

# Signature Style

Curated by Nella Themelios and Kim Brockett



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## About this Education Resource

This education resource is intended for use as a starting point to generate discussion and activities before, during and after a visit to *Signature Style*. It is designed to be used in conjunction with information provided in the exhibition catalogue, gallery wall texts and on the NETS Victoria website. The resource includes an introduction to the exhibition, definitions of key terms, collaboration profiles, suggested points for discussion, activities for students, and references for further research. Teachers may select relevant aspects of this resource to tailor their own response sheet for use in the exhibition.

## Planning your visit

Before visiting *Signature Style* it is suggested that you contact gallery staff to determine the following:

- Opening hours, transport and parking options, cloakroom facilities and admission fees
- Suitability of content for the year level you intend to bring
- Staff availability for introductory talks and tours
- Education and Public Programs, artist talks etc. that coincide with the exhibition

Before your visit you may wish to discuss the following with your students:

- An introduction to issues of collaboration in art (see this resource – Introduction)
- Your expectations for appropriate behaviour at a gallery, in regards to the safety of both students and artworks, and given that a gallery is a public space

## Curriculum links and themes

Use this list to generate ideas, activities and points for discussion, and where possible contact your local gallery for other ideas and suggestions. Because so many artists were involved in *Signature Style*, it has relevance across a broad range of arts subjects including **jewellery, music, fashion, film, art and performance**. Issues of collaboration are relevant to all curriculum areas due to the current curriculum focus on cross-disciplinary learning. These collaborations model a variety of different approaches that would be useful to study for any teacher or student involved in collaborative projects. **Exhibition design** is an important aspect of *Signature Style* with different members of the exhibition team collaborating to create a consistent feel across all aspects of the exhibition design. Exhibition design is especially relevant to students of VCE Unit 4, Studio Arts. It is highly recommended for year 12 students, but would be very useful for year 11 Studio Arts students as an introduction, in preparation for year 12. However this exhibition is relevant to all art students. This document is designed to be used by students at VELS levels 5 and 6, and VCE Units 1-4, however the material may be easily tailored to suit younger students.

Throughout the text, artists, groups and organisations are highlighted in bold to suggest starting points for further research.

### VISUAL/CREATIVE/STUDIO ARTS (DOMAIN: DISCIPLINARY LEARNING)

- Methods and consideration involved in the exhibition design
- Artists' practice, ideas and inspiration
- Responding to artworks: formal analysis and interpreting meanings and messages
- Exploring artists' personal and cultural perspectives
- Exploring symbols and metaphors expressed in artworks
- Exploring possibilities for materials, processes and techniques

### CAREER PATHWAYS IN THE ART INDUSTRY (DOMAIN: PHYSICAL, PERSONAL AND SOCIAL LEARNING)

- Throughout this resource there are examples of study pathways and professional experience that can be instructive in developing ideas for career pathways for students in a variety of disciplines
- Collaborative processes are also relevant to this specific Domain of Physical, Personal and Social Learning



# Introduction

## THE CURATORS

The underlying concept of *Signature Style* is **collaboration**. The outcome of the project (the exhibition) is crucial of course, but also the project is very much about facilitating a process – the process of collaboration between practitioners of different disciplines. ‘**Craft**’ (formally Craft Victoria) is an organisation that has a history of developing collaborative exhibitions that aim to facilitate **cross-disciplinary** exchange. Examples include: in 2012 Anna Davern & Lucy James; Tai Snaith & Lucy James, Melinda Young & Lauren Simeoni. In 2011 BLESS & P.A.M, Jasmine Targett & Debbie Symons, Alexi Freeman & Tessa Blazey. In 2010 Natalia Milosz-Piekarska & Karla Way; Meredith Turnbull & Bridie Lunney; Nicholas Jones & Warren Harrison; Andrea Eckersley & Dell Stewart; Ricarda Bigolin & Michael Spooner.

The curators, Nella Themelios and Kim Brockett, met whilst working at Craft. They have worked together on several exhibitions at Craft – *Shoe Show*, 2009; *BLESS No 38 Windowgarden*, 2011; *Signature Style*, 2013-2014 and also independently on *Insert Coin Here*, 2010. They are both on the board of artist-run initiative **Bus Projects**. Nella used to work as the Curator at Craft, where her role was to work closely with the Artistic Director to develop and implement the annual exhibitions program. She now works at **RMIT Design Hub** as the Creative Producer. Her primary role is to oversee the production of the exhibitions and events that comprise the annual exhibitions calendar. Kim currently works at Craft as Project Coordinator. In addition to Kim’s work at Craft, she also maintains an independent curatorial practice focusing on contemporary visual art. She is the Associate Producer of *Fringe Furniture 2013*, a keynote exhibition of the Melbourne Fringe Festival and the Director’s Assistant at commercial gallery **Neon Parc**. Kim has a Bachelor of Arts in Art History & Cinema Studies from the University of Melbourne. In 2006 she began volunteering at Craft as a Gallery Assistant. In 2008 she joined the gallery professionally as an Administration Officer and began working on Craft’s public programs, projects and events.

Kim and Nella had noticed a growing interest in collaboration among various artists, and they felt that there was room for this method of working to be explored in the context of contemporary craft. They worked on the idea for the exhibition with a view to proposing it to National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Victoria. NETS is a government-funded organisation, which supports artists and curators to develop exhibitions to tour

to regional centres across Victoria and interstate. Collaboration, support and exchange are important NETS values and so the processes of collaboration are woven into the *Signature Style* project on a number of different levels. The curatorial process, the design process, the development of the exhibition tour, the making of the work itself, and even part of the funding for the project was derived through ‘crowd funding’ – a relatively recent development in the various options for funding arts and community projects. Members of the general public are invited to assist in the funding of projects through donating small amounts of money via a website. This is a significant shift away from the previously dominant model where artists rely on large government, commercial or philanthropic organisations to provide large sums of money for projects, to a more collaborative and community based model where the artists stimulate interest and engagement in the community, and individuals provide what they can afford to help support the project.

The title *Signature Style* comes from a quote from a book by Charles Green called *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism*. Green opens the book with the following statement:

*“Artists appear in their art, voluntarily placing themselves centre stage in self-portraits but also at the margins of all their other works, constructing themselves through brush marks, in signature style, by individual preferences, and through repeated motifs – in short, from the intersection of **subjectivity** with medium.”*

Traditionally an artwork has one author and the identity of that person is expressed physically (or materially) in the artwork in diverse obvious and less obvious ways – through their signature, the choices they make about subject matter, their individual perspective. Making work in collaboration with others throws a question mark over the meaning of individual gestures. Who is the artist?

# The Process

The curators decided to tackle three main questions in creating the *Signature Style* project. They wanted to find out:

- What is the status of collaboration within craft and design?
- How are practitioners operating across disciplines?
- In what ways does collaboration challenge or change modes of working?

The idea was to facilitate collaborations between contemporary jewellers and artists of other disciplines. The starting point was to select ten jewellers to be involved in the project. The curators selected them from practitioners who had exhibited at Craft or who had displayed their work in the Craft shop. The selected jewellers were asked to nominate another artist to work with from any discipline – they selected their collaborators from various fields: fine art, sound/music, dance, film, and fashion. A total of twenty-five artists collaborated on *Signature Style*.

The artists worked on the show for over a year, so they were able to refine their work, ideas and presentation. There were four meetings between the curators and the artists during the development period, otherwise the structure and methods of the collaboration process was entirely up to the artists.

## EXHIBITION DESIGN

The design of the exhibition, the physical elements of display and the catalogue design are all integral to the exhibition and form part of the larger collaboration that creates the overall look and feel of the show. There is a consistency of aesthetic ideas across the catalogue, the exhibition signage and the furniture design, which unifies the exhibition, providing a coherent context for works that springs from many diverse practices.

Catalogue designer Simon Browne wanted to provide an alternative to the idea that the catalogue should be simply a document of the finished work in the exhibition – he wanted the *Signature Style* catalogue to have the feel of a workbook – to express something about the process of collaboration. The participating artists were asked to document their development process, through drawings, photographs, transcripts of email exchanges, video, sound files, and any other material generated during the collaboration. Selections of this material are included as part of the catalogue design. The colours chosen for the design – red and blue

merging into purple in the centre of the page, represent two individual elements merging into one to create a third new element. The merging of red and blue also represent 3D glasses, using two perspectives to create greater depth.

The exhibition designer is Erik North. He works as Exhibition Technician at RMIT Design Hub and was formerly the Exhibition Designer at Craft. He has worked with The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Craft and Greer Honeywill. North also maintains an independent practice through his studio LEV. He has designed the *Signature Style* furniture – the tables upon which the work is displayed – to be collapsible so that they can accompany the exhibition while on tour – this makes them an integral part of the exhibition itself. The tall, thin blue struts of the table legs are reminiscent of a forest, and the colour is matched to the thematic colours of the exhibition design – red and blue.

## COLLABORATION

Collaboration – working together on the same project or goal – can occur in many different ways. Some creative areas, usually performative ones, always involve collaboration: theatre, music and film often involve many individuals working towards the same outcome. Often there are distinct roles taken up by individuals, e.g. the director, the writer, the designer, the composer, the performer. In visual arts and crafts the process is different, and the roles are not distinct. In this case collaboration involves more than one person working on the same element of the project – the final artwork. In the introduction to the *Signature Style* catalogue, Georgia Cribb, Director of NETS Victoria, describes the processes of collaboration as requiring ‘dialogue, negotiation and compromise’. This means discussing ideas and impulses, and also being prepared to be flexible, understanding when to adjust or modify your own ideas. The artists in *Signature Style* expressed their collaboration in a number of different forms; some worked on the project only together, some exchanged ideas in written form, some had many conversations, some based their work on previous ideas, some tackled new themes. There are a number of historical examples of collaboration in the arts, but what is particular about the collaborations in *Signature Style* is that they happen between artists from different disciplines. This is cross-disciplinary collaboration.

## Themes for discussion

- Think about ways that you already collaborate in your work or creative projects.
- How do you make decisions in collaboration with other people?
- Brainstorm all the different ways that collaboration could occur. How many can you come up with?
- In which areas of life is collaboration most important?
- What are some of the problems of collaboration?
- How would you overcome them?
- Can you think of alternative ways of overcoming these problems?
- What do you think the different outcomes would be according to the different choices that the collaborators make?
- How do you think that new technologies and social media can assist with processes of collaboration?
- Jewellery exists by definition in relationship to the human body. What other sorts of body adornments can you think of?

### ACTIVITIES

- Research some historical examples of collaboration – you could start by researching the Fluxus movement of the 1960s.
- See if you can find some interesting examples of cross-disciplinary collaboration between, for example, art and science.
- Research **The Association of Collaboration** and list the different ways that this organisation has documented collaborative processes.
- What sort of artists or non-artists would you like to collaborate with?
- Plan a collaborative project of your own with your chosen people. Imagine the different ways that you could document your process.
- If it is practical, undertake the project. If your planned project is not practical, think of how you can adjust it to make it actually achievable. Do it!

### KEY TERMS

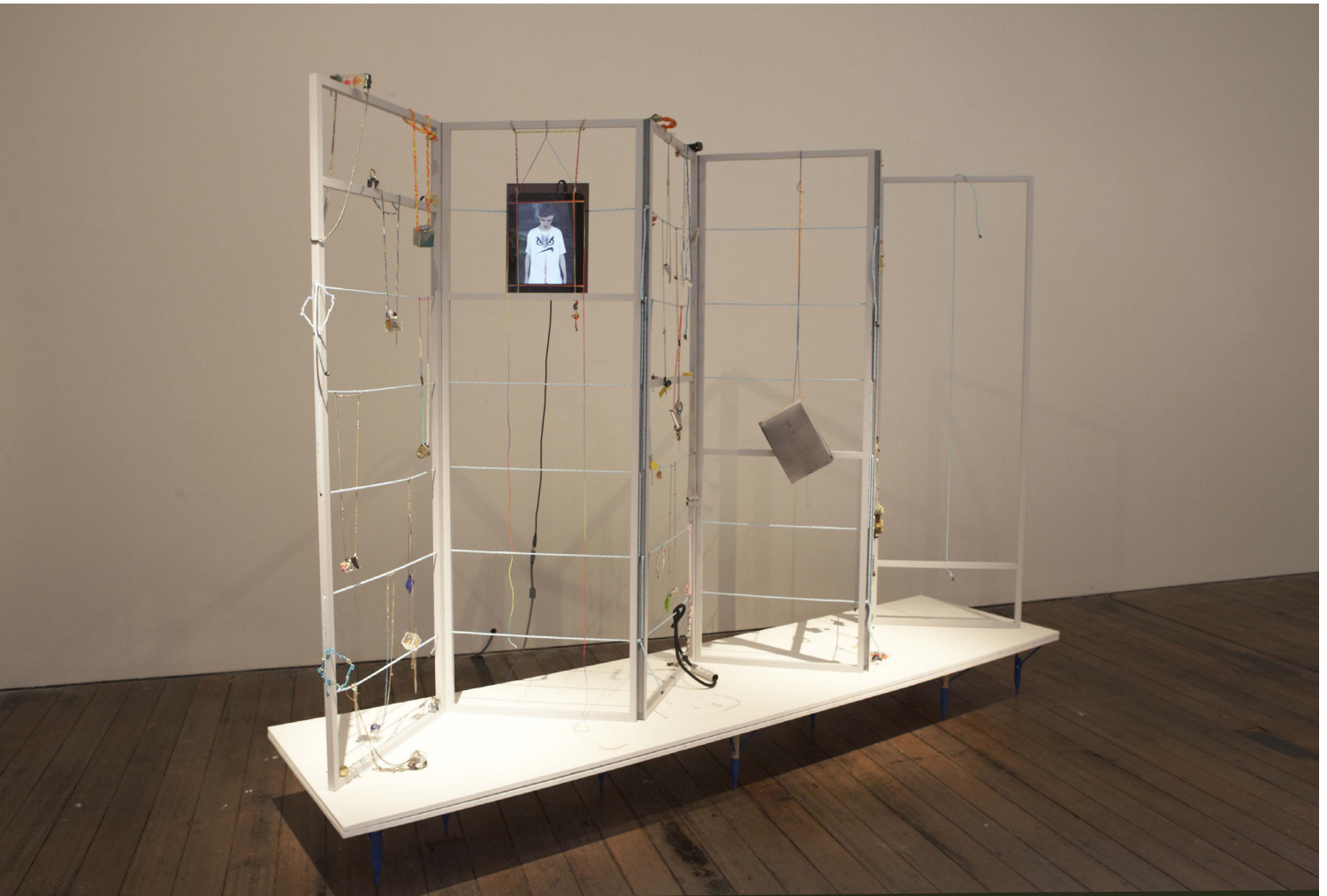
**Collaboration:** Working with each other to complete a task. It is a process where two or more people or organisations work together to realise shared goals, by sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus.

**Cross-disciplinary:** Projects or works that involve individuals from different disciplines or areas of study working together. This can be from various disciplines from within the Arts, such as film and visual art, or dance and sculpture, or it can be from completely different areas of study, for example, visual art and science.

**Subjectivity:** Judgment based on an individual's personal impressions and feelings and opinions rather than external facts. **Subjectivity** is a term used to refer to the subject's perspective, experiences, feelings, beliefs and desires. The term is usually contrasted with **objectivity**, which is used to describe humans as 'seeing' the universe exactly for what it is from a standpoint free from the influences of human perception. Subjectivity is shaped by things like culture, history, personal experience, the economy, political institutions, communities, as well as the natural world.

A **vernacular:** The native language or dialect of a specific population or community, as opposed to a language of wider communication such as a national language, standard language, or lingua franca. Dan Bell uses this term to refer to our common understanding of objects and what they mean to us as a community.





1. Dan Bell and Nathan Gray,  
Bianca Hester, Christopher LG Hill,  
Liang Luscombe, Charlie Sofo and  
Oliver van der Lugt (*Untitled* 2013)

Dan Bell has used the process of collaboration to open up a conversation about wearable objects, exploring the many ways objects are used as a vernacular language – a common language between a particular set of individuals. Collaborating with several artists at once, Bell has produced a set of objects specific to each relationship. Using processes such as melting, surface treatment and encrustation on found objects, Bell has used the wearable forms he has created to question traditional ideas of value. He has used materials that are commonplace, imbuing them with a sense of value by making them into jewellery. Bell explores the performativity of objects – how they change when they are worn on the body, or ‘performed’, in contrast to how they function as static artefacts when they are not being worn.

Dan Bell and Nathan Gray, Bianca Hester, Christopher LG Hill,  
Liang Luscombe, Charlie Sofo and Oliver van der Lugt  
*Untitled* 2012-2013  
wood, rope, glue, paint, plastic, chain, cotton, aluminium,  
polymer clay, vinyl, stainless steel, enamel, resin, glass, silver,  
phosphorescent pigments, HD video, paper, earrings, various  
found objects and other mixed media  
Video credit: Oliver van der Lugt and Dan Bell  
Courtesy the artists



## THE COLLABORATION:

Installation artist and jeweller Dan Bell chose six of his friends and colleagues to collaborate with, to maximise the possibilities for exploration across different approaches to making work, to help him reflect on his own approach to work or 'modes of making'. He selected people that had similar or 'sympathetic' approach to ideas and materials. The structure that supports all the individual works was created in collaboration Charlie Sofo and explores their shared interest in framing devices and how the aesthetics of framing or 'casing' influences how work is viewed. It also helps to create consistency when the work is on tour and to differentiate each of the collaborations. Dan has collaborated with each of the six other artists individually, rather than attempting to achieve a collaboration between all six artists.

The first collaboration was with Liang Luscombe and was influenced by the work of Brazilian artist **Hélio Oiticica** (1937–1980) in the mid sixties when the artist experimented with exhibiting dry pigments in vessels, and later work by Australian artist **John Nixon** (b. 1949), whose work explores loose objects inside various framing devices. Luscombe created small objects and Bell adapted them into wearable forms in small vessels.

The second collaboration with Oliver van der Lugt takes the form of a film presented on a tablet that hangs on the supporting frame. The film is based on previous work that Oliver had done on energy drinks. The cans have become wearable and are performed, as smoke eerily rises from them.

Bianca Hester and Dan Bell share an interest in similar materials, those that are ephemeral and 'throw away'. They have been in a group show together and so their collaboration continues an on-going conversation about materials and their symbolic value.

Nathan Gray performed actions from his notebook of scores. He and Bell are both part of the **Scratch Ensemble** which re-interprets **Cornelius Cardew's Scratch Manifesto** music. From Nathan's scores the artists created actions using jewellery at the base object. The 'score' is not like a traditional music score, however it is in the form of a booklet that asks the performer to do various simple actions, for example (referring to a piece of jewellery) "press it into your skin until it leaves an impression".

Christopher LG Hill and Dan Bell explored how jewellery acts as conversational dialogue. Bell took objects that had been used by Hill in previous installation projects and adapted them into wearable objects.

The outcome of the various collaborations was that Bell was able to open out a range of different approaches and dialogues about jewellery making, seen through the prism of his own practice, and how it can adapt and change through different contexts.

## Biographies

### DAN BELL

Dan Bell studied at Canberra School of Art, Australian National University, and completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 2006. Recent exhibitions include *Alluvial Atomiser*, Rice and Beans, Dunedin, New Zealand 2011, *Pwdre slurr*, Y3K Gallery, Melbourne 2010 and *Tectonic Shivering*, TCB art inc., Melbourne 2009. Group shows include *Pretty Air and Useful Things* at Monash University Museum of Art, 2012.

### NATHAN GRAY

Nathan Gray is an artist and experimental musician. He completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Curtin University, Perth and a Postgraduate Diploma in Electronic Design and Interactive Media at RMIT University. He has exhibited extensively across Australia and abroad. Gray completed a studio residency at Gertrude Contemporary from 2008-2010 and a residency at Sacatar Foundation in Bahia, Brazil in 2008. Gray is a member of the improvised electro-acoustic group Snawklor and band The French.

### BIANCA HESTER

Hester recently completed a PhD by project in sculpture at RMIT University. She was a founding member of **CLUBSproject Inc** (2002-2007), a member of OSW and coordinates the second year program in the department of Sculpture and Spatial Practice at the Victorian College of the Arts. Recent exhibitions have been held at The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (2010), Sarah Scout Presents (2011), and The Narrows (2009).

### LIANG LUSCOMBE

Liang Luscombe is an artist, curator and writer. She completed a Bachelor of Visual Art (Hons) in 2009 at Canberra School of Art, Australian National University. She has since shown in group and solo exhibitions across Australia. In 2012 she co-edited issues 6.1 and 6.2 of *un Magazine*, alongside Lisa Radford.

### CHARLIE SOFO

Charlie Sofo works across a range of media, using actions such as walking, mapping, noticing, collecting and arranging in his practice. He often uses mundane and underwhelming objects acquired during his explorations of the suburban lands of Melbourne. Sofo investigates consumption and consumerism in everyday life.

### OLIVER VAN DER LUGT

Originally from New Zealand, Oliver van der Lugt is an artist working across a range of materials and techniques. He completed his Bachelor of Fine Art at Dunedin School of Art, New Zealand in 2010. He has since participated in group and solo exhibitions in Melbourne, Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Berlin.

### CHRISTOPHER LG HILL

Christopher LG Hill's practice takes the form of extended collage in sound, text and installation, as well as the shifting sands of surface and conversations in paint, object, movement and grammar. He has been involved in numerous projects (see *Signature Style Catalogue* for full details).



## EXPLORING AND RESPONDING

*(Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussions or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)*

- Dan Bell has chosen to work with six other artists instead of one. How has that affected the final resulting work? Make a comparison between this work and the others in *Signature Style* with a particular focus on this aspect of the project.
- Do you think that Dan Bell's framing solution for his works is successful? Explain why?
- Research the work of **The Scratch Ensemble**, **Cornelius Cardew** and **The Scratch Orchestra**
- In what way is Dan Bell's collaboration similar or different to the other artists in the exhibition?
- What adjectives would you use to describe the film made by Dan Bell with Oliver van der Lugt?

## CREATING AND MAKING

- Plan a collaborative project with 4-8 people. Discuss the different ways that you could go about the collaboration.
- List the materials used in the collaboration between Dan Bell and Bianca Hester. What interesting and unusual materials can you find to make jewellery?
- Experiment with different ways that you can make your materials wearable.

## VCE ART/STUDIO ART

- How would you approach a formal analysis of Dan Bell's completed collaborative work for *Signature Style*? What formal elements would you discuss?
- Discuss the meanings and messages implied by wearing an energy drink can as jewellery? What are the cultural references? What is the meaning of a smoking energy drink can?

Bianca Hester

*Please leave these windows open overnight to enable the fans to draw in cool air during the early hours of the morning*

(install shot) 2009

mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Gallery





## 2. Karla Way and Dylan Martorell (*cosmic elevator* 2013)

Jeweller Karla Way invited music/sound/visual artist Dylan Martorell to work with her on the *Signature Style* project because of their friendship, but also because of she liked Martorell's playful, almost scatological approach to making work, his 'bowerbird aesthetic'. Martorell is interested in human rituals from diverse communities all around the world. Consequently, the human body, costume and adornment are central concerns in his work. Karla Way had worked previously with Martorell with his experimental music group **Hi God People**.

Karla Way & Dylan Martorell  
*cosmic elevator* 2013  
Found objects, mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Sound: Karla Way & Dylan Martorell  
Courtesy the artists  
Photography Marc Morel



## THE COLLABORATION:

Karla wanted to engage with a playful approach to making work. She wanted to keep the connection with the human body that is fundamental to jewellery making, but was interested in working on a different scale, bigger than she was accustomed to, and in experimenting with non-traditional materials.

The team began their discussion with some 'lofty ideals'. They intended to make instruments that were wearable as costume, and film and record people performing them. However both the collaborators were busy with other projects, and found that time constraints meant that the project became simplified over time. Due to their shared concerns the figure was a central image in the work. They incorporated the form of a stretcher, to increase the portability of the work. They collected all kinds of found materials to work with, to adorn their figure, and the materials themselves began to dictate the way that the work evolved. Because of the limited time the artists had to spend with each other, Karla describes the process as incorporating 'very little talking – it was all about action!' She was very clear that she wanted the finished work to be something that had been created by the artists working very much alongside each other, not from two separate elements coming together.

## KARLA WAY

Karla Way is a Melbourne-based jeweller. She began her studies at NMIT in Collingwood in 2001, and went on to complete a Bachelor of Fine Art with Honours in Gold and Silversmithing at RMIT University in 2008. Her work was shortlisted for graduate awards such as *Fresh!* at Craft Victoria, Design Now at Sydney's Object Gallery and *Hatched* at PICA in Perth. Way has exhibited in Australia, the Netherlands and the USA.

## DYLAN MARTORELL

Artist and musician Dylan Martorell has been exhibiting and performing for over ten years. Music and sound from field recordings of ritualised performances play a major part in his multidisciplinary practice. Martorell has exhibited and performed extensively throughout Australia and overseas. He is also an illustrator and a member of the **Slow Art Collective** and of the experimental music group **Snawklor** alongside *Signature Style* artist Nathan Gray.

## EXPLORING AND RESPONDING

(Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussions or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)

- Observe the structure of the work *cosmic elevator*. Describe how it looks.
- What does it remind you of?
- Why do you think that the figure is lying horizontally – how would it affect the meaning of the work if the figure was standing up?
- How many different kinds of objects can you see in *cosmic elevator*?
- Research the work of **Hi God People**. How long have they been working together?
- What formal elements are at play in *cosmic elevator*? How has sound been used?
- Can you think of what different cultures the work might reference? What evidence is there for your theories?
- Discuss the use of colour in *cosmic elevator*.
- The work is influenced by the aesthetics of ritual. What sort of ritual do you think *cosmic elevator* is expressing?
- What do you think the title means?

## CREATING AND MAKING

- Dylan Martorell documents rituals in different cultures by recording the sounds they make. Create your own performance ritual to celebrate passing an exam at school, and think of different ways to document it.

## VCE ART/STUDIO ART

- Look at the way that the human figure is implied in *cosmic elevator*. The figure is implied in most of the works in *Signature Style*. Is it implied in every work? Make a comparison between the various ways that the figure is referenced throughout the exhibition.



### 3. Katherine Wheeler and Polly van der Glas (*The hand untitled* 2012-13)

Katherine Wheeler and Polly van der Glas are both jewellers and makers of sculptural objects. They have collaborated to create a group of sculptural jewellery objects and small vessels that contain or interact with the human hand. The concept of *the hand* represents the artists' shared interests and practices. They have made individual works that, when placed together, form relationships through materials, forms and colours, connecting them as one work. The materials used are often concealed, making their weight and texture hard to interpret without touching. The objects incite the viewer to hold, touch or wear them while simultaneously repelling any thoughts of placing them near the skin – they are both grotesque and delicate at the same time – making them fundamentally curious objects.

Both the artists live in Castlemaine and both were pregnant during the time they were working on *Signature Style*.

#### THE COLLABORATION:

Katherine Wheeler's work explores how humans influence nature and how nature responds to that influence through evolution or extinction. She makes creature-like vessels and jewellery, which evolve through experimentation, like the processes of nature, through growth, movement, and collage. She uses various materials including metals, porcelain and clay.

Wheeler invited Polly van der Glas to collaborate with her on the *Signature Style* project. Polly is a jeweller and sculptor. She uses organic materials that were once attached to the human body like teeth, hair, and sometimes fingernails – She is interested in making pieces that 'contain' the body – 'face bags' that surround the face like a mask, 'hand bags' that are literally bags for hands.

Their individual work intersects through a mutual interest in natural forms and forms or materials that are cast off or dead, like bones you might find on a beach, inferring a previous life or obscured history. These ideas became a springboard for their collaboration. Both artists use a muted palette in their work.

Their collaboration process began with a discussion about the overlap of ideas in their individual practices. They decided to base their project on the human hand, and to create a body of work where it was difficult to identify which artist had made which work. However, they did not make the works together, but worked individually in their own studios.

Polly wanted to make a series of gloves, but after experimenting with casting, she was drawn towards the forms of cast fingers. Katherine responded with an impulse to make environments for these forms, which reminded her of little creatures. They gathered the works together and assessed which ones worked better than others – they also looked for ways to connect some of the forms into single pieces that then truly become the work of both artists together. This was done in a spontaneous way, and was the aspect of the collaboration that the artists found most rewarding and enjoyable. The artists actively sought ways to find connections between their works and make work that shared a similar resonance.

### KATHERINE WHEELER

Katherine Wheeler completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Gold and Silversmithing at RMIT University in 2007, and a Diploma of Fine Arts at RMIT University in 2003. Wheeler has exhibited in Australia and internationally and has been represented by Charon Kransen Arts at SOFA Chicago and SOFA New York in 2012. In 2013 Wheeler was a finalist in the Cicely & Colin Rigg Contemporary Design Award at the National Gallery of Victoria.

### POLLY VAN DER GLAS

Polly van der Glas creates jewellery and objects. She completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Fashion at RMIT University, a Graduate Certificate in Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne, and an Advanced Diploma in Jewellery at NMIT. Her first collection of metal objects won the Craft Victoria *Fresh!* award in 2006. She creates jewellery under the label VAN DER GLAS, which is stocked nationally.

## EXPLORING AND RESPONDING

(Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussions or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)

- The sculptural forms in *The hand untitled* are reminiscent of natural forms. What do they remind you of?
- What would the physical sensations be of wearing these objects?
- How are the individual works arranged in relationship to each other? How could they have been arranged differently and how would that have affected the meaning of the artwork?
- What impression would it have given if the artists had chosen to work in bright colours?

## CREATING AND MAKING

- Imagine how you would wear some of these forms – make some drawings of someone wearing one of the pieces.
- Try casting your fingers and other organic forms in plaster. How can you combine these to create a sculpture?

## VCE ART/STUDIO ART

- Explore the meanings and messages that are expressed in *The hand untitled*.
- Partner up with someone in your class and discuss how you might undertake a collaborative project. Do you have ideas or themes in common? If you had to combine your works together, how would the meanings and messages in your work change?

### Image on previous page:

Katherine Wheeler and Polly van der Glas

*The hand untitled* 2012-13

Fine silver, sterling silver, copper, porcelain, leather, human hair, human teeth, thread, PVA, enamel paint, silver-plated bronze, patinated bronze, glass beads, paper, ink, 18ct gold-plated silver

Dimensions variable

Courtesy the artists





#### 4. Natalia Milosz-Piekarska and Katherine Doube (*Untitled* 2012-13)

Jeweller Natalia Milosz-Piekarska invited dancer Katherine Doube to collaborate with her on the *Signature Style* project. Natalia created a complex work to be worn on the shoulders like epaulets – shoulder decorations mostly seen in historical military uniforms. The piece is made of resin ‘scales’ or small ‘plates’ that are like fish scales, or because of their warm muted colours and surface decoration, reminiscent of an armadillo skin. It incorporates elongated forms that dangle from the shoulder. The various components create subtle visual and percussive possibilities when the wearer moves. Katherine Doube then created a dance piece to feature and respond to the epaulet jewellery piece. The dance work was filmed by Jeremy Flynn. The end result is that the jewellery and the choreography of the dance directly influence each other, in how they are viewed and interacted with – the lighting in the film also affects the end result.

#### THE COLLABORATION:

Below are extracts from correspondence between the artists, which demonstrate the way they explored ideas together, and brought their own perspectives to the collaborative project.

#### Dance inspiration reference links:

**Kat’s notes** - *(The main thing with the top 2 is the collaborative element. The dancers often end up wearing very unconventional items which ultimately enhance the overall piece. Once dancer in a Michael Clark piece nonchalantly wore about 10 toilet plungers!)*

#### Michael Clark (Scottish-born choreographer)

Collaboration with Lee Bowery/ strong leg work  
<http://www.michaelclarkcompany.com/>

#### Stephen Petronio (American choreographer)

Collaboration with artists and designers/playful/ forceful yet fun movement  
<http://stephenpetronio.com/>

Natalia Milosz-Piekarska and Katherine Doube  
*Untitled* 2012-13  
 resin, sterling silver, textile, timber, beads, sequins  
 Video: MP4, HD video  
 Duration: 2:42 minutes, looped  
 Production: Jeremy Flynn  
 Courtesy the artists



**Jiří Kylián (Czech-born choreographer).**

Contrasting movement/flow/isolation of body parts  
<http://www.ndt.nl/en/people/18>

**Random snippets of mail correspondence:**

Kat: "It may all change when I put your lovely gear on but I have a couple of ideas to run past you. It involves motion and it's going to have to be lit nicely, not too harsh. A lot of delicate slow mo close-ups of your piece/s, panning down. It's sort of 2 contrasting shots. One is slow and simple and the other one is a bit more erratic or floppy or something."

**1. Slow and simple:** "I'm sort of doing a slow motion dive down/contraction with the upper part of my body/ arms are neutral so the shoulder gear you're making might change angle as my head moves slowly towards the floor. To add another element to the gravitational pull on the jewellery, every few seconds I suddenly move my supporting knee so the piece shudders/flutter a bit. The camera might do a jump cut to my supporting knee or a pointed foot but the focus is on the upper torso where the piece is."

**2. Other/moving about/dancing/contrast:**

"Then this could be contrasted with something more vigorous. Shoulders rotating/flopping around, body freely dancing about/or intricate movements/ maybe reflecting properties of water or blah blah need to develop that haha."

"I may have a different idea tomorrow but I'm trying to think seriously about it."

"I also still think we should somehow record the sound of the stuff, like a chime, even if we contrive it. Worth a shot."

xxx K"

Nat: "So, I'm heading down the epaulette road for the first piece. A mixture of resin, silver and not sure what else. Thinking fish scales, layers, muted colours on top, flashes of colour hidden underneath."

"Here are some pics of epaulettes to give you an idea, but mine will be quite different."

"It will most likely be strapped under your arm, so it can be worn independently of clothing (though you will be clothed, somehow, don't worry). The components will be quite free to move, rather than rigid. At the moment I'm trying to figure out what the base will be, the part that fundamentally sits on the shoulder for all the scaly elements to attach onto. Initially I was thinking chain, but it will absorb a lot of the movement which will decrease the impact of movement on the scales. So I think the base needs to be a bit more rigid, maybe cast resin

components... not sure, thinking thinking..."

Kat: "Yeah you are so right about the absorption of movement. We need to capture it in slow motion or a series of photos ...or photos of slow motion hmm or something. Slow motion, shoulders, mega close-ups almost like a microscope. A microscopic slow motion image capture of mitochondria moving in fluid."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrS2uROUjK4>

Crazy dude! Might have to have some mega close ups and then wider shots. And something clever. Maybe creating an illusion at first and then the epaulette is revealed and marvelled over!

One of the nicest qualities in dance/ballet is Epaulement.

**Definition:** Epaulement refers to the positions of the shoulders, head and neck in ballet. In French, epaulement literally means "shouldering".

Epaulement is achieved by slightly twisting the torso, from the waist upwards, while tilting one shoulder slightly forward. Epaulement helps to give a dramatic, three-dimensional quality to a ballet dancer.

We can explore that when we have a mock-up."

**NATALIA MILOSZ-PIEKARSKA**

Natalia Milosz-Piekarska is a contemporary jeweller working with a variety of media and contexts. Completing a Bachelor of Fine Art in Gold and Silversmithing at RMIT University, she has exhibited her work both nationally and internationally. She received the British Council's Realise Your Dream travel grant and an Ian Potter Cultural Trust travel award.

**KATHERINE DOUBE**

Katherine Doube is an independent dancer who trained in ballet (Royal Academy of Dance) at the National Theatre in St Kilda, and in modern dance at Deakin University, The Place (London), Menagerie de Verre (Paris) and Merce Cunningham (New York). In 2012 Doube designed the movement for the fashion film Concrete shown as part of Vivid Sydney at the Museum of Contemporary Art. In 2013 she participated in a dance/design experiment at RMIT Design Hub with body architect Lucy McRae and choreographer Anthony Hamilton.

## EXPLORING AND RESPONDING

*(Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussions or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)*

- Make a list of adjectives to describe the nature of Katherine Doube's movements in the film of her choreography.
- How do her movements affect the interpretation of the work?
- How is the formal element of space addressed in this work?
- What is the impact of light in the work?

## CREATING AND MAKING

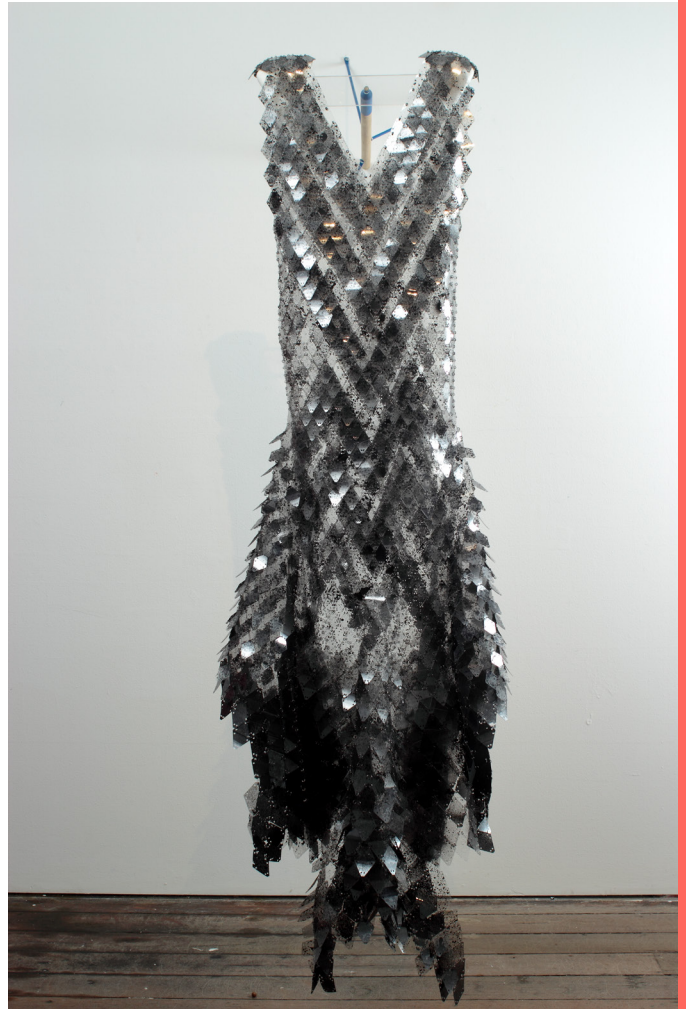
Think about body adornment for dance performance. Make some drawings of ideas for performance and related body adornment – costume or jewellery or a hybrid of both.

- Think of three pairings of costume and movement each with a distinct style. Make drawings or paintings or collages to express your ideas.

## VCE ART/STUDIO ART

Describe the cultural influences that are incorporated into the work by Natalia Milosz-Piekarska and Katherine Doube. What elements of the work describe its cultural context?

Image opposite:  
Tessa Blazey and Alexi Freeman  
*Gown of Shadows* 2012  
acetate, spray paint, base metal  
Courtesy the artists



## 5. Tessa Blazey and Alexi Freeman (Gown of Shadows 2012)

Tessa Blazey and Alexi Freeman have developed a garment which references medieval scale armour, science fiction and fantasy literature. The materials and processes they have used draw on contemporary and historical influences.

### THE COLLABORATION:

Tessa Blazey is a jeweller and Alexi Freeman is a fashion designer. They have collaborated before on three other projects, each time essentially creating dresses made from jewellery. Their familiarity with one another and their previous experience of collaborating meant that they were able to manage their time on the project effectively, ‘chipping away’ at the work over a period of time. For *Signature Style*, they took for their initial inspiration a shared obsession with the novel and TV series *Game of Thrones*, and their fascination with the costumes and armour. They identified a quote from the book by George R.R. Martin, to use as direct inspiration:

*“A shadow emerged from the dark of the wood, it stood in front of Royce. Tall it was, and gaunt and hard as old bones, with flesh as pale as milk. Its’ armour seemed to change colour as it moved. Here*

*it was white as fallen snow, there black as shadow. Everywhere dappled with the deep grey-green of the trees. The patterns ran like moonlight on the water with every step it took.”*

The artists’ aim was to recreate this fantasy image, combining the hardness of armour and the subtlety of shadows, in the form of a dress.

The inspiration of medieval armour was combined with inspiration from 1950s vintage ball gowns, but instead of using silk or chiffon to create the garment, Alexi suggested using acetate. The pair came up with a shape or ‘module’ for the acetate pieces, which was a small diamond shape that could create the effect of fish scales, or armour, by fitting together. The pieces were laser cut from large sheets of acetate – they also had holes in the sides so that they could be joined together with tiny wire rings. The artists spray-painted the acetate to create more of a shadowy effect, and then began the slow process of lifting all the pieces of acetate off the sheets and reconstructing them by hand in the form of a garment. They began by creating back and front panels on a flat surface, but once they had joined the panels together, they were able to work in a more sculptural, three-dimensional way. They did not use a pattern.

Because of the delicacy of the final work, the artists decided to document it in various ways before it became part of the *Signature Style* exhibition. They invited artist **Tolson Richter** to photograph it being worn by a model. He decided to use the fading art-deco grandeur of The Astor theatre in St Kilda as a location. They also invited a filmmaker to create a clip of a band performing with the lead singer wearing the Gown of Shadows. The inspiration for the film clip was the 1980s movie *Blue Velvet* by David Lynch starring Isabella Rossellini.

#### TESSA BLAZEY

Having studied Sculpture and Interior Design at RMIT University and Jewellery at NMIT Blazey now works exclusively as a jeweller from her Melbourne studio. Blazey has shown her work extensively, both nationally and internationally and is represented by **Pieces of Eight** gallery. She lectures in Interior Design at RMIT University and is a recipient of an ArtStart grant from the Australia Council. Blazey's work is held in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Australia.

#### ALEXI FREEMAN

Freeman studied Fine Art at the University of Tasmania and has since produced paintings, sculptures, prints, garments and costumes. Receiving the Manufacturing Design Fund from Arts Tasmania enabled him to establish his ALEXI FREEMAN fashion label in 2006. Freeman has since completed twelve seasons of ready-to-wear and has collaborated on many projects including work with The Australian Ballet, Tourism Victoria and **Preston Zly**.

#### EXPLORING AND RESPONDING

(Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussions or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)

- Research the costumes for the *Game of Thrones* TV series – who was the costume designer? What was their inspiration?
- What do you think the impact of the artists' previous work together has been on this collaborative project? What are the positive impacts? Are there any negative or challenging impacts?
- Discuss the quote referenced by the artists from the book *Game of Thrones*. Do you think that the artists have been successful in illustrating this quote? How would you have done it differently? What other materials could have been used to express the same feeling?

#### CREATING AND MAKING

- Come up with your own fashion collection based on your favourite book or TV show. It could be themed to a season of the year – your Spring Collection for example.

#### VCE ART/STUDIO ART

- Explore all the different cultural influences expressed in *Gown of Shadows*.
- How have the materials had an impact on the meanings and messages inherent in the work?



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