COOL CHANGE CONTEMPORARY

28 NOVEMBER - 19 DECEMBER, 2020

GRAHAM MATHWIN

CEDAR RANKIN-CHEEK, ISABELLA ROSSARO, ZOË SYDNEY

SAM HUXTABLE

SHANNON MARLBOROUGH

Clear Focus, the company I bought the vinyl in this show from has the tagline 'now you see it… now you see through it!'®, this bad joke of a statement ironically makes exceptionally clear the weakness of perforated vinyl. Because there is never a "now you see it" and then a "now you don't" moment like in some magician's show. It is only ever a partial invisibility that it can provide, and therefore only a compromise on uninterrupted vision.

One narrative of the development of perforated vinyl in its current form comes from Roland Hill. In 1982 Hill, a lover of squash, sought to allow audiences to see the performance of the players, usually enclosed in four walls, while allowing the players to be able to see the lines of the court clearly. He developed a system of perforations and a contrasting colour scheme that would allow illumination to direct visibility. He then developed this product for advertising purposes and applied for a patent (Ref US 37, 186) in 1985, and formed the company Contravision to develop and manufacture and license his product.

Squash is a peculiar sport, at least to someone from outside it: a game where the ball is reflected off a surface in such a way as to place your opponent at a disadvantage. In the same way as many sports, it is not originally a spectator sport but a game played on the street. Squash has one period of its origins in Fleet, Britain's debtor's prison, where inmates would play a version of tennis that only involved hitting

walls – no open space being afforded them in their institutionalised setting. Squash proper was developed from this in other institutionalised settings: Eton and Rugby (the school that also developed rugby), modified the racquet and the ball to be made of rubber and to deform on impact, hence the name of the game. Squash, it seems, is something like the game of the trapped, wedged between at least two walls, and between which the object of play is constantly shuttled in order to defeat your opponent.

The first fully wrapped vinyl bus was done in New Zealand in 1990 by Hill's Contravision, or one of its licensees. The vinyl wrapped bus is therefore now only 30 years old – not very long, for a product that it is almost impossible to avoid seeing when out and about on the streets. The origin of this project was a chance superimposition that occurred on a vinyl wrapped bus. I was riding in the back seats of the bus, and at some point Transperth had decided to implement the installation of perforated steel over the back windows of their busses. This was presumably to prevent back seat bandits from graffing the windows, and to maintain a limited ('now you see through it!') view of the passing scenery. On this day in 2014 however, the full vinyl wrap also surrounded the perforated steel, and through the small dots in the steel I could see the small dots of the vinyl, and through these I could see the passing landscape. The overlap and congruence of these perforated forms underlined the relationship between the visual order of these materials and their forceful use in public space. This visual order comes in two parts: the first is the understanding of vision as array based; as made of small points, the second their scale: not small like a computer screen pixel, but large and clear, due no doubt to an optimisation of the relationship between material costs, visibility and obstruction, and the
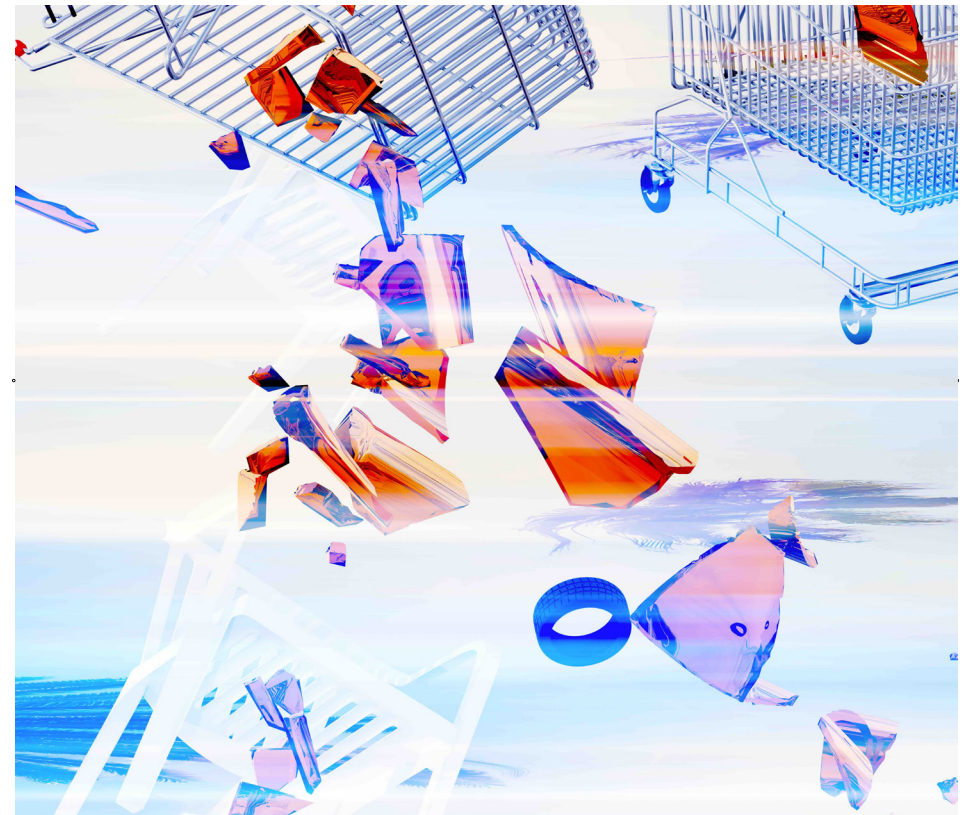
Graham Mathwin, *Contiguous views of passing scenery*, 2020, digital image. Image courtesy of the artist.
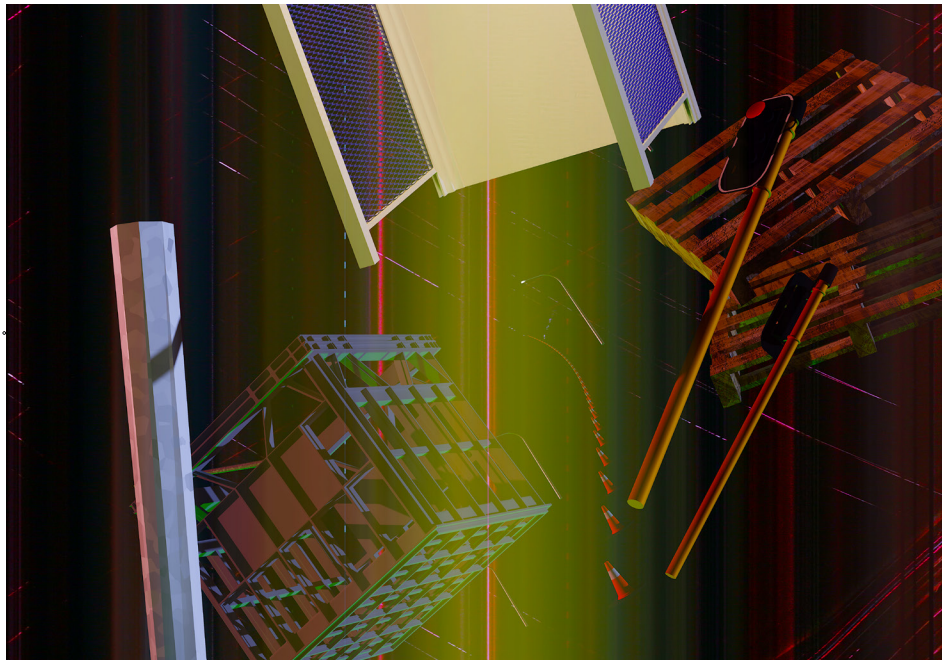
Graham Mathwin, *Contiguous views of passing scenery*, 2020, digital image. Image courtesy of the artist.

distance of the viewers, undertaken by Hill in the 80s and a nameless perforation firm at some other time. It is this visual order that underlined the dynamics of this space for me: about who has the power to impress images and words onto whose eyes, and who must be restrained and their actions limited. It is fascinating to me that the strategies of prevention and projection that each media embodied, and undoubtedly from different original needs, arrived at the same material and visual structure.

The corporate images that adorn the exterior of our public transportation system meanwhile shine down on a landscape of discarded detritus of leisure, consumption and transit: shopping trolleys, broken glass, used palettes, verge pick-up pedestal fans blowing in the wind like an anemometer and crushed aluminium cans. These artefacts of our lives live in the landscape that flickers behind the perforated vinyl here in Perth, which seems to me to oscillate between the simplistically paradisiacal and the absurd and austere in its devotion to automobility and the standardised construction of infrastructure.

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Graham Mathwin studied at Curtin University (BA; Fine Arts, Hons, 2015). His group shows include *I'll love you tomorrow,* Success Gallery, Perth, 2016; *Hatched National Graduate Show*, PICA, Perth, 2016; and *Worldline*, Geraldton Regional Art Gallery, 2017. His solo shows include *Twice a day, every day, it fails*, Free Range Gallery, Perth, 2017; *Take Care*, Moana Project Space, Perth, 2017; and *Eager Beaver*, Outer Space, Brisbane; 2019. He is currently engaged doing Higher Degree Research in Art at Curtin University.

CEDAR RANKIN-CHEEK, ISABELLA ROSSARO, ZOË SYDNEY: SELECTED WORKS GALLERY 2

Selected Works is a self-curated collection of recent work from three artists working across shared and disparate subjects, materials and questions.

A common sensibility here is an attention to the body as a political and aesthetic zone of enquiry: Cedar Rankin-Cheek explores the expectation of use and value functionally ascribed to femme bodies; Isabella Rossaro, in reference to biological science and aesthetics, materialises and draws out her own relationship to invisible illnesses; Zoë Sydney constructs objects posed at the scale of the body—mirror, gloves, shower cap, skipping rope—in order to communicate and explore her personal experience of lesbian womanhood.

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Cedar Rankin-Cheek's work explores the expectation of the femme body as a site of absolute comfort and care, that achieves value for its function and convenience. Her piece *Femmebags* discusses the aesthetics of comfort and functionality, questioning why certain bodies are 'useful', while others make us feel disgust and fear. The anthropomorphic furniture pieces are there to be intimately interacted with, prompting participants to think about the different reactions the two forms elicit through this interaction.

The beanbags offer a moment of gentle intimacy, purely existing for the needs of others; they are not autonomous, so it is up to the participants to decide what the *Femmebag*'s function is. The work provides functional human substitutes that allow for reflection of our understanding and treatment of living femme bodies.

Cedar Rankin-Cheek is a UWA Fine Arts graduate working on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar. She works with soft sculpture and installation works that are born from her own experiences and understandings of the femme body. She particularly focuses on creating works that examine the functionality of the body and the relationship between usefulness and value. Rankin-Cheek works with soft sculpture as it holds a lot of political and historical weight as a form, referencing the understanding of what art is and who is expected to make what kinds of art.

Rankin-Cheek merges art, craft and furniture making to examine further our understanding of functionality and usefulness and how those ideas relate to the value we place on people and art objects. In the examination of functionality, Rankin-Cheek explores how we exploit bodies for their usefulness, both for their visual aesthetics and comfort aesthetics, similarly to the way we 'use' and value furniture pieces. Rankin-Cheek combines the femme body with sculpture and furniture design to give an example of our desire for things to fit into functional categories in order to be wanted and valued.

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Isabella Rossaro's works explore her relationship with an unseen illness within her body. She focuses

on the possibility of dieldrin, an insecticide that her mother was exposed to during childhood, and explores this hereditary history of disease with a series of monoprints.

Applying her knowledge of biology and genetics, she aims to communicate the inner world of invisible illness by exposing her own physical and emotional experience. The sculptures and monoprints encourage the viewer to investigate the body and mind of one suffering with endometriosis and major depressive disorder, looking to amplify the importance of invisible illness in women's health.

Isabella Rossaro is an emerging Perth artist fresh out of an undergraduate degree in Zoology and Fine Arts. Specialising in monoprinting, she manipulates ink with graphite illustration, natural found objects and medication packaging. Isabella pairs these traditional mediums with biological polymer clay forms. She is very passionate about invisible illness, especially communicating the struggle of being a young woman suffering with endometriosis and major depressive disorder. She is inspired by genetic research, looking to amplify its importance in women's health.

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Zoe Sydney's work draws from personal writings and stories to explore the experience of lesbian womanhood in Australia.

Found objects commingle with unusual materials across a broad series of work. There is a clear sense of the connection between identity and presentation. A combination of non-traditional textile work, pre-owned objects, and even her own hair are used. Pinkness,
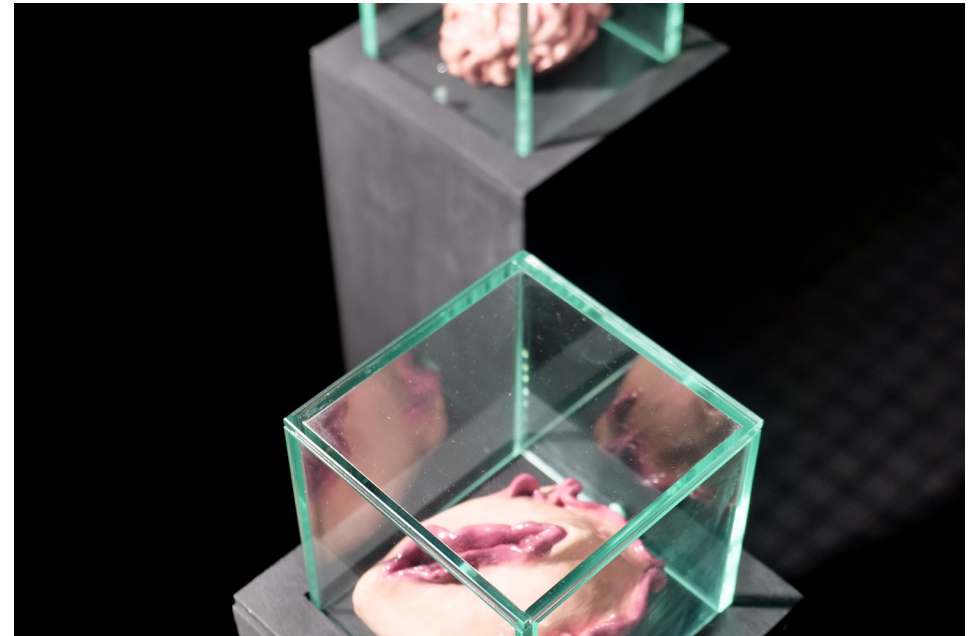
Top: Cedar Rankin-Cheek, *Femmebags*, 2020, fabric, recycled PET fibre, thread, rubber, dimensions vary. Photographed by Ben Nixon. Bottom: Isabella Rossaro, *How's your vagina?* 2020, Sculpey polymer clay, scientific glass display. Photographed by Nick Mahony.

Zoë Sydney, *You have changed my touch*, 2020, Found object, mixed media. Photographed by Olivia Ellis.

blondness, girlishness are all employed as devices of artifice in a display that demands the audience present themselves to the work as much as the work is presented to them.

Zoë Sydney is a local Perth artist working with multimedia including textiles, paint, and her own hair. Her work deals with aspects of queer womanhood from an Australian lens, exploring the interactions between an artist's body of work and the public and private concept of the body.

She is currently studying Physics and Fine Arts at the University of Western Australia, and endeavours to bring this interdisciplinary thought into her practice. She is a cofounder of *Snart Club*, a group of young people running art/science/sustainability workshops across Perth. Check out what's happening at snartclub.com

I begin by acknowledging the lives, love, and joy of Black and Indigenous trans women and femmes whose work has made the lives of every single LGBTQIA+ person less painful.

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It would be naïve to say that trans experience is universal, understandable, or portrayable in one sticky room. But, as always, we Queers pour everything we have into what we can and we make it shine.
When I first began conceptualizing this body of work, I was a few months into HRT (hormone replacement therapy) as a trans masculine, non-binary person. Now a year into HRT, I am swamped with the realization that my newfound euphoria and -finally- some sense of recognition of my physical self is going to be ongoingly dependent on the largely transphobic medical system, and unfortunately, money. I am so privileged in that, for now, I can just afford the monetary cost of transition. However larger, heavier costs loom around ahead of and me.

(Will I run out of T and not be able to buy more? What happens to my body then? Can I get to the doctors next week or should I wait 'til I've paid rent? Should I prioritize transition or therapy? I want to keep my nipples through top surgery but is it worth it if I have to pay maybe thousands more? What am I worth???)

Sam Huxtable, *Value Unknown 2*, 2020, mixed media. Image courtesy of the artist.
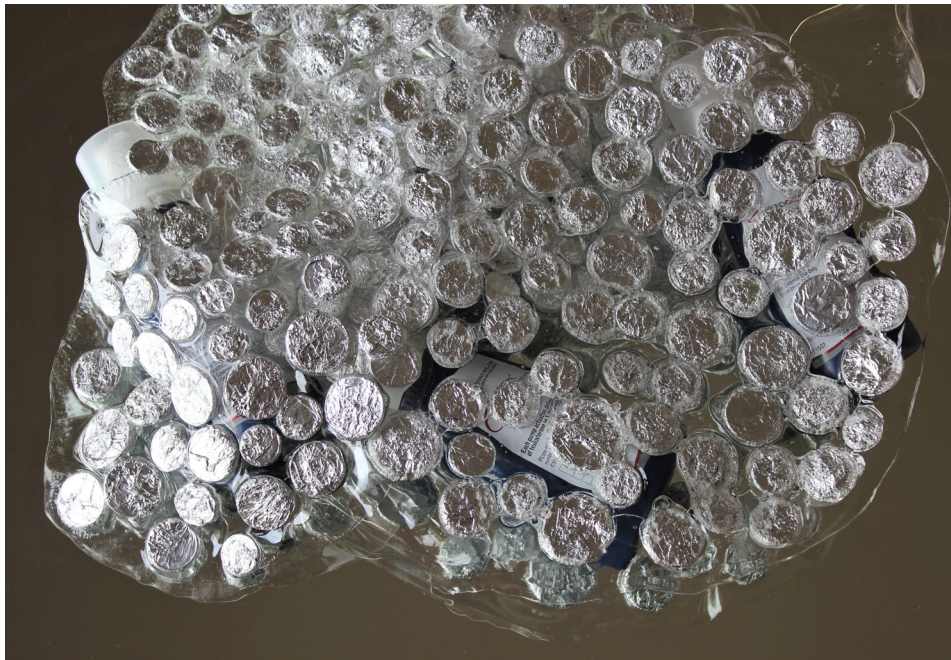
Sam Huxtable, *Value Unknown 3*, 2020, mixed media. Image courtesy of the artist.

Value Unknown began as a conversation between my psyche and body in transition, money, and medical, but the idea of cost as a trans, queer person or community extends beyond that.

I use cost as means to explain both loss and gain, in flux and in intersection.

There is a social 'cost' in transness. There is an emotional cost, familial cost, cost in safety, security, and stability. This will look and feel different for everyone and I can only speak for myself and from my personal experience. However, what I realised I was looking for is a tangible symbol of this greater cost. This meant money imagery becoming an emblematic channel for cost that flows around myself and my community in multitudes. I have always found solace in metal- a hard body capable of so much- I was immediately drawn to coin over note. They became my channel of choice.

So tangibly, where fluid and viscosity meet metal and hardness, something disrupts. Corrosion, reactions in rusty goop. The harshness of medical and physical meet the softness of self and emotion, and they converse. You can experience a body or physical experience without seeing one these sticky, metallic interactions are body alternative. Metal, particularly adornment through jewellery, has provided a protective exoskeleton for my trans body and psyche for years, through discovery and change. Its resilience, strength, beauty yet malleability speaks to my experience of transness in volumes, so I involve it as my chosen body alter.

Despite the focus, I hope that money is fairly unreadable in the process of its gluey envelopment. The softer matter has the power in this room. Trans

bodies have the power everywhere. In this space a visible and invisible process of slow change occurs. A sense of what has been, one of what is to become. A sense of power, pleasure, and a sense of pain. A sense of systems colliding.

Trans experience is all of it. You don't need to understand it to feel it.

No medical system, patriarchal, capitalist system can put a dollar sign above the heads of trans folk. My value is unknown, our value is unknown. Know though- feel too- that it is immense.

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Sam Huxtable is a non-binary/trans, queer artist living and working in on unceded Whadjuk Noongar Boodja, in Boorloo. Exploring the queer body and psyche, their work finds commonality between fantasy and reality and reaches out for emotional and visceral response. Sam works with a range of mediums including sculpture, installation, digital media, and performance. Navigating the unresolved, expansive notion of existence from an ever-evolving queer/ trans perspective, alongside the experience of others in their community, they talk emotionally through unconventional material as representations of body. Through explorations constantly fluxing, solitude and togetherness/ harshness and tenderness work in parallel to reflect non-conforming gender, identity, and physicality. Sam presents ideas around form and experience which are often overlooked.

In the 2000s the internet sparkled.
As internet theorist Olia Lialina put it,
        with the new millennium came new GIFs, glittering and blinging graphics created with new tools called glitter graphics generators. The principle of these was to take a static image— photo or graphic— and decorate it with all sorts of glittering-sparkling "stamps," from stardust to rotating necklaces.[1]

Glitter graphic GIFs were shared on bustling web-community boards, where internet users could admire them, download them, and redistribute them. Social media users gathered content from these hubs to customise their profile pages.
I recall the glitter GIF market that supplied the website MySpace to be cream of the crop. Many warm summer evenings were spent glued to the family computer flicking through pages of graphics, aiming to curate the perfect animated cursor and rainbow scroll-bar profile combo. Raking internet archives now, you'll find MySpace profiles decorated with sparkly glitter GIFs of flowers, love-hearts, stars, patriotic paraphernalia, and cartoon characters, in flashy and bright recognisable shades of pink, red, and silver.

But whilst the GIFs of the 2000s remain sparkling, they were and have always been static. Glitter graphic GIFs had no reason to move dynamically back and forth across webpages. By the time MySpace came around in 2003, the web was moving towards a model

of participation ruled by structured layouts, tables, templates, and generators. Glitter graphic GIFs evolved to quickly[2] communicate a greeting or a sentiment within the constraints of a social media site. At the peak of the MySpace era, discussing the evolution of trends in GIFs, Lialina wrote "starry backgrounds [of the 1990s] represented the future, a touching relationship with the medium of tomorrow. Glitter decorates the web of today, routine and taken-for-granted".[3]

Now the internet is invisible, or at least developers have tried to make the internet invisible. Internet users predominately engage with interfaces of online platforms that they do not have permission to edit. The backbone language of the internet is hidden, and the messy aesthetics of HTML (HyperText Markup Language) that evidenced traces of the people behind a webpage are of the past.

When I make webpages now I use HTML because it's the only web programming language I have learned, and you bet I have MySpace to thank for that. Back in the 2000s, internet users customised their MySpace profiles by editing the page HTML. On web-community sites, a culture of sharing unique profile code developed alongside GIF sharing. Users came to familiarise themselves with HTML elements that still pop up here and there on the internet today.
An HTML element I remember seeing around the place is <marquee>. The marquee feature inserts scrolling displays of text, or sometimes images, into a webpage. MySpace profiles occasionally contained the marquee element to stylise a background of falling graphics; mimicking snowflakes wafting from the clouds or love-hearts drifting to the floor. In the looped animated video *Marquee*, the marquee tag activates sparkling GIF flowers to fall down a screen over and over again.

Shannon Marlborough, *Table Arrangement* (still), 2020, looped single channel video. Image courtesy of the artist.

Shannon Marlborough, *Marquee* (still), 2020, looped single channel video. Image courtesy of the artist.

Marquee relies on an obsolete HTML element that once shaped not only how the internet looked, but also how it behaved.

Googling the marquee tag now, you'll quickly discover it is not recommended for webpage use, actively discouraged even, because some browsers no longer support the feature. In addition, the scrolling motion of marquee often reduces the legibility of text. Like many idiosyncrasies from the internet's past, the marquee tag rightfully has little place on the net of 2020 and has been replaced with other tags that do similar things.

So, what does it mean to gather archived GIFs together in *Marquee* to scroll and sparkle indefinitely? I wanted to create a tribute that was playful and nostalgic, albeit a little ominous, to the visual language of MySpace. I wanted to remind you that the internet used to look like this. I gratuitously wanted to browse pages and pages of archived glittery Tweeties and Betty Boops and sparkly pink Playboy logos, and think about all the internet users that created them and edited them and shared them, and I wanted to remind you that you too can go and do that. The archive lives a few flaming clicks away.

1   Olia Lialina, "All That Glitters," The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, 2010,

https:// www.guggenheim.org/blogs/the-take/all-that-glitters

2   Olia Lialina, "Vernacular Web 2," 2007, http://contemporary-home-computing.org/

vernacular-web-2/

3   Olia Lialina, "Vernacular Web 2"

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Shannon Marlborough is a new media artist with a passion for exploring archived online communities from the early internet that encouraged play and experimentation. Marlborough's practice involves researching and appropriating found digital content into compositional moving images to investigate the unique materiality of digital forms. She aims to evoke questions regarding the dominant usage of the internet and the necessity of internet media archival. Marlborough is based in Boorloo/Perth. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art from Curtin University in 2018 and has since exhibited at FELTspace, in group shows at Paper Mountain and Smart Casual, and online at the Dirt Gallery (NZ) Online art space.

Cool Change Contemporary acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional and rightful custodians of the land on which we operate. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.