we can become absorbed—not into the self but into the world—as potential locations for our self-identifications, and with what intensities. This “absorption” or investment constructs the places and events which are, or can become, significant to us. They are the places at which we can construct our own identity as something to be invested in, as something that matters.’ When something matters, the formal spaces of the studio and the painting dissolve into one shaped by affect. Collages of memory, conversation, feeling, experience and opinion plot emotional investments in the world.

How things make sense—what makes things matter—has also preoccupied art history. Erwin Panofsky’s classic text Meaning in the visual arts wrestled with the idea that a viewer’s ‘cultural equipment’ filtered and shaped a world in which everything could be experienced aesthetically. Beginning with the formal, allegorical spaces of Renaissance art, Geoff Lowe has similarly sought the deep social foundations of meaning. Panofsky dubbed this iconology a ‘synthetic intuition’ bridging historical circumstance and human mind.
Artists, like researchers, build the stage upon which to exhibit the manifestation and the effects of their competence, rendered uncertain by the terms of the new idiom translating a new intellectual adventure. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It requires viewers to play the active role of actors, who elaborate their own translation in order to appropriate the ‘story’ and to make it their own story. An emancipated community is a community of storytellers and of translators.¹

‘Misunderstandings are the mediums at the heart of which one can communicate what is non-communicable.’ ²

This art exhibition is the second Vizard Foundation Contemporary Art Project, an initiative which allows senior artists to explore new directions in their art practice through commissioned artwork. We would like to thank the Vizard Foundation for their continuing and generous support. We also wish to acknowledge the support of the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund, which is likewise committed to supporting the professional development of Australian artists.

Footnotes:

CHRIS McAULIFFE
Director
The Ian Potter Museum of Art
It is really one of art’s mysteries and a sign of the power of its logic that all radically logical exactness, even that which we call absurd, results in something that resembles meaning. If works using language disturb grammatical recognition, and if language tools end up losing what seems to be their main function—communicating a meaning—then we must conclude that the goal of a work of art, whether it uses language or not, cannot be limited to Derrida: ‘certain utterances can call absurd, results in something that resembles meaning. According to Derrida, ‘certain utterances can have a meaning even when deprived of an objective signification. A loss of signification will always be able to convey a meaning, for example, that of an absence of meaning. Even if a Constructed World generates nonsense, chaos, confusion, scattered and blurred registers, it may happen that the feeling of being addressed takes precedence over the awkwardness. Their multi-referenced and unexpected use of language becomes familiar. It is a language that requires you to work (in the psychoanalytic sense of the word) in their work (in the aesthetic sense of the word).

Being invited when you are not supposed to be legitimately invited has been a Constructed World’s manifesto at least since they began Artfan. This journal project was initiated in 1993 in Australia as a response to a lack of critical art discourse and as a protest against the fine art conservatism in the local art world. In Artfan, ‘anybody’ was invited to write about art, even professional art critics. But, as Giorgio Agamben stated, ‘anybody’ is not a good term. In The coming community, he refers to the quodlibet, the ‘whatever’ inherited from the scholastics: ‘quodlibet ens est unum, verum, bonum seu perfectum’—whatever entity is one, true, or perfect. The adjective ‘whatever’ (the Latin quodlibet), does not mean ‘the whoever being’ but ‘the being who, whatever, matters’, a being who is neither universal nor particular; it is being ‘such as it is’.

Jacques Rancière, who considered that democracy is far from being achieved in self-proclaimed democratic countries, states that a real democracy implies the equal competence of all its citizens. This has the consequence that non-professional politicians have a temporary power through random elections. A Constructed World has in common with Rancière the consideration that democratic process is based upon the acknowledgment of conflict and involves a reconfiguration of the divisions between legitimacy and illegitimacy. Both criticize the actual notion of democracy in which ‘legitimate’ representatives of the majority are ruling for the minority. Real democracy would create a situation where all minorities have legitimate voices. This is when we have to consider the fact that A Constructed World, as a duo, is a micro-democracy, which means that they are at least two minorities generating conflicts. When they work in groups, the policy is one of dissent rather than consensus. According to them, ‘If you do not have conflict and crisis, it means that people are not saying what they think’. A conflict may sometimes lead A Constructed World to the limit of rejecting their own proposals. Their installation Come vuoi (2004) implied that the audience creates the value of the artwork. A Constructed World sold paintings displayed on the floor for the price that the buyer determined. After offering a price, the buyer had to explain why they had chosen this price. But when some paintings were valued at only 2 euros, A Constructed World did not consider that fair. They explained why they disagreed and pointed out the contradictory logic of someone wanting to have something that they did not properly value. These participatory situations do not fit into the evangelist ideology of pretending to bring the lost soul into a redeeming perfect art world. The art world into which A Constructed World invites people is not quiet and ideally refurbished. The inclusive system they build is not immune to various symptoms they feel free to react to themselves. When they did a project inviting the public into a gallery space in a shopping mall to play guitar it was a contract: the public played in exchange for being filmed.

Sometimes A Constructed World seeks a public with whom they want to raise conflicts. Banking executives were once invited for a workshop in 2009 which ended in the creation of a living sculpture representing the Hells Angels (played by the bankers) killing a teenager during the 1969 Altamont Rolling Stones concert. The Altamont concert recorded the end of idealism and the beginning of another era (neo-liberal and technological) The artwork was made at the beginning of the major economic crisis in 2009. It shows the opposite to the ideology of the self-regulation of the liberal economy: here, those who created the crisis were enacting it.

The history of representation has been obsessed by hierarchy and its mise en scène: the relation between figure and ground—the power being represented emblematically in the centre, and in front of the ground. Since the beginning, it seems that de-hierarchization was A Constructed World’s idiosyncrasy before becoming a deliberate political device. It was already evident in Internal glossary and Interior I, Geoff Lowe’s studio paintings made in the early 1970s. The values of this classical genre—where power and skill are emblematically expressed—are turned upside down. The chaotic heteroclite objects are geometrically displayed all over the floor in order to maintain everything at the same ‘ground level’. The perspective is constructed in such a way that even if something is hanging on the wall, nothing appears vertical or privileged. This logic goes as far as to propose that the paintings themselves (the supposedly valorized works of art) are part of the landscape, that they belong to what they represent. The painting is not better or worse than what it represents. It is part of a whole environment.

Later, the participatory paintings of the late 1980s such as Next to, Not touching and Contact boundaries resuscitated the Renaissance studio practice of a multi-authored collaboration but without the legitimating name of one author. The Rosebud group gathered by Geoff Lowe executed monochromes inside a single frame as a way to disrupt the traditional battlefield of egos. In the context of the retour à l’ordre of commercial painting of the 1980s, the project might be understood as an act of transposition of a modernist
oxymoron which would consist of imagining ten Jackson Pollocks simultaneously making a dripping on the same canvas. Such a disruptive reorganization can be interpreted as a logical step from Rauschenberg’s _Erased de Kooning drawing_ (1953). The difference however being that no name is added above any other and no avant-garde idea of transition is proclaimed.

A Constructed World performances, which involve their groups of participants (amateur artists, non-artists, students, art critics, philosophers, musicians, dancers ...), has to do with the phenomena that were the Exploding Plastic Inevitable multimedia events of the mid-1960s. Even if Warhol’s spectacles were based on very different positions, they share with A Constructed World a common erasure of the difference between ground and figure that is central in Warhol’s paintings. In a brilliant text, David Joselit analyses how the Exploding Plastic Inevitable brought about the abolition of difference between artists and the audience:

> sometimes the filmmaker Barbara Rubin would plunge into the crowd with her own camera and lights, making the audience itself a spectacle. These practices established a circuit of media feedback in which the line between performing oneself and becoming an image was perpetually crossed and recrossed. In a beautiful metaphorical summation of this experience, Jonas Mekas suggested in 1966 that strobe light could lead a dancer to perceive him or herself transmogrified into film. He stated, ‘You become a particle, a grain of the movie. Maybe that’s what it is. We are cut by strobe lights into single frames, to eight frames p/s or whatever the strobe frequency is, on and off’.8

A Constructed World is shifting here from the high/low theme to another that has to do with a more psychoanalytic construction involving exposed and repressed contents. Before forming A Constructed World with Geoff Lowe, Jacqueline Riva made a series of pictures of the beds in which she had slept in other people’s homes. Made vertical, this intimate object became a public space. Later, mattresses were used as furniture displayed for watching videos. Sexuality and dreams had entered a space where transference became a substitute for representation.

PSYCHOANALYSIS, TELEPATHY, THE TELEPHONE, EELS AND THE OTHER

Knowledge is an inner process; in itself and for itself it is incomunicable, in the same way that one describes someone meditating as being lost in himself [...] Exposure only can give birth to a community [...]. In truth we might very well suppose the existence of an inner knowledge, preceding or outreaching any exposure; but it remains [...] incomprehensible inasmuch as it remains inexposable.9

> ‘Two psychics pass each other in the street and one says to the other, “You’re doing all right, how am I?”’
> David Bowie.

> ‘I am on the side of your unconscious.’

This sentence must have been written in some of A Constructed World’s papers but they do not remember having made the comment, nor if