

## Review: Stages by Simone Hine and Clare Rae

by [Catherine Clover](#)

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The collaboration between Simone Hine and Clare Rae comprises two components, one a set of black and white photographs pinned to the wall, *Untitled Action (for Stages)* by Clare Rae, and the other two wooden screens facing each other with two moving image works projected onto each screen, *Staged* by Simone Hine. The content of both is developed at the same site – the 1930s Rosina Auditorium at Melbourne’s Abbotsford Convent. The artists did not work together but asynchronously through site, using the auditorium as their point of contact along with the shared site of the [Screenspace gallery](#) as the final realisation of the works.

Both works examine performance through lens-based media. Clare Rae features in her still photographs, dressed in her daily clothes, effectively being herself. She uses her body to explore space and the capacity of her own physicality. Captured like black and white still lives the richly analogue noisy photographs incorporate movement through Rae’s actions that blur in front of the camera. In the same way that a child physically explores her or his surroundings in order to understand the world, Rae moves through the space, athletically at times and dance-like at others, exploring both small and large possibilities – attractions even - through balance and weight, gravity and strength. Her collaborator in these works is not Hine as one might expect but the camera, directly through the lens but also indirectly through the reflection of the mirror at the back of the auditorium.

Hine’s work creates a double vision, a kind of double take on a brief exchange. Two characters exist in the two separate projections, yet both occupy the same physical space of the auditorium. Both characters are aware of each other, and react to each other, yet neither overlap into each other’s projected space. Both characters are played by the artist herself, and she dresses for each part. Watching the characters between the two screens means I move my head from left to right and back, not unlike watching a tennis match trying to keep a track of the ball, but in this instance to trace the muted exchange that is taking place. As I move my head, it seems that I catch sight of something out of the corner of my eye, a glimpse that is lost each time I look from one screen to the other, searching and always missing it. As I look and look, I see that the wooden projected screens are not only in the physical space of Screenspace but also in the projected theatre space, placed on the stage behind, giving the uncanny impression that I somehow become a ghostly component in the events that are unfolding onscreen. There is a tension between the two characters that is apparent but unfathomable. A script exists in one of the character’s hands but we are not privy to its contents. Questions about time – what has taken place and what might take place – bother the viewer as the characters disappear offscreen, only to reappear over and over again and re-enact their brief exchange. There is no sonic component to Hine’s work, but distant voices from an artwork upstairs and the street outside bleed not unhelpfully into the viewer’s experience of this work.

Through analogue photography and digital video the artists explode the illusion of the theatrical. Both artists break the fourth wall, the wall that immerses us in the fiction of the theatrical, yet both spin webs of narrative around their actions, dots that the viewer can connect in various ways. There is flexibility here. While the performative in contemporary art practices is common, Hine’s and Rae’s works do not so much enact as unpack what performance is or can be using the tools of the visual art perspective, specifically the mediation of the camera. Through peeling back the theatrical process, performance is reduced to its bare bones. In some ways this isn’t a collaboration at all because the analytical engagement is underlined by the solitary nature of each artist’s approach. Both are challenging in their reduction, yet within this contraction the magic of illusion is carefully retained and remains seductive.

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Simone Hine and Clare Rae

18 April – 23 May 2015

Screenspace 30 Guildford Lane, Melbourne

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Simone Hine, *Staged*, 2014, Video Installation.  
Installation View, as part of Stages with Clare Rae (Screen Space, Melbourne 2015).

