

23 – 27 CARDIGAN STREET CARLTON VICTORIA 3053 AUSTRALIA

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OPENING HOURS Mon – Fri – 9.30am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 5.00pm

Thursday 9.30am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm – 8.00pm



Exhibition curated by Miranda Whall and Benet Spencer

Weekending at the RMIT Gallery is Funded by Liverpool School of Art and Design

Text edited by Benet Spencer

Project Space/Spare Room gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Simon Stephenson (installation), Darren Sylvester (design) and the 2nd year students from the Diploma of Visual Arts.

Weekending is a six-person exhibition of British artists. The first part of *Weekending* ran at two separate venues of the Globe Gallery in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, England in September 2004. This touring exhibition is conceived and curated by Miranda Whall and Benet Spencer.

Weekending profiles six British artists, all of whose work suggests an individual response to the natural world. Whether playfully distracted or engaged in a full-blown vision of utopian excess, the work brings symbolic or metaphorical values to the exploration of a chosen environment. A diverse range of approaches is presented that focus on the depiction of both real and imaginary landscapes. All the work contained suggests an escape into a purpose-built reality, where pastimes, hobbies or escapist pursuits can develop towards having a deeper meaning.

Neil Bromwich and Zoë Walker have worked both individually and collaboratively over the past few years. Two works by them are included in *Weekending* at the RMIT Project Space. Of these, Zoë Walker's solo work 'Limbo-Land' presents a video of her attempts to keep a 3-meter inflatable moon air-borne. Filmed by day and night on the Northumbrian coast (near to England's border with Scotland), this work explores parallel concerns: the escapism of an individual transcending everyday reality through a dream-like reverie, and a broader social-political concept of shifting borders – those of the inter-tidal coastal waters as affected by the moon itself and mirrored by the

marginal nature of land that has switched ownership between England and Scotland over the centuries.

Bromwich and Walker's collaborative work 'Celestial Radio' (2004) is super-charged by a synthesis of contrasting elements. Among these parts is a specially mixed classic 1970's soundtrack, Bradwell Nuclear Power Station (looming in the background), a yacht covered in 50,000 mirror tiles, the over-looked and historic coastline of Essex (South East England) and a floating pirate radio station broadcasting on 87.7FM. The result - shown here as a video and soundtrack - is an ambient and contemplative work that lulls the viewer in, whilst forcing consideration of a strange, almost forgotten, coastline and the foreboding presence of the reactor.

Geraint Evans' paintings describe the unwavering optimism and aspirations of hobbyists, enthusiasts and suburban social climbers. This cast of unlikely protagonists 'tentatively embrace the resigned limitations of provincial life' as they aspire to match the unobtainable feats of much admired role models. Described in the same acute detail of an amateur artist's nature study, Evans' sympathetic portrait 'Cometh the Hour, Cometh the Man' (featured in the RMIT exhibition) places a hirsute naturist in a strangely disjointed landscape. This modern-day caveman displays a comic desire to return to a savage state. However, his search for solitary bliss is tempered by his comfortable designer sandals and blow-dried hair.

The subjects of Benet Spencer's multiple paintings on paper describe fictitious utopias. These highly patterned, make-believe landscapes contain generic and eclectic elements that are collaged together, that partly reflect the nature of travel as a conflation of disparate elements and experiences. Symbols and icons from nature and modern culture collide within a fragmented picture space, evoking a lost world through the submerging of elements within a dense graphic surround. Spencer's paintings play with scale and identity of image to create a fictitious and dream-like space. As the works spread across the wall, parallel positions are established that pitch the subjective nature of experience (and its interpretation) against the objectivity of sampled images.

Miranda Whall uses drawings, photographs and video to represent relationships between her fertility, nature and the wider external environment. Her digital drawings stage intimate and beguiling scenarios compiled of self-portraits, animals and functional objects within pattern. In Whall's most recent work she presents her search for primary fertility signs, humorously exploring an uncompromising and seemingly undignified journey into the internal workings of her own body. Included in the RMIT exhibition are 'Looking for Egg White' (2004), a series of small Digital Lambda prints on aluminum panels that superimpose her own image on reproductions of 16th century landscape paintings scanned from old linen table mats. At first glance these

vignettes present a rural idyll similar to a Bruegel painting, however closer inspection reveals Whall's own image engaged in the private act of conducting a fertility test.

Justin Carter's work presents a vision of an environmental sustainable existence where he builds fully functional systems for survival, waste recycling or the production of food. As a variation on his own constructions, 'A Bright Spark' (2004) pays homage to Geordie electrician Paul Smith, who has converted the diesel engine in his work van to run off used vegetable oil. Through a series of video interviews we meet the human links in the supply chain including hotel supplier, technical convert, H.M. Customs and Excise – even a grateful wildlife vet. The work explores the social, political, economic and environmental repercussions of Paul's DIY innovation, and points a finger at the 'triad' of government, petrochemical industry, and car manufacturers for "sleeping together", instead of doing more to tackle the problem of sustainability.

Neil Bromwich, Geraint Evans, Benet Spencer and Zoe Walker live and work in London; Miranda Whall and Justin Carter live and work in North East England and Glasgow respectively.

A forthcoming supporting publication, with essays by Roy Holt and Frances McKee, is planned to be published by Liverpool John Moores University.



**PROJECT SPACE
SPARE ROOM**

**WEEKENDING
NEIL BROMWICH
JUSTIN CARTER
GERAINT EVANS
BENET SPENCER
ZOË WALKER
MIRANDA WHALL**

**OPENING NIGHT THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY 6–8PM
MONDAY 14 FEBRUARY – FRIDAY 4 MARCH 2005**





NEIL BROMWICH & ZOË WALKER
Celestial Radio 2004, photograph on aluminium



MIRANDA WHALL
Paradise Place 2004, digital lambda print (detail)



BENET SPENCER
Tiergarten 2004, oil on paper



GERAINT EVAN
Cometh the Hour, Cometh the Man 2000, acrylic on canvas



ZOË WALKER
Limbo-Land 2002, video still



JUSTIN CARTER
Lifeboat 2003, video still