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The College Voice

Welcome to The College Voice - the COFA Students' Association's online Arts magazine.

The College Voice represents the collective voices of all students and staff at the College of Fine Arts, UNSW. Each voice is unique, and each voice is part of the community of artists working at the College. Here, different approaches, different goals, different methods, different disciplines combine to form a supportive and solid working environment where individuals may explore their creative potential and where we may all be enriched in mind and spirit by each other's efforts. - Ed. Janis Lander

Free Spaces

May 29 2005

Joanne Handley has exhibited at the New York Hall of Science; the Contemporary Art Museum at the Institute for Research in Art, University of Southern Florida, the Center for Maine Contemporary Art; Taranto Gallery, New York; the Center for Cultural Exchange, Portland, ME USA; Artists Space, Green Street, New York and Sydney Powerhouse Museum. Joanne has just completed her MFA at COFA and currently teaches part-time at COFA.



As a visual artist, I have long held an interest in the art/science intersection, its aesthetic and conceptual border-crossings and provinces of liminality.

Liminal spaces are spaces in-between, thresholds or transitions from one state or space to another. Liminality, from *limen* (Latin: threshold), is a term used in psychology to indicate the limit between the sensate and subliminal (the level below which a sensation ceases to be perceptible), but is most notably linked to Victor Turner, who writes of a no-man's-land 'betwixt and between' - a space of transformation between phases of separation and re-incorporation, representing a marginal state or period

of ambiguity.

The concept bears significance in describing some of the most highly specific and contemporary cultural phenomena: the transcultural space, the transgeographical space, the transgender space and so on; and has been viewed by certain artists as the location from which opportunities arise for new experimental forms and practices, particularly those which involve innovative technology and technical experimentation. Many artists experience this marginalised state at some point or other, which is one I consider not just the province of artists, but of Art itself.

Alfons Hug, chief curator of the 26th São Paulo Biennial, reflects upon this idea in his recent essay 'Image Smugglers':

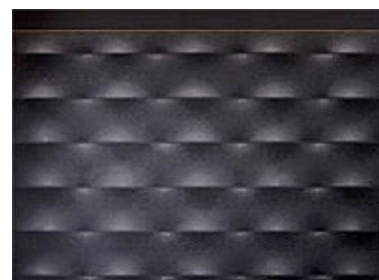
"The no-man's-land of aesthetics begins where the normal world ends. It designates the area in which reality and imagination are in conflict with each other. Artists are border guards of a realm that lies beyond the administered world, where the power of interpretation is no longer the sovereign right of politicians or economic gurus.

.... Although artists are "embedded" into conflicts, they do not copy the world, but create free spaces within reality. With help of metaphors and symbols they transform the earthy raw material into a new condition that can be experienced by the senses. Art exists outside of causality and must not be imprisoned in the iron casting of mundane constraints".

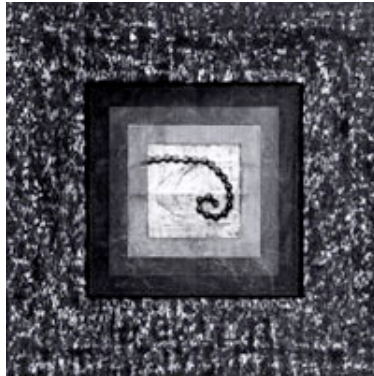
I am also interested in junctures whose elements transcend and transport us beyond our known experience. Considering our perceptions of *artifice* and *reality* are largely governed by technology, media and a new millennium hallmarked by virtual phenomena, we often find ourselves in a realm of conflicting disembodied information - one that forces us to fathom deeper in our search to engage in palpable, authentic and personally meaningful creative processes. We strive to find independence, individuality (our unique voice) away from the masses. At the same time we want and need to embrace the liberties this present era of innovation and connectivity affords us. It becomes a juggling act.

In early 2004, I completed a MFA at COFA, which included a number of years in the United States investigating the synthesis of painting, digital image and giclée print. The research project engaged the use of fractal technology and processes involving photographic transfer of digital image and embedded print within the paint surface. It also examined innovative developments in artists' acrylics - synthetic polymers that embody reflective pigments that are either actual metals, synthetic lamellar iron oxides, or naturally produced mica flakes mined from the earth.

These processes were evidenced in my recent solo exhibition, MERGE, at Wollongong City Gallery in November 2004. The exhibition of large-scale paintings, prints and mixed media drew into question traditional notions of the



painted surface and explored the unique properties and effects of *light interference*. Mica platelets suspended within the polymer emulsion are coated with an extremely thin layer of titanium dioxide, allowing multiple refraction and reflection of light and reproducing several natural phenomena - the nacreous, or pearly, qualities found in fish scales or the dust of a butterfly's wing, and the shiny and reflective properties found in certain metals and minerals. The large paintings are characterised by meticulously interwoven layers of emulsion and metal oxides, grids of elongated pixels, and a patina that more resembles the surface of quarry rock and burnished metal substrates than that of acrylic paint.



Images courtesy of the artist:

(1) Derivation, Lithia, Objectivity

Diptych, aluminium, steel, metal oxides, synthetic polymers on canvas, 65 x 138 cm

(2) Dome_Alum

(from Katahdin Series) digital inkjet print, 122 x 122 cm

(3) Transition

synthetic polymers and metal oxides on linen, 153 x 183 cm

(4) Quarks and Virtual Artifices II

Digital image, micaceous iron oxide and synthetic polymers on canvas

51 x 51 cm

Article by Joanne Handley

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