METRO ARTS // EXHIBITION PROGRAM

LIKE A BURDEN */ RACHAEL HAYNES*

24 JUNE - 11 JULY 2015

I turned over the pages and listened to the constant rain falling. I was hiding under the blankets, reading. I had spent many content hours of my life here. The words were unsettling.[1]

For some time now Rachael Haynes has been building a personal archive of objects and texts. Some objects are manipulated to fit the context, such as fabric which can be cut and resewn. Some are fixed, in the case of her collection of drawings, exhibited in different combinations. And some take a transient form, such as snippets of text that are printed, cut-out and sewn or digitally manifested. The archive exists in a state of flux, developing outside of each exhibition as the accumulation of remnants of labours the audience will only glimpse.

Haynes's archive is not an archive of preservation, rather it operates as a store, which can be drawn upon and reconfigured for particular exhibitions. Its purpose lies in the networks created between the forms and is therefore opposed to the stasis inherent within modes of preservation. Each exhibition is a moment of pause within an otherwise dynamic archive. While the viewer of the exhibition does not have access to the archive, Haynes offers snapshots in the form of exhibitions.

The process of accumulating, keeping and displaying this archive, evokes the processes of a casual reader, who selects a book from the shelf, downloads an article, crawls up in bed on a rainy day, spends time reading, writes some notes, thinks about the ideas, and on occasion finds reason to discuss or perhaps write about what has been read.

Haynes makes literal the processes involved within any research project and, in doing so, imbues them with a sense of physicality. Through careful placement of monitors and projections, which are often partially obscured by fabric that fills the gallery, Haynes invites the viewer to crawl under, sit on top of or otherwise navigate the work. The viewer is engulfed as they enter the space of the work in order to watch the videos with clear sight, only to find the content elusive.

One video in particular is comprised of a still image of a hooded figure whose face is obscured by a black fabric splat. Viewers familiar with Haynes' work will

recognise this image as a still from her previous performance work. A computer generated graphic of a target, Haynes's shorthand for post-painterly abstraction, is placed over the hooded figure's chest area. The final layer to the image is a series of short written phrases that flash between each other. In contrast to the written text, a single voiceover recites snippets of conversations, quotations from books and general ideas about the position of women within art history. These snippets are stitched together as though it is a single stream of consciousness. The subject position of the voice is impossible to gauge as it shifts between conflicting ideas. The voice itself is disconcerting, not quite digital, and not quite human. The voice is Haynes', digitally manipulated to sound lower and therefore masculine. So even here, the site of the artist's speaking voice, we see Haynes shift and change the content and form in order to disallow a fixed subject position and to show the self as a combination of conflicting and borrowed ideas.

Haynes extracts objects and texts from her archive in order to produce a series of *floating signifers* that imperfectly communicate ideas. Even the viewer's unique engagement with the work feels as though it is a re-enactment of a performance, as one crawls between the draped fabrics just as the previous viewer must have. Haynes' labour is everywhere throughout the exhibition, from the stitching together of vast expanses of fabric to the editing of text for the video, but Haynes herself is hidden behind layers of signification. This is exemplified by the figure in the video, where she is literally buried under layers of symbolic gestures.

This is a project about feminism, painting, art history and the codes through which they are read, but before that, it is a project about the way we engage with written and spoken concepts, drawing them into our lived experience and making them part of ourselves. The effect is unsettling.

[1] Haynes, Rachael (2015) *37 COUNTS* Retrieved: 06/06/15 from (http://www.blindside.org.au/portfolio-item/27-may-13-jun-2015-unthinkable-rachael-haynes/).

Metro Arts

Chief Executive Officer
David Fenton

Program Coordinator (Visual Art)
Amy-Clare McCarthy

metroarts.com.au

109 Edward St, Brisbane Qld 4000
GPO BOX 24, Brisbane 4000
(07) 3002 7100
info@metroarts.com.au

Find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram