



SUSAN ANDREWS + ALLAN
GIDDY + JAMES NGUYEN
& YIN-LAN SOON + MARK
TITMARSH + LAURA WOODWARD

CURATOR: SALLY CLARKE

AIRSPACE PROJECTS

Sally Clarke and Brenda Factor (Directors)
10 Junction Street
Marrickville, NSW 2204
Opening Friday 7 November 2014
Continues to Saturday 22 November 2014

GALLERY HOURS

Thursday – Friday 11.00am – 6.00pm
Saturday 11.00am – 5.00pm

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IN MOTION

MOTION IN

"In Motion" was conceived as a way of engaging with motion or the idea of motion to reflect on the kinds of change or states of flux experienced in the world today. The premise of the exhibition is that the work offers a political, social, cultural, philosophical or environmental response – however abstractly or metaphorically conceived - to the change observed.

Motion is the companion of time, advancing in all manner of directions and dimensions, often in the most ruthless and unforgiving way. While perceptibly a pause may be taken or a moment may be captured in an image, the world and the universe continue to unfurl and change around us. We change. William Shakespeare suggested we have two options: to be eaten to death with rust – his preference – or to be scoured to nothing through motion. Either way - no matter how fast or slow - motion, and subsequently change, is inevitable and it spells not just ends and beginnings but interactions, processes, sequences, systems and displacement. This inevitability points to something universal and integral to existence. Existence is a doing word, we exist in a doing world. Doing is change and change is an inevitable part of existence. Unless humanity alters its inherently destructive nature, there is the pervading fear that we will collectively move towards nothingness.

Societies, particularly modern ones, are characterised by transitions in space as a result of technological innovation, the flow and circulation of people, ideas and knowledge. Paul Virilio proposed that these transitions are occurring at an accelerating rate and progressing in relation to, and at the speed of, state legitimised weapons systems and modern media. They occur in strategic space where territory is competed for and where a number of verbs are enacted: 'envision, draw, map, curtail, mobilize, contour, stabilize and police the polis.'¹ If it is the case that art functions as a mirror of society, then an exhibition engaging with motion as the primary concern is enduringly relevant as a document of human history with all its significations of strategy and contested space. This is something Leonardo da Vinci perhaps recognised in the fifteenth century when he identified motion as being one of the key attributes of sight. Is it a coincidence that, for this man who envisioned contemporary war machines, motion was one of his key concerns and that art itself is now defined as a series of

movements, each working to subordinate, even annihilate, its predecessor?

The preoccupation with motion in the arts continues into all contemporary media and is conveyed to us in actual, virtual, illusionistic forms as well the so-called static forms of painting and sculpture. While motion may be a subtext in all artworks many artists and movements have engaged with the idea directly and linked it with a social agenda, the Italian Futurists being one example among many. For them, motion was about engaging with industrialisation, scientific and technological innovation and pressing forward with fervent intent to destroy the past and any monuments and museums that honoured it. Accordingly, the founder of the Futurist movement, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, glorified militarism and believed war, 'was the only true hygiene of the world.'² The Futurist response to the change occurring around them came in the form of machine-inspired dance, the imaging and forming of de-materialising objects and bodies such as Umberto Boccioni's painting *The City Rises* (1911) and his sculpture *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913). The tenets of motion have preoccupied artists through the twentieth century art with significant movements emerging in Russia, Japan and Latin America, partly in response to developments in photography and cinema but also because of other rapid technological changes, two world wars, social upheaval and social activism. The rise of performance art and happenings, fluxus, op art, time based art and video and art as social practice all owe something not just to the self-referential dialogues in art as well as those dialogues that converge with art from social and cultural space and even from the noxious field of warfare.

The artists participating in this exhibition Laura Woodward, James Nguyen & Yin-Lan Soon, Susan Andrews, Mark Titmarsh and Allan Giddy each bring a unique perspective to the idea of motion, all touching upon the issues stated above even if in an oblique manner.

Relying on a combination of sculpture and video, Laura Woodward delivers an intentionally ambiguous work that explores the interconnectedness of the components that make a system work, or even fail. It asks the viewer to determine for themselves what the system at play might be, and what the system is doing. An impenetrable armature of steel houses a seemingly fragile form, perhaps surviving on artificial life support. Woodward's unnerving



object reveals what we don't understand about contemporary life and our inability to fully comprehend the systems that operate to not only sustain but to control us.

In his recent travels to China, James Nguyen became engaged with the idea of communal exercise as a form of state aesthetic. In this exhibition Nguyen collaborates with dancer Yin-Lan Soon to examine how people in China use public space - as opposed to an enclosed gym - in which to demonstrate ones physical responsibility as a state enterprise. Collective movement through dance or exercise in the streets and parks function as everyday expressions of the more expansive orchestrated and synchronised displays of state sanctioned military might and nationalist unity.

The urban obsession with the 'exercise regime' is also referenced in the work of Susan Andrews. An initial reading of the work recalls the formalism of the 1960s Op Art movement where displacement is observed from fixed positions as colours in repeated forms vibrate on a planar surface. Yet, on further consideration, the bright contrasting colours painted on the vertical planks also recall the colours of exercise gear or training clothes. Accompanying this painting is an object on wheels, seemingly constructed for some particular purpose yet the inclusion of empty spaces renders it non-functional. These two works explore notions of spatiality and displacement through the application of contrasting and/or complimentary colour and thereby creating physical unease or instability in the awareness of the viewer and their perceptions of space.

Mark Titmarsh utilises a spirograph to overlay patterns that are at once geometric and biomorphic onto the dustjackets of books. Produced mechanically the patterns consist of regular and repetitious curves like those mass-produced in an industrial context, all the while resembling the natural fluid forms found in nature. Similar to the dazzle camouflage used on WW1 weaponry for its ability to confuse the enemy, Titmarsh employs the spirographic overlay to dazzle and fragment the strict graphic rules of book design and typography. The flow of information is disrupted and concealed - the logic is broken – while colours blocked into the elliptical shapes created by spirographic overlappings, provide an opportunity for a display similar to a colour wheel tipped off balance and spread out beyond its scientific boundaries.

Allan Giddy's two-channel video, *The Gate* (2014), also references the idea of overlay but as a lived historical experience, capturing the industriousness of a society as motorbikes enter and leave the southern gate of the Citadel in Hui, Vietnam. The work is informed by a efficiently executed American assault that took place in proximity to the gate during the Vietnam War, an event described on the Ohio University's history site. Major Thompson, who set up a temporary command post to witness the assault unfold, observed Marine fixed-wing aircraft dropping napalm within 800 metres of the advancing Viet Cong troops. While the assault was regarded as a success by the American military the magnitude of tragedy for both sides in the name of this unpopular war against communism remains inconceivable. Yet, somehow, life goes on and the cities become busier as the people of Vietnam eke out a living and make their contribution to this growing economy.

The aim of "In Motion" is to bring together the work of artists who respond to the idea of motion in a range of media. Inevitably, this exhibition becomes just one moving part of the world of systems it is contained in. Just how it fits with Virilio's theory that modernity is logistical and always in the process of preparing for the possibility of war is yet to be seen. Or like flutter of butterfly wings in Chaos theory, the disturbance created by "In Motion", will create indeterminate outcomes beyond any direct notion of cause and effect.

Sally Clarke, November 2014

¹ Benjamin Bratton, 'Introduction' in Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics, Semiotext(e)*, Los Angeles, 2006, p11.

² F.T. Marinetti, 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', *Gazzetta dell'Emilia*, 5 February 1909.

IMAGE CREDITS

Left: Susan Andrews
Zip, 2014

Front cover: Laura Woodward
Five, 2014
Photo by: Jem Selig Freeman

Back top left: Mark Titmarsh
Picturing Movement, 2014

Back top right: James Nguyen & Yin-Lan Soon
Manual Pan 2 (Tunnel), 2014

Back below: Allan Giddy
The Gate, 2014