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Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts

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2013

## (Wo)man with Mirror

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Louise Curham

*Teaching and Learning Cinema*

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### Publication Details

Louise Curham and Lucas M. Ihlein (Wo)man with Mirror 2013. Artwork featured in the exhibition "Hollow in the Paper" Hobart CAST Gallery 13 July to 18 August 2013. Published in flipbook *Hollow in the Paper*, by Amanda Davies, David Haines and Joyce Hinterding, Pat Brassington, Fiona Lee and Maria Kunda, Teaching and Learning Cinema, curated by Bec Stevens ISBN 0947335897.  
2009: Imprint, Artspace, Sydney  
2013: Parlour Performance Event at 13 Rooms, Kaldor Contemporary Art Projects  
2013: Unconscious Archives, Apiary Studios, London.

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### RESEARCH IMPACT STATEMENT

#### Research Background

The research of Ihlein and Curham (TLC) involves re-enacting Expanded Cinema performances from the 1970s. *Man With Mirror* (1976) is a key work by Guy Sherwin, developed at the London Filmmakers Co-Op. The TLC re-enactment, entitled *(Wo)man with Mirror*, involves two simultaneous live performers, super 8 film projection, mirrors and screens.

#### Research Contribution

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# (Wo)man with Mirror

## Abstract

Teaching and Learning are Louise Curham & Lucas Ihlein. TLC evolved from the Sydney Moving Image Coalition - a filmmakers and film lovers group with a specific focus on Super 8, Curham works in film performance, installation and experimental film. Her key interest is the experience of deteriorating and ephemeral film images. Ihlein is an artist who works with social relations and communication as the primary media of his creative practice. His work manifests as blogs, participatory performances, pedagogical projects, experimental film and video, re-enactments, gallery installations, lithographic prints and drawings.

## Keywords

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## Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Law

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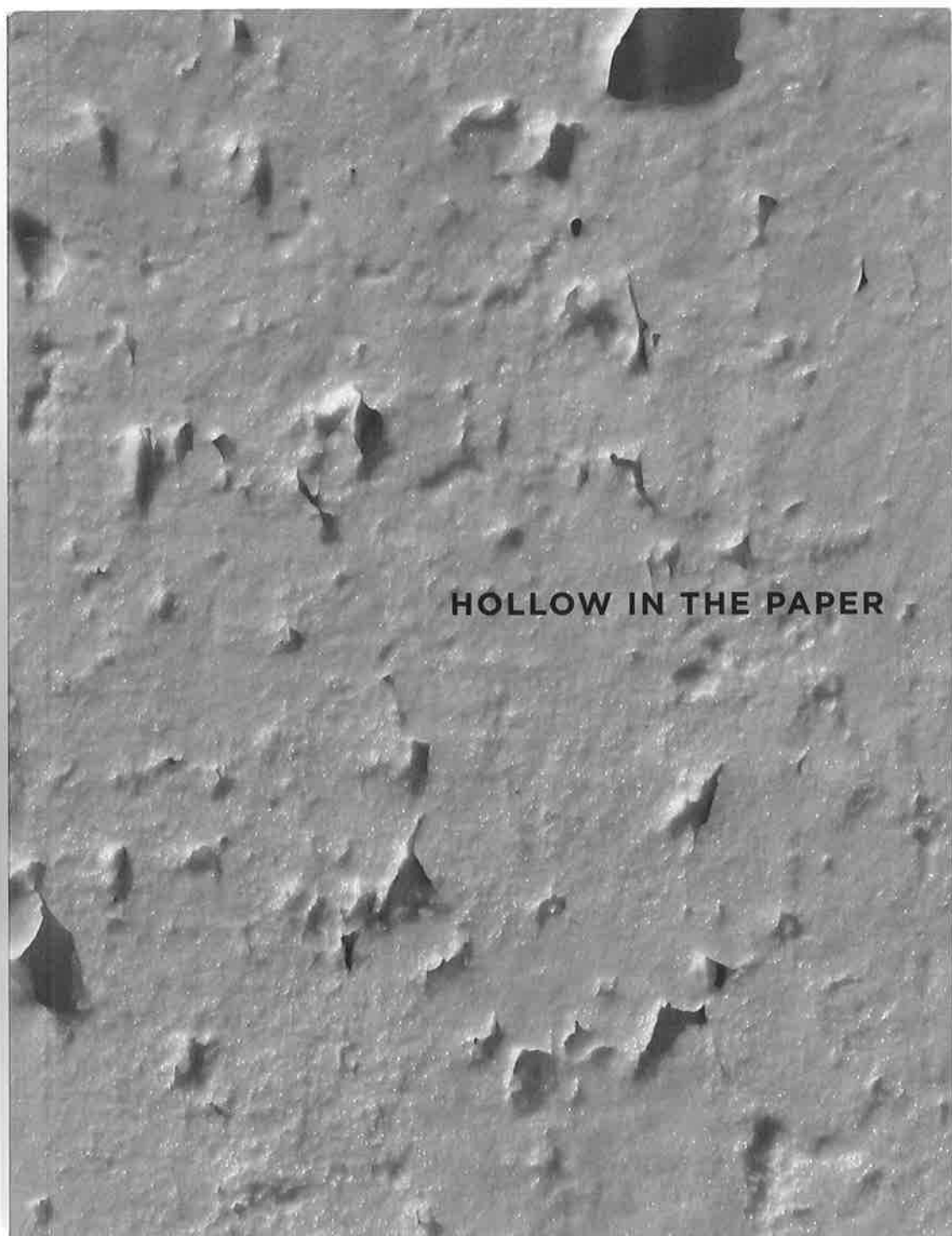
TLC's ongoing research investigates how re-enactments allow direct access to ephemeral performances that may otherwise only be available through documentation. The process of re-enactment changes the original work. What alterations are necessary to manifest it in the present time and place? The work thus positions artists as "experiential archivists". The findings of this research may take multiple forms: performances, academic papers, and the publication of a "Users Manual" communicating the practical discoveries generated by the re-enactment.

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## Research Significance

*(Wo)man with Mirror* was devised by Ihlein and Curham (TLC) in consultation with Guy Sherwin, via archival research at the British Artists Film and Video Study Collection in London, 2013. This led to a presentation at the conference *Museum Futures in an Age of Austerity*, at the Institute of Education; and a performance and public discussion organised by Unconscious Archives, at Apiary Studios. The project was also included in the exhibition *Hollow in the Paper* at CAST, Hobart, 2013. TLC was funded to travel to London in 2013 by an Australia Council Skills and Arts Development Grant. This led to the development of a new re-enactment project at the invitation of Malcolm LeGrice (UK), one of the world's foremost practitioners of expanded cinema.

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**HOLLOW IN THE PAPER**

HOLLOW IN THE PAPER

CAST GALLERY 13 JULY - 18 AUGUST 2013

AMANDA DAVIES  
DAVID HAINES AND JOYCE HINTERDING  
PAT BRASSINGTON  
FIONA LEE AND MARIA KUNDA  
TEACHING AND LEARNING CINEMA

CURATED BY BEC STEVENS  
UNDER THE 2013 CAST CURATORIAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

'A transformer designed to utilise the slight, wasted energies such as: the excess of pressure on an electric switch, the exhalation of tobacco smoke, the growth of hair, of other body hair and of the nails, the fall of urine or excrement, movements of fear, astonishment, boredom, anger, laughter, dropping of tears, demonstrative gestures of hand, feet, nervous ticks, forbidding glances, falling over with, surprise, stretching, yawning, sneezing, ordinary spitting and of blood, vomiting, ejaculation, unruly hair, cowlicks, the sound of nose-blowing, snoring, fainting, whistling, singing, sighs, etc'.<sup>1</sup>

'The sound or the music which corduroy trousers make when one moves, is pertinent to the infra-slim. The hollow in the paper between the front and the back of a thin sheet of paper....To be studied!....it is a category which has occupied me a great deal over the last ten years. I believe that by means of the infra-slim one can pass from the second to the third dimension'.<sup>2</sup>

Surfaces and intervals ... Transitions and gaps

The exhibition *Hollow in the Paper* was initiated in response to these two intertwined notions proposed separately by Marcel Duchamp. They are generative and open-ended; expand when prodded - mutable and transformational; slippery and elusive. They may shift our attention to what isn't there, or prompt our thinking towards a perception of energy as it relates to the body, and in turn to moments of transition or excess. The artists in *Hollow in the Paper* present works that reflect changes of states, whether it be the changing state of a perceived form of energy or the fluid and flexible state of subjectivity.

For *Hollow in the Paper*, Amanda Davies, initially proposed to be hypnotized and to paint while experiencing another state of consciousness. Unfortunately, hypnotists were troubled by the ethical implications of Davies' request. The paintings she completed for the exhibition developed instead from an understanding of the Brazilian artist, Lygia Clark's key work *Structuring the Self*, wherein Clark experimented with objects that could invoke multiple sensations within an haptic experience. The work grew from inquisitiveness about what the mind may experience in a heightened proprioceptive state and a willingness to inhabit a space of otherness as a tool for exploring transitions between perception and subjectivity.

Teaching and Learning Cinema are involved in the re-enactment and dissemination of Guy Sherwin's performance *Man with Mirror*, 1976 - 2009. For *Hollow in the Paper* they present the continuation of his work in *(Wo)man with Mirror*, 2009 - Ongoing. In reactivating works from expanded cinema, Teaching and Learning Cinema open these pieces to other subjectivities. *Man with Mirror* conflates present with the past, through surfaces and intervals, using the action of a mirror, the mechanism of a recorded image and the performer's presence. The mirror in reflecting an image offers a version of reality that is separate from the actual, and this space between the image and its reflection suggests the space of the infra-slim. *Man with Mirror* offers the performer and audience access to a sensitized and proprioceptive awareness and elicits a doubling and fracturing. In Ilhein and Curham's *(Wo)man with Mirror*, when a re-enactment is undertaken using a recorded performance of a parent at a similar age, the performance adds a layer of genetic comparison and doubles the inherent conflation at play in the work.

In describing, Lygia Clark's work, theorist Suely Rolnik defines subjectivity as comprised of "knowing the world as form, which calls upon perception; and

knowing the world as force, which calls upon sensation".<sup>3</sup> She defines these two 'powers of the sensible body' - perception and sensation - and states that there exists an 'invincible disparity'<sup>4</sup> between them; an immeasurable space that is none-the-less present. This disparity is further described as a mobilizing force.

Pat Brassington's works elicit a certain charge. In 'The Creative Act', Duchamp proposed the conflation of good and bad and the proposition of 'art' being perceived as a range of intensities. The frequencies generated in Brassington's work are never easy to pin down. Her works often position the viewer in the space of a 'flexible subjectivity'; it is immediate and shifts and pulls at multiple parts of a viewer's sense of self. *Sweet Inspirations*, 2006, locates the viewer in a destabilised position, hovering somewhere above two girls. Their faces, bowed down, are veiled by masses of flowing hair. The image at first appears mirrored, but with closer attention it reveals itself to be noticeably not. Like speaking with two identical twins wearing the same clothes, trying to concentrate on the conversation at hand, we are caught somewhere between their difference and their similarity, somewhere in the zones of transition, genetics and dress-making.

Transforming slight wasted energy from demonstrative hand gestures, or from a cowlick is absurd, *but what a thought*. A team of environmental technologists in the Netherlands has recently transformed waste electrons released from plant root systems into electricity using microbial fuel-cells.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps Duchamp's idea is not so absurd. Perhaps it is about possibility - a 'what if'; a shifting the parameters of what we know as known.... "Possibility is infra-thin... possibility implying becoming".<sup>6</sup>

David Haines and Joyce Hinterding have recreated versions of Wilhelm Reich's Cloudbusters from the 1950s and describe these machines as both an ethical dilemma and an 'invitation for thinking'. Reich's Orgone Institute in New York pursued research into the state of Orgone energy as an anti-entropic force - and in drawing it from the environment explored its effects on human health and weather manipulation. Reich's machines fell by the way side after he was discredited in the post world war II climate. Although his ideas may have been radical for the time, the loss of his life's work is unfortunate. The research seems to have slipped into a gap - and in this light, perhaps the notion of an attention to gaps as repositories is also a political idea.

Haines and Hinterding have long been occupied as artists with investigating energetic forces. While in conversation with Haines, regarding the changing states of energy he suggested that perhaps '*thought transduces and is transduced... that it has the capability to travel vast distance, across time and space, with the least amount of effort or energy*'<sup>7</sup> and from this thought perhaps Reich's proposition of an alternative way of perceiving energy extends.

Fiona Lee and Maria Kunda present *Automatic Conversation Activator*, 2013, a series of four person games derived from a Surrealist 'game lineage'. Participants are invited to enter a state of ambiguity and slip lucidly through the gaps between the keywords that are used as prompts, allowing for both free association and for the company of others to act as a generator of thoughts. Lee is a proponent of conversation as art and acknowledges the influence of the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. Lee and Kunda quote Gadamer, 'Through an encounter with the other we are lifted above the narrow confines of our own knowledge. A new horizon is disclosed that opens onto what was unknown to us. In every genuine conversation this happens. We come closer to the truth because we do not exist by ourselves'.<sup>8</sup>

In articulating the proposition of a flexible subjectivity, Rolnik describes "a subjectivity open to otherness, able to live a shared experience and to construct itself and the world on that basis. Those are the necessary conditions for the reactivation of the political and aesthetic potentials of subjectivity."<sup>9</sup> In exploring these notions of gaps as generative spaces, whether they are through the gaps between keywords, in knowledge production or in our understanding of states of energy, the artists in the *Hollow in the Paper* negotiate the terrain of transitions and of fluid, flexible subjectivities.

#### ENDNOTES

1. P 191. *The Writings of Duchamp*, Ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, Da Capo Press, 1973.
2. P 194. *The Writings of Duchamp*, Ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, Da Capo Press, 1973.
3. P 2 Rolnik, S, 2006, "Politics of Flexible Subjectivity, The Event-Work of Lygia Clark", *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity and Contemporaneity*, <http://www.pucsp.br/nucleodesubjetividade/Textos/SUELY/Flexiblesubjectivity.pdf>
4. Ibid
5. Laursen, L, 2013, Plugging In to Plant Roots: Marsh grasses can power small fuel cells, <http://spectrum.ieee.org/energy/environment/plugging-in-to-plant-roots>
6. P 94. Cros, C, 2006, *Marcel Duchamp*, Reaktion Books Ltd.
7. David Haines, April 20th, 2013
8. Lee, F , Kunda, M, 2013, *The (Neo) Avant-Garde and (Their) Kitchen(s): Potluck and Participation*, The International Journal of Social, Political and Community Agendas in the Arts, Volume 7. [www.artsinsociety.com](http://www.artsinsociety.com)
9. Ibid P 9 Rolnik, S.









*(Wo)man with Mirror*, 2009, Artspace, Sydney  
Photo credit: Anneke Jaspers

Previous page:  
Lucas and Owen practice *Man with Mirror*, 2009  
Louise's mum films *(Wo)man with Mirror*, 2009  
Photo credit: Peter Shaw

DR MARIA KUNDA BA (hons), BFA (hons, first class), MFA (research), PhD is associate lecturer in art and design history and theory at the Tasmanian School of Art. Her practice spans curating and writing. Current research relates to modernism, postmodernism, international avant-garde movements; contemporary Australian art, craft and design; professional art-writing-as-creative-practice, and printmaking. She has participated on the University of Tasmania's Plimsoll Programming Gallery Committee, was Chair and longstanding member of the Board of Contemporary Art Services Tasmania, and has worked in general management and as a designer for performing arts companies. Maria has contributed to numerous publications and curated exhibitions.

FIONA LEE is an artist with an interest in dialogical, pedagogical modes of social practice, and the role of the artist-curator. She curated *Our Day will Come*, an alternative art school by Paul O'Neill (2011) for Contemporary Art Spaces Tasmania (CAST), and co-curated with Pat Brassington, *The Arresting Image* (2009) for the Plimsoll Gallery, and her work is included in state, commercial and private collections. Lee has had a residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris and two Australia Council Funded art residencies in the UK. She has been awarded an APA scholarship for post-graduate studies, a Marie Edwards Travelling Scholarship and selected for the 2013 Banff Research in Culture Residency, organised by the Liverpool Biennale, The University of Alberta and the Banff Centre, Canada. In addition to her artistic practice, she has been involved in exhibition curating, administration and touring, she was a member of the Plimsoll Gallery Committee (2001- 2010), a Board member of INFLIGHT Art (2010-2011) and in 2009, she worked for the Australia Council at the 53rd Venice Biennale.

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<http://www.teachingandlearningcinema.org/>

<http://www.teachingandlearningcinema.org/expanded-cinema-re-enactments/woman-with-mirror/>

#### LIST OF WORKS

AMANDA DAVIES

*Imagining the infra-slim*, 2013

Oil on linen

45 x 35 cm

*Bleak exercise to grasp the infra-thin*,  
2013

Oil on linen

45 x 35 cm

*Feeling for the infra-mince*, 2013

Oil on linen

45 x 35 cm

*Searching for the haptic (after  
Étant Donnés)*, 2013

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

*Starlight Driver: Cloudbuster Number  
Four: Orgone Energy Cloud Engineering  
Device*, 2011-12

Anodized aluminium, irrigation piping,  
water pump

220 x 220 x 160 cm approx.

PAT BRASSINGTON

*Sweet Inspirations*, 2006

84,5 x 66,5 cm

Digital print on Hahnemuhle  
paper

FIONA LEE AND  
MARIA KUNDA

*Automatic Conversation  
Activator* 2013

A card game for 4 or more  
players

TEACHING AND LEARNING  
CINEMA

*(Wo)man with Mirror*, 2009-2013

Expanded cinema re-enactment  
(documents, video, printed  
media)

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