

move



Chris Bennie

October 4 - 19

thehold

This exhibition catalogue documents *Move* a solo exhibition by Chris Bennie held at The Hold Artspace.

Move opened on 4 October 2013 and continued until 19 October 2013.

Front cover

Primary, 2013

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Sand Pumping (to advance and/or abate) from the *Methods to Repair a Caravan* series, 2013

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The Kissing Swans, 2013



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The Missing Semester



pause

reflections on *Move*

by Kylie Spear

Our inability to accurately communicate our unique and subjective experiences to others is an issue many artists and academics have attempted to deal with. While problematic, the need to explore and represent the profound possibilities of everyday occurrences remains relevant. Edmund Husserl¹ uses the term 'first sense' to describe those immediate and personal responses we have to events occurring around us, before we have a chance to analyse them. These reflexive thoughts and behaviours soon become contaminated by dominant societal structures, as explored by theorists such as Guy Debord² and Jean Baudrillard³. Our immediate experiential responses therefore retain a sense of authenticity, as they are devoid of outside influence.

Chris Bennie is a new-media artist who attempts to draw our attention back to possibility of authentic experience. Bennie's works are many things; playful, romantic and banal all at once. While spontaneously captured, Bennie's video, photographic and sculptural works are edited with a great deal of consideration. Countless hours of footage are carefully refined in order to thoroughly reconsider the possibilities of everyday objects and experiences.

As the name of his solo exhibition at *The Hold Artspace* implies, Bennie's most recent body of work explores the transcendent qualities of movement. This includes bodily gestures, the progression of time, concepts of dislocation, and the transformation of objects no longer considered useful. Such objects included a flood-damaged caravan that the artist salvaged from Bundaberg after the devastating 2013 natural disaster. The caravan formed somewhat of a motif for *Move*, presenting itself in photographs, videos, and as a sculpture in a park opposite the gallery. This exhibition also acted as a type of self-portrait for Bennie. While he was not always present in each of the works, the artist stated that this exhibition managed to capture a relatively accurate portrayal of himself - his lifestyle, as well as his present ideas and concerns - at a particular moment in time.

A work that illustrates this is *Familial Matter* (2013). This video documents Bennie opening a package he received from his family based in New Zealand. His mother periodically sends small parcels containing family photographs, as well as postcards with famous artworks on the front that she assumes her 'artist son' will appreciate⁴. This time-based work takes the form of a moving collage, as we watch Bennie's hands tack each object from the package to his studio wall, progressively layering and altering its composition. This video can be described as a mediated self-portrait; created by the specific selection of objects from someone close to, yet separate from the artist. By transforming this simple communication between family members into a video artwork, Bennie exposes some of the unique intimacies shared between mother and son.







Track and Field Meditation (2013) was captured during a group training session at the University of Queensland running track. The majority of the video depicts this group of men lying stationary in savasana - a traditional yoga pose for relaxation - while we watch the movements of other athletes in the background. After several minutes the individuals begin to wake up and notice the patches of sweat underneath them. The artist races to the camera - which was placed on a tripod - and starts to hand-film the sweaty marks. Resembling an Yves Klein *Anthropometry* work, these sweat patches subtly reference and critique 1960's performance art. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, this time-based work forces a slowing of perception. Projected in a purpose-built space in the gallery, the scales of the bodies in the video were life-size. On one quiet afternoon at the gallery, I even lay down at the base of the projection to join in the group meditation. While experienced through representation, this spontaneous work revealed the existential possibilities of the everyday, providing one pays close attention to the opportunities presented in the moment.

While Bennie's video works look conceptually at authentic experience, they are somewhat limited in their capacity to elicit the reality being filmed to the video's audience. This medium, while preserving real-time movements and responses, can only ever translate experience by way of representation. While Bennie's video works successfully isolate and heighten the extraordinary in mundane daily activities, his recent exploration into site-specific sculpture such as *The Kissing Swans* have allowed his audiences to take a step closer to experiencing Bennie's idea of authenticity first-hand.



While walking to work at *The Hold Artspace* one morning, I noticed familiar loud thumping noise; unmistakably the sound of someone banging on a domestic pot with wooden spoon. As I was still one hundred metres or so away from the gallery, I assumed the sound must have been coming from one of the many houses around me. The sound continued to become louder as I approached the gallery, and still unable to pinpoint the origin of the noise, I realised it was coming from the caravan across the road from the hold, in Davies Park. This work, for me, managed to penetrate and alter my daily experience of walking to work.

Of course each individual's experience of this sculptural piece will be different; some may have seen it at Currumbin during the *Swell Sculpture Festival*, or during the exhibition at *The Hold*, or other locations around Australia. The physicality and site-specificity of this work aids in its ability to elicit authentic experience, away from the generic white walls of the gallery. The video and audio components of *The Kissing Swans* work in unison with the architecture of the caravan, allowing viewers to feel as if they are looking in on something private, something happening in real time. While still presenting actions that have been recorded previously through audio visual technologies, when combined with the flood-damaged vehicle - it's rust, the smell of petrol from the generator, the heat of the metal when you leant up against it - allows for a multi-sensory experience that may not be possible in other environments.



This page: *The Kissing Swans* (detail, video still), 2013

Next page: *The Bewildered Scot (you've got to be kidding)*
from the *Methods to Repair a Caravan* series





While time-based media such as video and audio provide Bennie with a successful means to capture and translate experience, his photographic series in *Move* managed to retain the sense of authenticity and spontaneity present in the rest of the exhibition. The artist, his girlfriend and a cast of dogs featured in this series, where small two-dimensional cutouts of caravans were held up against various coastal backgrounds in a type of photographic collage. These playful images were hung in an almost domestic fashion, mirroring the steps at the entrance of the gallery. These experimental and almost comical photographs were perhaps able to capture what the video works were not able to; that immediate, pre-cognitive and authentic response to the moment.

Move did not attempt to solve the problem of communicating subjective experience to art audiences. However, through video, audio and sculptural works, Bennie was able to assist in the facilitation of unique viewer experiences. My encounters with this exhibition - such as my walk to work and afternoon meditation session - attest to this.



¹ Husserl, E 1977, Phenomenological psychology: lectures, summer series, trans. J Scanlan, Mertinus Nijhoff, The Hague.

² Debord, G 2000, Society of the spectacle, Black & Red publishing.

³ Baudrillard, J 1970, The Consumer Society, Sage Publications, London.

⁴ Bennie, C 2013, pers. comm.

