







Mish Meijers

Sprinting
towards
the
Sun.

June 11 - July 24 2022



Number twelve stopped on the block and sat down, waiting for an end.

I imagine that moment, the training which drags one past the absurdity of plunging headfirst into an unbroken surface. Gravity has a habit of pulling straight down, so the finessing, the self-determination really exists only in that initial jump off. Then wind resistance, your unconscious spasms and bodily protestations kick in, steering you further on or off course. What does it mean when you've been following a plan your whole life and suddenly pause? What happens to that potential which rings inside like a loaded spring? Does it bleed off like a steam pipe, intermittently into the atmosphere or does it internalise and start to combust?

I look up "How to vent.." and my screen is filled with pressure cookers and other accessories and I wonder at this idea of pressure. We understand it as something which effects in a way which feels like weight or resistance. But it's not always a load, or not necessarily a thing which one can perceive. Something which fills the room, which fills the lungs, which takes up all the available space. But what happens in the absence of pressure?

Sprinting towards the sun is a pause in action, bound, mutually dependent.

Ok, wait.

There are always two sides to this.

One half – *THE PAUSE* is the space which signifies the present. It is the moment before or after action. It is a reflection, a break in the relentless temporality of chronological time. A sideways shift, allowed by a reflective surface at the bottom of an abandoned pool. Perhaps it is the light, which brings to mind the setting or rising of the sun – that light which flattens every depth and paints form to surface in ways which disturbs the perception of space.

The pool is inhabited by a figure in a ghillie suit¹ sitting atop a displaced diving block, an anthropomorphised houseplant, and a wombat who all stare into the reflective void which has been exposed by a hole in the splintered pixels of the tiling. There is a curious serenity here, (even accompanied by a flashing video work which shows the sun bouncing in and out of frame) in this gridded, curved place. Like a diagram of the universe, gently curving at the weight of its occupant. Reminding us of gravity, reminding us that pauses have weight as well.

Recurring themes and motifs of Meijers' feature here, such as this image of the portal. Previously we have seen its use as a tool of immersion in the work *Keeping Vigil* (2011) where a sleeping figure by a campfire was surrounded by spinning meteors and overshadowed by a dark lumpy, slightly ominous growth. In *THE PAUSE* it reflects the camouflaged figure to itself, with a dilute kind of narcissism. This is not something happening in seclusion, the camouflage draws attention to the act of witnessing oneself in context.

In an age where everything we do is collated for the great surveillance gods, a refusal to be perceived is glaring in its intent. More than that, as the system itself sells us this idea of *contribution*, that we are feeding some grand utopia fuelled by the commodification of identity politics. It is a system which provides for contradiction as long as it still participates. One might contribute, or one might revolt but it is not an option to withdraw. Threats of a "lack of representation" are raised as a means of holding this content provision hostage. So, the refusal to contribute to this bright new world we exist in, where its very structure "requires a continuous approximation to total information as the ideal condition for machine intelligence" (Zuboff 399) is the only possible response.

1 A Ghillie suit is used to camouflage into the natural environment. Used traditionally by hunters and snipers, it looks like an outfit covered in drab woolen hair, lightweight enough to move with the wind and replicate the movement of foliage. The word "ghillie" is derived from the Scottish Gaelic for "young man or older boy" who would help hunters on the field. There is also some reference to Earth Spirits in Scottish mythology.



The only act left which does not require participation.

“The aim in this new phase is the comprehensive visibility, coordination, confluence, control and harmonisation of social processes in the pursuit of scale, scope and action...The result is the application of instrumentarian power to societal optimisation for the sake of market objectives: a utopia of certainty.” (399)
In other words, our world now is built largely by levels of knowledge which have been specifically curated for our consumption by machines that we have trained by using these systems. It’s almost laughable to complain against a structure that we have provided the building blocks for, but we thought we were just posting pictures of cats to our friends.

Information is the currency of now, and we are producing more and more of it with fanatical devotion. Information has recently been afforded a physical statehood. Alongside gases, liquids, solids and plasma, we have acquired a new, fifth state of matter. According to the scientist Melvin Vopson who discovered it, one terabyte of information is about equal to one photon in mass. Our machine-learning machines are suddenly not as abstract as we thought. Hoarding and exchanging tiny bits of information feels different when you consider them to have some sort of weight. Some material presence. Information itself, and its commodification start to feel like things we can gain or mostly, lose.

THE PAUSE provides a subtlety which attempts to nourish the self while avoiding the now monopolised commons of the digital landscape. It envelops a handful of tiny paintings and sculptures which reference events and protests that have occurred in defence of our planet’s welfare. It composes them in abstracted blobs of colour which act as memory triggers rather than transparent representations. Still here, is the desire for opacity, for a “queer opacity [which] operates as a tactical evasion of the gaze of digital machines, like drones and biometric systems, but also accounts for the specificities of subjects – and their particular relationalities of concealment and visibility.” (Blas 150)

Meijers' installations are quite often opaque, their truer nature undisclosed, and used as subtle redirection. In *Calling Occupants* (2014) the back of an ornately painted courier van was filled with a meditative sand garden. The sort that one sees on the desks of sociopathic businessmen who use them to endlessly rake repetitive patterns as a means of not throwing themselves from the window. In *Occupants* it surrounded a scale model of the Arecibo observatory antenna and acted as the nexus of communication of which Meijers is so fond – that of broadcasting out and away to an unknown and hopefully receptive audience. Imbuing those transmissions with a desire for solutions for a world which no longer has the capability to imagine them.

THE PAUSE brings to my mind those failed property developments in inhospitable places – the edge of the desert, forests, places where the boundaries between worlds are blurry, and where nature is quick to reclaim what we no longer undertake the ritual of taming. Trees growing through windows, holes in rooves letting the birds and more in. The empty pools filling with dust and leaves. A rapid decay, mapping where the money went, or where it departed from. A picturesque failure of colonisation, of our inability to blend and live with nature.

Opposite *THE PAUSE* is *THE ACT*.

A room filled with the carnage and fury of an angry planet, manifested through hybrid post-human figures which make up a kind of Greek chorus, surrounded by objects of significance. This is *THE ACT*, and here the mask of opacity lies bleeding and is transfused by Myth. Edouard Glissant discussed the nature of myth as the “first state of a still naïve historical consciousness, and the raw material for the project of a literature.” (71) The chorus recites a seemingly endless rendition of an Instagram scroll.

This broadcast fills the space with its affected robotic voices and casts a dark light. The idea of this expansive stream becoming a future artifact which represents our collective existence is horrifying in its banality. “Myth disguises while conferring meaning, obscures and brings to light, mystifies as well as





clarifies and intensifies which emerges, fixed in time and space between men and their world. It explores the known-unknown” (71.) In this instance, the known-unknown is this heavily self-censored and machine-curated testament to the shortness of our attention spans, the impermanence of our diminishing memory.

The chant follows the pattern of algorithms with little regard to a tonal outcome. As more of our reality is governed by machine thinking, of information being thrown into a mythical pot before resolving into machine logic, I can't help but think on the nature of that vessel which holds so much of our collective information. The internet has come to underpin almost all of our common interactions, has become a vast many-headed body which speaks with a multitude of conflicting tongues. “The idea of the body as a vessel is a powerful image, one that relies on a metaphor of containment, which appears to play a key role in organising our understandings of self and subjectivity.” (Crossland, 398)

If information is actually embedded into the DNA of everything then this “virtual” network cradles a mystical soup, the parts of our sum. If “metaphors of containment are fundamental organising properties of experience, growing out of our material engagement of the world.” (398) then the newfound materiality of Information begins to take on a further significance.

These ideas of *containment* are derived from current research by archaeologists into theories of materiality and embodiment. I wonder at the importance of objects to humans (and some non-humans) as extensions of the self, particularly with regard to totemic or significant objects. In the 17th Century in Britain, they discovered an enormous amount of “Witch pots” whose contents were often taken from the body and from the surrounding land, and bound to another's bodily fluids and ephemera, contained within one singular vessel. “The concept of the *distributed person* allows an extension of the concept of embodiment so that it does not rest upon a bounded and naturalised physicality, or indeed assume a unified and bounded sense of self, but can be expressed through materials that are distributed and circulated away from the body.” (Crossland 392 emphasis mine)

The inclusion of information into our material world is an interesting one, particularly in regard to this common pool. Where witch pots were used to bind known people together and form a connection of mutual dependency, our network is inhabited by accounts, not people. Quite often anonymous, quite often fragmented across multiple platforms and multiple accounts, often commercially driven. How this binds us collectively is yet to be fully comprehended, but in Meijers' world certainly there is an importance in the identification of the parts which configure the whole.

Her objects dot this intimate landscape and are almost incomprehensible, but we intuit within them, a sense of the body, a sense of geology and plant matter, of the other non-human material with which we share this physical plane. Receptacles of memory, bound with the responsibility of the witness, in the absence of effective action, to at least attest.

“An Object which is recollected, in the proper sense of the term, is one which has been absent from consciousness altogether, and now revives anew. It is brought back, recalled, fished up, so to speak, from a reservoir in which, with countless other objects, it lay buried and lost from view. But an object of primary memory is not thus brought back; it was never lost; its date was never cut off in consciousness from that of the immediately present moment. In fact, it comes to us as belonging to the rearward portion of the present space of time, and not to the genuine past.” (qtd in Wolf, 18)

Our technologically driven world no longer has a past. It has infinite streams of Present which we circle like birds of prey, recycling information and losing our sense of chronology. *THE ACT* provides another kind of *soothing*. Bathed in its golden light and its frozen time, on the verge of some environmental catastrophe, it also provides another kind of pause. The pause of being receptive, of encountering the familiar. Of becoming distributed and circulating far from the core.

Sprinting towards the sun is a torrent in a cavern, a volcano roaring into the night sky, an oncoming surge which streams towards us relentlessly. But it is also a rapid shallow breath beneath a pillow, the cool touch of tile on cheek, the silence of the interior. It is of us, but it is of everything else as well.

Tricky Walsh.

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BIO

Mish Meijers is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice experiments in surface tensions: how one material conforms or abrades against the matter of another. Whether in actuality, or within conceptual content, she distorts the inherent worth and significance of her objects with regard to popular culture, gender determination and functionality, in an alchemic and at times discordant sensibility.

Meijers uses installation, sculpture, drawing, painting, digital media, performance, and ceramics to translate and communicate her current concerns and interests. She divides her time between a distinct solo and an ongoing collaborative practice. The Collector Project now in its thirteenth year is collaboration with artist Tricky Walsh and is based on a fictional character Henri Papin.

Meijers has been a finalist in the following; Hutchins Art prize, Fishers Ghost, Hobart Art Prize, The Substation, The Paul Guest drawing prize, Tidal, The Churchie Prize and the Glover prize. She has been a recipient of numerous Australia Council and Arts Tasmania grants.

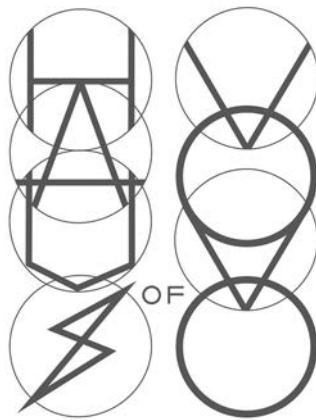
She has exhibited widely in Australia in various exhibition structures that include artist run initiative galleries, public and commercial galleries. She has held residencies and exhibited in New York, Indonesia and in Paris. She was awarded a Qantas Foundation Art Encouragement award and was commissioned by Gertrude Contemporary Gallery, Monash University Museum of Art and Detached Cultural Organisation to create new works for The Collector project.

Meijers work is held in public and private collections, she is represented by Bett Gallery.

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