

Adverse Collaborations is the second in the *ARI at The Block* program. This series of exhibitions engage with the important cultural practices generated by artist-run initiatives and acknowledges the vital role that ARIs play to the broader cultural ecology. Run by artists, ARIs contribute to a continuing program of creative activities. These activities can function outside of the institutional paradigm, in cooperation with it, or maybe even in collaboration with the established institutional system.

As alternative structures, ARIs enable highly experimental and engaging practices using a variety of creative methodologies and frameworks. Brisbane is currently host to several well-established ARIs and is experiencing continuing growth and diversity, welcoming new initiatives that continue to build the strength of Brisbane's cultural landscape. At the same time we are seeing ARIs that have been sustained over longer periods start to transition into something else.

ARI at The Block's intention is to provide opportunities for Brisbane-based ARIs to curate their own exhibition using the particular spatial and technical capabilities, institutional structure and support of QUT Creative Industries Precinct. The program sits at the intersection of independent ARI practices and process, and institutional structures and conventions. It is a journey of communication, co-facilitation and navigation through both paradigms.

QUT Creative Industries Precinct aims to cultivate critical and ongoing support and dialogue with artist-run initiatives, and welcomes inbetweenspaces in their final exhibition as an ARI. *inbetweenspaces* seeks to highlight and investigate the tensions of process and relationships, both personal and professional, that are intrinsic to collaborations. This ongoing interest is the focus of the exhibition *Adverse Collaborations* at The Block.

Lubi Thomas and Rachael Parsons, QUT Creative Industries Precinct

THE ARTISTS

Beagles & Ramsay

www.beaglesramsay.co.uk

Beagles & Ramsay have worked collaboratively since 1997. Along with the use of fictive self-portraiture and doppelgangers Beagles & Ramsay have an abiding interest in the allegorical and critical potential of playing with habitual ideas central to the mythology of art. This includes notions such as the lone genius, authenticity, originality, political agency, the sketchbook as locus of creativity and the studio as site of alienated production. Central to all of this is the foregrounding of collaborative practice as a troubled, complex and staged presence.

Freee

www.freee.org.uk

Freee is a collective made up of three artists—Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan—who work together on slogans, billboards and publications that challenge the commercial and bureaucratic colonization of the public sphere of opinion formation. Freee occupies the public sphere with works that take sides, speak their mind and divide opinion.

Sylvia Winkler and Stephan Köperl

www.winkler-koeperl.net

Sylvia Winkler (Austria) and Stephan Köperl (Germany) have degrees from the State Academy of Fine Arts Stuttgart. Since the beginning of their collaboration in 1997 the main field of their activities has been "urban interventions" which they have realised in various places around the globe. Their projects usually develop from observations in public space and are elaborated site specifically.

The New Spastiks

www.newspastiks.tumblr.com

Herma Auguste Wittstock and Declan Thomas Rooney were both born in the year the Centre Georges Pompidou was officially opened by French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in Paris, the Ocean Park opened in Hong Kong, the Porsche 928 debuted at the Geneva Auto Convention and Apple Computer became incorporated. The year was 1977. Upon hearing of their first collaborative work in 2003, Donald Judd turned over in his grave. With a shared passion for the ridiculous and the sublime, the serious and the absurd, the mundane and transcendental, the New Spastiks share with us an intimacy of ideas in a toned visual vocabulary. They play on the relationships of a brother and sister, fellow cult members, close friends or occasionally even lovers.

ADVERSE COLLABORATIONS

ADVERSE COLLABORATIONS

It's a kind of choose your own adventure story.

Try more like an open manifesto.

(Laughs) Or a Showbag!

Yeah! (Laughs) It's a precious gift.

What does The Block think it is?

A Publication

What is any exhibition?

It's more like a portable museum we give to each viewer to keep.

Well what's at The Block then?

The opening event.

inbetweenspaces is a Brisbane-based artist-run initiative (ARI), co-directed by two visual artists, Danielle Clej and Ruth McConchie. inbetweenspaces began in 2008 when a series of coincidences brought Sarah Byrne, Danielle Clej and Ruth McConchie together to collaborate and support the exhibition of artworks by other artists. In 2010, the directors reached an impasse and Sarah Byrne chose to leave and pursue other projects. Since then inbetweenspaces has worked with many artists, ARIs, institutions and organisations, focusing on different forms of collaboration. As our last exhibition as an ARI, *Adverse Collaborations* has provided a unique space for us to reflect on intimacy, trust and control in our relationships.

Benefit, love, trust and support are four areas of mutuality important to relationships that succeed and grow. Perhaps a strong relationship is based in a shared feeling of care and of being cared for in a manner that is approximately equal in the energy required to stay together. A relationship that does not have mutual benefit, love, trust and support can bring heartbreak, betrayal and agony.

In the past few years several of Brisbane's art institutions have realised the benefits in including ARIs in their exhibition and public programs. There is the potential for these benefits to be mutual; ARIs gain access to spaces, personnel, equipment and marketing that could otherwise be out of their budget and reach, and the institutions benefit from an increase in critically engaged viewers and visitors to public programs. Institutions necessarily have set expectations around visitor numbers, types of viewer experiences and exhibition programming. They have standard routines, timelines and methods for engaging and working with artists and curators whereas some of the most interesting ARIs in Brisbane take a more fluid approach in adapting their working methods to support the specific needs of different projects and artists. inbetweenspaces' concerns about working with institutions centre around these routines, methods and expectations in relation to trust, control and risk.

In relationships it is often the case that one player is a minimiser and the other a maximiser. The minimiser is more subdued while the maximiser tends to be more evocative. When this balance turns into a power struggle submissive and dominant roles emerge, but not always in ways that people expect. The minimiser may become dominant, the maximiser may become submissive, and in this relationship driven by power and control, instead of compassion and collaboration, one partner becomes "parentalised" and the other "infantilised".

When working with smaller entities, the methods and structures of institutions can be antithetical to their aims. Although they might claim to encourage experimental and process-based approaches to creating and exhibiting art, there is often little room to support difference, developments and the potentials of failure. This could be due to institutions having directors and administrative staff who may not comprehend the nuances and complexities of making art. Smaller entities are nearly always expected to be subsumed into the structure of the host institution, and it seems the more control an institute demands, the less likely we are to trust in their methods and aims. It is a delicate balance, as this approach from institutions increases the likelihood of limiting or destroying the qualities of the smaller entity and the exhibition that the institution first found appealing. There is a possible risk that institutions become so set in their own working methods and hierarchies that they fail to see the potential possibilities in learning from the processes of artists and structures of the groups they work with.

It is similar to being caught up in a curse of take-aways and tracky dacks; the routine and structure of the dominant player is so familiar that the need for an opportunity to adapt is not recognised. In response to this stagnation, the other party can either choose to leave or find a way to exist covertly within the dominant structure. While disagreements are healthy for relationships, constructive debate can never occur when one party is in a dominant, stagnate position. Disagreement can be a constructive force but only when there is mutual trust, support and benefit.

inbetweenspaces often experiments with ideas of arrangement as a creative process, and this has led to conflict when working within larger structures. The role of curator seems to afford organisational control of an exhibition space and the power to act as a mediator between the institution and artists. It is problematic then when both the institution and ARI attempt to assume this role. It is possible to find ways to co-operate, but this relationship is rarely collaborative. It is important to us to reflect on the relations between trust, control and risk; is it possible to form a mutually beneficial relationship between a smaller entity and a more dominant player?

Perhaps there is a difference between co-operation and collaboration. Disagreement within consensus is an important part of collaboration as it is essential to building different perspectives, considering alternatives and making changes. inbetweenspaces considers collaboration as a third space, a process that leads to changes in the way each party regularly operates as an individual. This necessitates a shift in the methods, structures and knowledge familiar to each entity, as the focus centers on the needs of the third space.

By holding this box you are implicated in these questions and concerns; you will play a part in the placement, distribution and display of the things it contains. Like the artists who have made these artworks, we ask you to reflect on intimacy, trust and control in your relationships.

inbetweenspaces
Danielle Clej
Ruth McConchie

ADVERSE COLLABORATIONS
12 to 20 October 2012

inbetweenspaces

Danielle Clej

Ruth McConchie

QUT CURATORIAL TEAM

Senior Curator of Digital Media Lubi Thomas

Exhibitions Officer Rachael Parsons

Assistant Curator (Intern) Sarah Phelan

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Olivia Porgand

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

Blair Walkinshaw

Nigel Oram

**QUT creative industries
precinct**

inbetweenspaces
www.inbetweenspaces.org

 **Queensland Government**
Arts Queensland

This project has received financial assistance from the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

Public Programs
supported by  **BAULDERSTONE**

Published by QUT Precincts
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Qld 4000 Australia

© Queensland University of Technology 2012
All images and text reproduced by permission
CRICOS No. 00213J