Opening remarks by Alex Selenitsch, poet, architect and senior lecturer in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

The Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne
Wednesday 4 April 2012

The unexamined life is not worth living, Socrates is supposed to have said. It's relatively easy to do because it examines the past, even if the past is a problematic mish-mash. The planned life, on the other hand, is nearly (if not completely) impossible to live because it attempts to predict the future. Where a plan is an image of an intended result, the way of getting there is often unknown. If a plan is a recipe, it is always incomplete because it cannot predict the circumstances of its implementation—to say nothing of the all-too-human capacity for making mistakes.

So when released into the real world of complex and apparently unpredictable events, plans experience obstruction, interference, modification and incompletion. On the Yarra we have two very visible architectural examples: the front of Jeff's Shed was once the front of the new museum, which then shifted to the Carlton Gardens. At the corner of Swanston and Flinders streets, Fed Square has a missing shard. This is because some people with influence thought the approach view to St Pauls from St Kilda Road must not be blocked. Shortly after, as a kind of karma, a super tram stop appeared, tattooed with data and advertising, blocking any kind of approach view. And talking of trams: what about the shunting yard just outside this gallery that was rushed into position one very hot summer, effectively cutting off the other side of the street, where the housing was designed to link with the university's pedestrian entrance leading to Masson Road. The stupidity of that intersection of two different plans is in the fact that only one plan wins, and we all lose.

These kinds of results don't mean we shouldn't plan—in fact theorists in artificial intelligence are thinking seriously about how we imagine any future action before we enact it, thereby reversing cause and effect. What we have to live with are the multiple intersections of many pre-imagined acts. And models of how we do this are the subject of this exhibition, through its curatorial assumptions, its installation, in the art practice of each exhibitor, and in the works.

For artists, THE special activity is composition, that is, how to put forward an integrated system of semantic attraction. To allow, or rather, to creatively use the probabilities of obstruction, interference, incompletion and alteration points to strategies of provisional statements, of improvisation, the use of found and real objects and systems, of micro-response (especially to mistakes), and finally a wider understanding if not a total ignoring of genre boundaries. All of these strategies have been worked out by many kinds of artists in the twentieth century, to the extent that they are now given practice for all.

The feature I want to emphasize this evening, in this micro-response, is the acceptance, in the one composition, of dissonant aesthetic frameworks (or taste cultures, as Herbert Gans called them). This acceptance can be done through an appeal to a larger but provisional image; or by invading another medium; by bringing together disparate kinds of the one discipline, or by deliberately misusing or stretching conventional techniques. All of these tactics are in the works in this exhibition: in fact, I made that list from looking and thinking about them.

The curatorial application of dissonant aesthetic frameworks means, I think, bringing together artists whose works not only indicate this individually, but whose adjacency will provoke new understanding of each work. This is not just a matter of heterogeneous pile-ups—some people will just not talk to each other, and artworks I suspect are the same. Nor is it important to force all works to talk to each other: this would only reproduce the authoritarian, Fascist-like stance of official style, or something like the aesthetic that rumbles around the paintings.
in the room just below us in this gallery [on level one]. What is presented in this room is a
different kind of issue rather: how can we let go—even banish—the PLAN from our civil life,
and work, in real time, with live systems? This exhibition tackles the question at the purest
level, through aesthetic propositions, but the question resonates at all levels for us,
individually, and communally. There are no plans in these two rooms, but ideas and facts as
to how we might go about doing things without them.

The plan was for me to provide opening remarks, which I’ve done, and maybe to declare the
exhibition open, which I won’t do; in the world of real time and live systems, the exhibition has
been up and open for quite a few days already. But I do want to say that I hope the exhibition
doesn’t go to plan—I hope it does a lot better than that.

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