

Venice Biennale 2007 Australia  
10 June – 21 November 2007  
Education Resource Kit

# AUSTRALIA **Au3**

VENICE BIENNALE 2007

susan norrie  
daniel von sturmer  
callum morton



**Susan Norrie**  
*HAVOC 2007*



**Daniel von Sturmer**  
*The Object of Things 2007*



**Callum Morton**  
*Valhalla 2007*

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## Education Resource Kit outline

This education resource kit highlights key artworks, ideas and themes of Au3: the 3 artists, their 3 projects which are presented for the first time at 3 different sites that make up the exhibition of Australian artists at the Venice Biennale 10 June to 21 November 2007. It aims to provide a entry point and context for using the Venice Biennale and the Au3 exhibition and artworks as a resource for Years 9-12 education audiences, studying Visual Arts within Australian High Schools.

Ideally this kit may be used in conjunction with a visit to the Venice Biennale 2007, Italy. Used in conjunction with the Au3 DVD, this kit is also a valuable resource for the classroom in Australia with which to critically investigate the Venice Biennale as one of the world's most important critical forums of contemporary visual arts, Australia's presence within the international contemporary art world context and the art practice of specific Australian contemporary artists selected to participate 2007.

Included are:

- quotes by agents in the contemporary art world such as artists and curators
- timelines expanding on the history of the Venice Biennale and Australia's participation in it
- Senior Curatorial Advisor of AU3 and Director of Venice Biennale curator's statements outlining their aims intentions and purpose
- commentaries about Au3 artists placing them in a wider context of contemporary art practice and art history
- keywords related to the Au3 artists practice to enhance literacy, vocabulary and the use of art language in context
- issues for consideration for teachers and students that develop sequentially from concrete to abstract approaches, encouraging students to explore develop and resolve their investigations into art criticism, art history and art making practice from diverse points of view.

The kit specifically targets teacher and student audiences but may also be of interest to a wider general audience both in Australia and abroad.

### **Selected commentary, text and images sourced from:**

Au3 website [www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au](http://www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au)  
Venice Biennale website [www.labiennale.org/en/art](http://www.labiennale.org/en/art)  
Au3 Room brochures  
Au3 Media releases  
Au3 Catalogue

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<http://www.ozco.gov.au>

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## **PART A The Venice Biennale and the Australian presentation**

### **Introduction**

The Venice Biennale is a major contemporary art exhibition that takes place every two years in Venice, Italy. Described as the 'Olympics of the visual arts world', the Venice Biennale is one of the most important and prestigious visual arts events in the world. The first biennale in the world was held in Venice known as La Biennale di Venezia in 1895. The second biennale was in the São Paulo, Brazil in 1951 and interestingly the third was The Biennale of Sydney, first presented in 1973.

The word 'Biennale' is Italian meaning every second year or bi-annual, but has come to be known more generically as a term referring to a major contemporary art event of this kind. A Triennale occurs every third year.

The phenomenon of the Biennale and the Triennale has continued to grow with more than 50 biennales occurring around the world in such diverse places as places as Australia, Brisbane: Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, France: Lyon Biennale, New Zealand: Auckland Triennial, Singapore: Singapore Biennale, Germany: Berlin Biennale, Japan: Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, Cuba: Havana Biennial, United Kingdom: Liverpool Biennial, Taiwan: Taipei Biennial, Turkey: Istanbul Biennial, China: Shanghai Biennial, Korea: Gwangju Biennale and Busan Biennale.

## The Venice Biennale: La Biennale di Venezia



**‘The Art Biennale has always borne witness to trends, schools, movements, avant-garde individualities, constituting a hub for artistic research where contemporary arts are the focal point of a creative international laboratory.’**

*Davide Croff*  
*President of La Biennale di Venezia*

### Who What When Where and Why

#### What

Established in 1895, the Venice Biennale is one of the world’s most important critical forums for contemporary visual art. Thousands of the world’s leading artists, curators, collectors, gallery directors and critics attend this event.

#### Who

The Venice Biennale typically comprises a curated show presenting about a hundred artists at the Giardini and Arsenale and more than 70 national exhibitions in 28 pavilions within the Giardini and other locations throughout the city of Venice, Italy.

The international event attracts approximately 30,000 key international curators, critics, collectors and artists to the three-day Vernissage (preview) period alone, and a further 265,000 visitors to the five-month exhibition.

#### When

As such the Venice Biennale occurs every two years from approximately June 10 to November 21.

#### Where

The Biennale takes place in Venice, Italy, a city with a population of nearly 300 000 people stretching across a number of small islands in the marshy Venetian Lagoon along the Adriatic Sea in northeast Italy.

It is famous for its canals, churches, bridges, architecture and arts. A city with a long and proud history, Venice was an important centre for commerce and politics. In modern times, Venice is an international tourist destination and arts centre.

#### Why

The Venice Biennale is one of the most important critical forums for contemporary visual art with thousands of the world’s leading artists, curators, collectors, gallery directors and critics attending, networking, discovering and discussing the latest in the contemporary art world.

# The Venice Biennale 2007

## The 52nd International Art Exhibition



### The exhibition

The 52nd International Art Exhibition (June 10 - November 21, 2007) is curated by Robert Storr, the first director from the United States in the history of the Biennale and is entitled *Think with the Senses - Feel with the Mind: Art in the Present Tense*. This international exhibition, set up in the Arsenale and in the Italian Pavilion at the Giardini, presents about a hundred artists from all over the world.

To find out more about the artists and their country of origin:  
[www.labiennale.org/en/art/exhibition/en/73799.html](http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/exhibition/en/73799.html)



#### Arsenale

Since 1999, the Venice Biennale has engaged in restoration programmes to create exhibition areas in some of the important buildings on the monumental east side of the Arsenale.

### National presentations

Also exhibited are 76 national participations and 34 collateral events across Venice. Collateral events are also exhibited in various venues across Venice.

76 foreign countries will be displaying their own artistic contemporary art forms, freely and autonomously, in this edition of the Biennale. National participations are exhibited in the national pavilions at the Giardini, as well as in other venues across Venice for countries not owning a pavilion in the Giardini area. Some of these countries, such as Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Moldavia, Mexico and Lebanon, are taking part for the first time. China is also present.

To find out more about the national participants:  
[www.labiennale.org/en/art/exhibition/en/73805.html](http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/exhibition/en/73805.html)



#### Giardini

These gardens in the east of Venice have been the traditional venue for the Intl. Art Exhibition since 1895. The area hosts the Padiglione Italia and 27 national pavilions, built at various periods by the participating countries themselves.

## Collateral events

There are also 34 collateral events in which the artists, with the support of international cultural institutions, will be free to express their own artistic experience. Some of these initiatives are collective exhibitions with a national theme, others are monographs of famous artists. All these events expand the Exhibition throughout the Biennale, bringing the total number of exhibitions in the city of Venice up to 76, including the countries not hosted in the pavilions.



### *City of Venice*

Countries that do not own a pavilion in the Giardini area and institutions that organise collateral events are exhibited in a number of other venues in Venice.

## Robert Storr, Director, Venice Biennale, Curators Statement: Thoughts on the 52nd International Art Exhibition



*Robert Storr*  
*Direttore della 52. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*  
*Director of the 52nd International Art Exhibition*  
*Photo: Giorgio Zucchiatti*  
*Courtesy: Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia*

*Think with the Senses - Feel with the Mind: Art in the Present Tense* is predicated on the conviction that art is now, as it has always been, the means by which humans are made aware of the whole of their being. However, it does not assume that an enduring wholeness is the result, or that art is a magical solution for the conflicts in our nature or in and among differing cultures and societies. That is the domain of philosophy, the social sciences and politics.

Nevertheless, to “make sense” of things in a given moment or circumstance is to grasp their full complexity intellectually, emotionally and perceptually. That effort does not promise that our grasp will hold for long, or even much more than the instant in which we awaken to the fact that such fleeting powers of concentration and transformation are ours. Incidentally, “making nonsense” of the world, as grotesque, Dada or absurdist art does, deploys those same powers through exaggerated disparity. By inverting order and logic the artifact created paradoxically holds fragmented consciousness in suspension so that its contradictions can be clearly apprehended.

Epiphanies happen but do not last. As James Joyce showed, one of the functions of art is to preserve the experience so that we may savour and study its many aspects. The history of art is a fabric of epiphanies woven by many hands at different speeds; the present tense of art is the outer edge of that work in progress. At any point the edge may be ragged and uneven and the pattern in formation disturbing or hard to discern, reflecting the difficulty of making art in troubled times. We are living in just such times. Rather than trim the edge or reweave the pattern to neaten it, this exhibition focuses on selected aspects of current production that hint at what the emerging patterns might be without presuming to map them entirely. No attempt has been made therefore to be programmatically “representative,” either in terms of styles, mediums, generations, nations or cultures. Instead certain qualities and concerns widely found in contemporary art have been used as magnetic poles for gathering work from all seven continents, in all media, in various styles and of all generations now active.

Between the poles to which some works have readily gravitated is a force field where many other works hover. The poles themselves have been used like tuning forks, such that the criterion for selection has been resonance or mood as much as subject matter or aesthetic methodology.

Among these vibrating points of reference are the immediacy of sensation in relation to questioning the nature and meaning of that sensation, intimate affect in relation to engagement in public life, belonging and dislocation, the fragility of society and culture in the face of conflict, the sustaining qualities of art in the face of death.

Since the early 20th century the development of modern art has been world wide. However its general dissemination and reception have lagged far behind this far flung, simultaneous, and cross-pollinating growth. In recognition of that discrepancy this Biennale has, as in the past, counted to the national pavilions to close the gaps, but it has also incorporated one national pavilion, Turkey, plus a regional pavilion, Africa, within its core, pointing the way, it is hoped, to greater, more permanent inclusiveness in areas of the world and of art-making too long overlooked in the international exhibition circuit.

While this show looks forward it does not look back. No attempt is made to trace genealogies or construct a new canon - and none at all to compete with art fairs or handicap the market. With a handful of exceptions all the artists included are alive and active. Diverse in origin and in temporal vantage points, it is they who conjugate the present tense of art for each other – and for us. The only artists in the show who are not living, would be but for their premature or unexpected deaths; their work is included here because its abiding freshness and impact keeps them on the minds of their peers and the public.

**Robert Storr, Director 52nd International Art Exhibition**

### **Year 9-12 Issues for Consideration**

- What is the theme of the Venice Biennale 2007?
- For Robert Storr, how does the Biennale reflect ideas, issues and events of the contemporary world?
- Do previous themes in the Biennale's history reflect their times?
- Investigate the nationalities of previous Biennale curators. What may it reveal about the Biennale's view on where the centres of art practice have been concentrated?
- Investigate where the artists presented in the Venice Biennale 2007 exhibition are from.
- How many nations are presenting at the Venice Biennale for the first time. Who are they and where are they from?
- Consider how acceptance at the Biennale for a nation brings them into an international community with other nations in a similar way to the Olympic Games. What other implications or motive could be related to this acceptance for the Biennale but also for the accepted nation?
- Discuss the idea that the state of a nation's arts is a good barometer of the state of the nation as a whole.
- Review artists presented by different nations. What their artworks and practices reveal about the nations they are representing and how those nations wish to be seen internationally.
- How do you think Australia wishes to be seen by the result of the world through the artists it has selected for representation?

## Au3: the Australian presentation 2007

**‘The Biennale is a critical forum for promoting Australian contemporary visual art, as thousands of the world’s leading collectors, curators and critics attend this biennial event.’**

*John Kaldor AM  
Commissioner AU3 Venice Biennale 2007*



John Kaldor speaking at the Daniel von Sturmer opening at the Australian Pavilion.

The Venice Biennale is the oldest and remains the most important of biennales. Every two years it becomes the world stage, the leading showcase of contemporary art.

For an artist, exhibiting in Venice is like being shown simultaneously in London, Berlin, Rome, New York, Los Angeles and Tokyo. It is natural that we choose Venice to present the strength and diversity of contemporary Australian art to an unparalleled international audience.

Australia’s participation in the 2007 Venice Biennale is our most ambitious undertaking: 3 Artists: 3 Projects: 3 Sites. Three of Australia’s most talented artists, Susan Norrie, Daniel von Sturmer and Callum Morton have created three significant new works in three major sites in Venice. Taking advantage of the expanded exhibition program of the Biennale, Australia will also be represented for the first time outside the national pavilion within the Giardini, in spaces curatorially ideal for the works.

These three artists are at the forefront of their practice, creating works that are powerful, original and challenging, reflecting the best of contemporary Australian art, and yet international in perspective and ambition.

### **John Kaldor, AM, Commissioner AU3 Venice Biennale 2007**

John Kaldor is the Commissioner for the Australian exhibitions at the 2007 Biennale and was also Australian Commissioner in 2005. Mr Kaldor is highly respected in the international arts world for his vision, commitment and passionate support of contemporary art. He has created an important private collection of contemporary art in Australia and has brought leading international artists to Australia through his John Kaldor Art Projects. Mr Kaldor is on the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Tate Modern in London, the Board of the Biennale of Sydney, and was formerly Chairman of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney and a Trustee of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. His contribution to contemporary art was acknowledged with the award of the Order of Australia.

## Au3: 3 artists, 3 projects, 3 sites

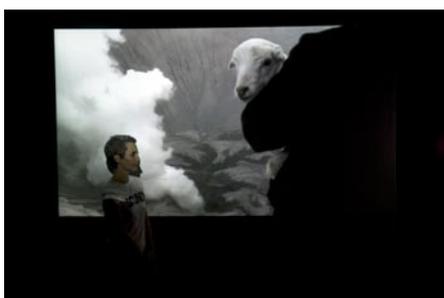
**'I like the multiplicity of visions and sites that corresponds to the quality of the Australian art scene.'**

*Isobel Carlos*

*Curator Artes Mundi Wales, 2008, curator, Biennale of Sydney 2004*

Three Australian artists have been selected to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale 2007:

**Susan Norrie** presents *HAVOC*, a video installation at *Fondazione Levi* that explores pervasive geopolitical issues of a planet in turmoil. The work is experiential, physically immersing audiences and transporting them into an uncertain future.



Susan Norrie

*HAVOC* 2007

Palazzo Giustinian Lolin

Venice Biennale 2007

DVD installation

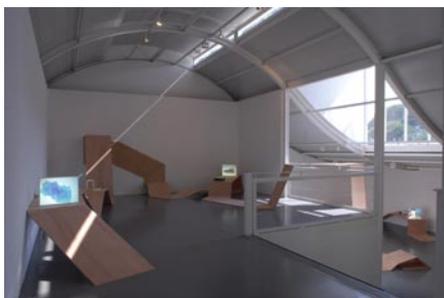
Camera, editing and location sound: David Mackenzie

Interpreter and journalist: Justin Hale

Sound design and mixing: Robert Hindley

Courtesy of the artist

**Daniel von Sturmer** continues his 'experiments with space', in *The Object of Things*, video installations and architectural interventions especially designed for the *Australian Pavilion*.



Daniel von Sturmer

*The Object of Things* 2007

5-screen video installation

Dimensions: various

Australian Pavillion, Venice

Venice Biennale 2007

Acknowledgements: The Australia Council for the Arts

Courtesy of the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

**Callum Morton** creates *Valhalla*, a large-scale, architecturally-inspired installation in the grounds of *Palazzo Zenobio*.



Callum Morton  
*Valhalla* 2007  
Night View  
steel, polystyrene, epoxy resin, silicon, marble,  
glass, wood, acrylic paint, lights, sound, motor  
465 x 1475 x 850cm  
Palazzo Zenobio  
Venice Biennale 2007  
Courtesy the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
and Anna Schwartz

## Other Participating Australian Artists

The Director of the Venice Biennale 2007, Robert Storr, has selected three leading Australian artists for his thematically curated exhibition, *Think with the Senses – Feel with the Mind: Art in the Present Tense*.

**Rosemary Laing** is exhibiting three works from her 2004 series, *to walk on a sea of salt*. The three photographs, *Welcome to Australia; 5.10am, 15 December, 2004*; and *And you can even pay later*, depict the exterior of the Woomera detention centre.

For further information about Rosemary Laing's body of work and practice:  
[www.tolarnogalleries.com](http://www.tolarnogalleries.com)



Rosemary Laing  
*Welcome to Australia*  
2004 photographic series, *to walk on a sea of salt*  
Courtesy the artist, Tolarno Galleries Melbourne

**Shaun Gladwell's** videos depict individuals - skateboarders, breakdancers, bike riders - who critically and poetically reinvent the forms of their environments. Gladwell is exhibiting two video works in the Italian Pavilion – a romantic painting-inspired self-portrait of the artist skateboarding at Bondi, and a conceptual drawing tracking the highway lines in the Australian outback.

For further information about Shaun Gladwell's body of work and practice:  
[www.shermangalleries.com.au](http://www.shermangalleries.com.au)



Shaun Gladwell  
*Storm Sequence*  
2000. Video. Duration: 8:40 mins  
Videography: Técha Noble  
Sound: Kazumuchi Grime  
Commissioned by Peter Fay

**Christian Capurro** is exhibiting a site-specific installation of works related to his project *Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette*. The work centres on a Vogue Hommes magazine that was erased by hand by more than 260 people between 1999 and 2004. This five-year collaborative erasure work was shown at nine sites around Melbourne, Australia in 2004 – 2005.

For further information about Christian Capurro body of work and practice:  
[www.christiancapurro.com/bio](http://www.christiancapurro.com/bio)



Christian Capurro *et al*  
*Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette, 1999-2007*  
Collaborative magazine erasure project  
with site/event program, poster, photographs,  
and text archive  
variable dimensions  
Image ©/courtesy of the artist

Artists, **John Mawurndjul**, **Paddy Bedford** and **Andrew Rogers**, presented by William Mora Gallery, have become the first Australian artists to show at **Cornice Art Fair**, a new contemporary art fair that was presented in association with the prestigious Venice Biennale.

For further information on the Cornice Art Fair: [www.corniceartfair.com](http://www.corniceartfair.com)

## Curatorial Commentary: Au3 participating artists Juliana Engberg, Senior Curatorial Advisor AU3

Space has come to matter as art has become more concerned with installation, audience navigations and social contexts. In light of this Australia has decided, for the first time since it built its own pavilion in the *Giardini di Castello*, to extend its official presentation to other sites, enabling the selected artists to present works of physical scope and migration. And so this year we have three sites and three distinct projects. No theme links them and no curatorial premise overwrites them, but each has developed unique aesthetic aspects that are nuanced within the space they inhabit.

### Susan Norrie's Catastrophic Collage

Al Gore's calamity road show, *An Inconvenient Truth*, might have come as a shock to some – those hiding under the bed, or recently arrived from a desert island or outer space perhaps – but for Australian artist, Susan Norrie, Gore's message about a world in terminal collapse is just another confirmation of her deep held fears and obsessions for over two decades. Norrie's concern for the environment has seen her create some of the most compelling and awesome images to emerge from Australia – a place perennially attached to imaging its traumatized landscape. Operatic in scale, and immersive in display, Norrie has engulfed audiences in a shifting picture of the environment made toxic and unstable by the interventions of industrial and military progress.

The diabolical cocktail of industrial damage, nuclear testing and climate change has been explored by Norrie as symptomatic events: earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, dust storms, toxic fires, freeze-overs and drought. Lava, mud, oil and other naturally occurring mucks have filled up her screens in excessive blurts and convulsions to become a hellish form of minimal painting. Sounds fill space with sonic menace to instill in the viewer a sense of dread.

Norrie's video making differs significantly from the 'documentary' or 'interview' style that dominates a lot of art concerned with issues. Hers is a visual approach above all, and links fundamentally to her earlier processes as a painter. Norrie employs the sensibilities of the grotesque, which spring from romanticism and its twentieth century descendant, surrealism, as well as the cinematic collage, to construct her fragments of awesome beauty and sublime terror. Hers is a visceral video making, made all the more thick and stretched by a tampering with tempo that slows time in an unsettling warp.

One of the best examples of Norrie's video ensembles, and one that precludes the work we are to encounter in Venice 2007, is undoubtedly *Undertow*, a five screen and object event. In *Undertow*, a massive central image, which dwarfed the visitor with its 45 feet loom, delivered a chain reaction of catastrophic events – a toxic forest fire, the ocean besmirched by oil slicks, a city subsumed in an apocalyptic dust cloud, and the chocking parade of polluting cars in their slow, poisonous amble across the modern freeway-scape. This seamless sequence of events was pulled together via the aesthetics of blue tonality and the slowing of tempo, which bound all to the somber tolling of a bell, and rumbling sound-scape that reverberated within the vast hall of the exhibition.

Smaller visual vignettes, projected from cabinets that resembled loud speakers, or old fashioned standard cameras, played silent witnesses to modern madness, environmental crimes and degradation – a choking bird covered in the thick slick of oil, purged from the EXXON Valdez; meteorologists sending up their weather balloons; boiling volcanic mud bubbling and spluttering; and a looped scene from Orson Well's [Kafka's] *The Trial*.

*Undertow* joined the list of Norrie's previous projects, such as *Natural Disasters*, *Shudder*, *Err*, and *Thermostat*, which, in their various ways, had demonstrated Norrie's growing commitment to the exploration of a planet in environmental disquiet and distress. In these projects, the female 'body', once the major site of Norrie's combined interest in the pathological and psychological, was expanded to incorporate the geological body. In *Undertow* this expansion was complete.

Since *Undertow* and increasingly, as forecast in the project *Err*, and more recently explored in the project *Twilight*, Norrie is also drawn to the plight of the indigenous victims of this world in peril. Flora and fauna have been joined by displaced and politically abused peoples whose attachment to the land is being estranged by the interventions of governments, multi-national corporations, nuclear power, logging, and the consequences of climate changed conditions.

For her Venice project, Norrie enters into the heart of darkness to bring forth 'the horror' as Joseph Conrad would have named it, to bring together images of environmental trauma and cultural belief. Focusing on the geographical region of Oceania, Norrie has followed the volcanic, seismic and climate disturbances which, of late, have delivered circumstances of devastation to the indigenous peoples of the area. In this region the indigenous populations resort to faith: mud slides, tsunamis, cyclonic behaviors and volcanic eruptions have encouraged a return to ancient rituals. Norrie bears witness to the frenzy of Animism, voodoo and sacrifice which are encountered as primordial antidotes to the woes of a world in break-down. Within all this, the landscape remains a central force and focus within Norrie's picturing.

It is the land that is at stake and it is the land that will ultimately judge us all. As it has been for numerous artists before her, the land, which all Australians know, is fickle and furious, and full of beauty and terror, continues to hold us rapt and in trepidation.

### **Daniel von Sturmer shifts the perception paradigm in the pavilion**

In many ways painting is about perception. The eye is deceived by a range of illusions into believing, for instance, that depth exists, where in fact there is merely a surface; or that things are smaller or larger, when in fact they have no relationship in reality. Even when art is neither pictorial, nor seeking to represent a type of spatial reality, when it is abstract say, it still concerns itself with causing the eye to travel and make kinetic that which is actually inert.

Sculpture is not illusional, but actual, and is about balance, volume, form and shape and the ways these things react with space. Whether sculpture is figurative or abstract, these things are always important.

The moving image is about capturing colours and objects before they have molecular fallout and disintegrate into nothingness. And so the moving image is about speed and movement and light and optics, and about the transitory and fleeting encounter of things that have their own status as kinetic objects. Space is something you move into, and into which you place things to reorganize negative and positive propositions that cause the contemplation of things related by their deposition within space.

Daniel von Sturmer is concerned with all these things when he creates his sculptural films and object installations that ask the viewer to look and decipher illusion and solids in kinetic interaction. Scale, distance, horizontality, verticality, generality and quiddity are all encountered in Von Sturmer's own play of the perceptible, in which empirical evidence is constantly called into question.

Von Sturmer delights in converting the banal object into a thing of curiosity. Through his use of the video camera, with its capacity to zoom in and out, pan, track, enlarge and diminish items, he can assist common things to behave in eccentric ways to draw attention to their innate physical potential, and activate an inquisitive engagement with a viewer whose apprehension of those things has been altered by a shift in visual context.

Some of Von Sturmer's favourite characters have been scrunched up balls of paper, blue tak, coloured paper squares, polystyrene balls, planks of wood, disposable cups, sticky tape, water, a drinking glass, paint, craft wood, paper clips...the full kit and caboodle of the stationary store. The stuff of the studio, you might say. All these items are called into Von Sturmer's playful perception events.

Platforms have also become important elements within Von Sturmer's visual events. Large, purpose built floating planes accentuate space and assist objects and moving images to levitate within architectural delineated spaces; and they establish a further physical relationship with the body of the viewer. In his recent large room installation *The Field Equation*, Von Sturmer used over 50 plinth-like platforms to build colonies of visual experiments, around, and through which the audience walked to encounter ever unfolding linkages between visual things.

Von Sturmer has given his projects titles such as *The Truth Effect*, *Limits of the model*, *Material from another medium* and *The Field Equation*, to give emphasis to his tools and trade. Truth is an important aspect in his practice and it is worth mentioning in an age when special effects seem seamless and easy inside the world of digital manipulation and post production editing. For Von Sturmer the important thing is a veracity which, by deft means and real visual play, causes the viewer to pursue positive doubt, the better to reengage with the original material and object.

In Venice, Daniel von Sturmer's newest project will occupy the Australian Pavilion in the Giardini. In this instance the pavilion provides a unique spatial architecture to encounter and syncope. With its split level and various ceiling height, the pavilion encourages a different approach to a straight-forward linear event. Platforms, objects and moving images will articulate the space and deliver new vistas for the audience to decipher in Von Sturmer's site related work in which the play of the perceptible will unfold and punctuate the pavilion's membrane.

## Callum Morton is Going Up

The 21st century began with an image of ruination. The traumatized site of the collapsed World Trade Centre in New York provided a renewed vision of hysterical romanticism: |compulsively surreal and awesome, yet grotesquely real. An iconic image from this horror became the spires of mangled, wrought metal through which radiant light passed, as if transporting souls heavenward. The visual legacy of Casper David Friedrich's natural cathedrals, formed from petrified forests could not be ignored. Indeed one might say it was sought. Neither could the reference to the dark, unfathomable spaces of Piranesi's proto-romantic tomb ruins and prisons go un-remarked upon.

Piranesi's 1761 versions of his 'prison' etchings, re-worked and obsessively over hatched, offered evidence of the shock that was inflicted upon the psyche of enlightenment Europe as a consequence of the catastrophic earthquake of Lisbon in 1755. Contemporaneously Voltaire and Rousseau, then later, Kant and after, Adorno, were just some of the writers to characterize the earthquake as symptomatic of the emerging debate between divine goodness and evil. The Lisbon earthquake and its shattered built forms offered a ground zero for the establishment of a new modern order. At the beginning of the 21st century that new modern order was collapsed anew: blasted to smithereens and the dilemma of divine good and evil have once again been encountered.

Ruins have come to stand as metaphors for shattered optimism, and simultaneously as symbolic of opportunities for renewal. Buildings, in pristine upstanding-ness and dishevelment are the active protagonists in this scenario of modernity in flux. Buildings are tangible evidence of a society's ego-centricism. Tall buildings, like skyscrapers offer the symbolism of phallic power; buildings with domes, like the Vatican or the White House represent a maternal house. When you cause terror and trauma to buildings, break them down, penetrate them, explode or implode them, you then have a powerful, libidinous act of psychoanalytic proportions that shatter the fragile ego which architecture sets about to represent.

Callum Morton knows this. For many years his project has been to excavate and unleash the uncanny forces at work in the architectural enterprise through an art practice that recasts buildings as sculptures, pictures and environments which are given phantasmic, chimerical centres with a twist of Hollywood. However, rather than focusing upon the corporate, ecclesiastic, or civic symbolic building, Morton is mostly drawn to tamper with iconic domestic dwellings – that architecture which connotes both father and mother site.

In previous projects Morton has transformed Mies van der Rohe's *Fansworth House* into a party and murder scene, Gerrit Thomas Rietveld's *Rietveld-Schröder House*, Utrecht into a 'Toys 'R' Us', outlet; Ree and Charles Eames' *Case House*, into a DIY Home Depot; Adalberto Libera's *Casa Malaparte* into a Casa Spizzico, Moshe Safdie's Habitat complex into an domestic honeycomb replete with 'rear window' dramas; and Le Corbusier's *L'Habitation* and Alto Avvar's Berlin apartments, into ubiquitous hotel chains. In each transformation pressure has been applied to the heroic, utopian concept of the domestic icon to see if it will withstand domestic or commercial alteration.

As well as dwellings, Morton has invented object hybrids that comment upon the tussle between types of conceptual practice. His project, *Babylonia*, as an example, pitched Robert Smithson-esque 'land art' against Bruce Nauman-esque mirrors, corridors and minimalism; but of course not straight-forwardly. Smithson's small piles of displaced land were converted into a scaled down, island form that recalled the protagonist site of Antonioni's *L'avventura*. This miniature island held in its belly a mirror displacing corridor that resembled Hollywood infinities. Morton is drawn to bastardise the high end conceptual moment with low-end pop-culture.

Particularly in his sculptural events, Morton has made explicit his interest in the issues of psychoanalysis, which inform so much of the 20th century's visual culture, by using architecture as the site of hidden agendas in the domestic space of the cube. In his scaled down dwelling/sculptures the *unheimlich* body is continuously restless within the intended serenity and rational classicism of geometric modernism. Morton's clever scenarios of domestic bickering are indicative of the troublesome and active person (often female) within the Albertian container (mostly man-made).

Morton takes us back to the primary minimal box: the sarcophagus in which the body is entombed. He makes clear the connections between this ancient container and the classically formed, phenomenologically driven, minimal gestalt forms of Judd, Morris, LeWitt et al., which inherently imply the phantasm within. Morton's works are about control, control, control. About disavowing and repressing the body. About domination and the violence within, this of course causes the volatile tension and interest in minimalist works.

Morton's later works, his digital architectural inventions, excursion into the virtual space of new technology. A space in which bodies become thin and vaporized, invisible and evacuated – dis-embodied and without a cogent solid form in which to dwell. In his abandoned Gas station, for instance, the narcissus pool no longer captures the body's reflection; the phantasms have escaped through the violent holes punched through glass, leaving a ghost town without inhabitants.

In Venice, Morton's project proposes to bring all his key elements together. Architecture of the modernist, domestic kind; a phantasmic presence indicated from within; a conundrum space pitched between the external smaller scale and the infinity interior. We step from the dilapidated domestic exterior into the schmick corporate cavity. Lift shafts light up and malfunction, screams are heard, seismic shudders are felt, and all the while muzak becalms our shattered 21st century nerves.

Allusions to the Hollywood scenography of modern catastrophe movies and corporate subterfuge are coupled with the traumatic site of domestic destruction. Morton proposes a ruined site, a collapsed home, and new Piranesi fantasy from which shafts of light will emanate as if indicating the arrival of a new alien, or betraying the inhabitation of a familial poltergeist. Once again Morton proposes the psychic intensity of architecture while continuing to pursue his hybridization of the modern and conceptual project – land art collapsing the minimal cube.

## **Juliana Engberg, Senior Curatorial Advisor**

**Juliana Engberg** is Artistic Director of ACCA (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne). She has curated a city-wide event of performances for the Commonwealth Games, Festival Melbourne 2006, was Curator of the Melbourne Festival Visual Arts Programs for the past five years, was the Artistic Director of the internationally acclaimed Melbourne International Biennial 1999, and was co-curator the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art. She is Adjunct Professor in Architecture and Art at RMIT University, Visiting Critic at the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland, and a guest juror for the Rijksacademie in Amsterdam. She is a sought after commentator on the arts and contributes regularly to radio and TV programs, and has curated more than 400 local and international exhibitions, and authored over 2,000 articles, essays and catalogues.

### **Year 9-12 Issues for Consideration**

- Outline the art forms and media areas Australia's representing artists are working in. In comparison with artists from other countries represented at the Biennale, debate whether they seem particularly Australian to you?
- How do you think Australia wishes to be seen by the rest of the world through the artists and practices selected for representation?
- Can any links between the AU3 artists representing Australia and the three artists chosen for the curated exhibition be identified?
- You have been commissioned to curate any exhibition of all six Australian artists participating in the Venice Biennale 2007 to present back in Australia. What would your title and theme be? Where would you show the exhibition, in what type of venue and which part of Australia? Write one paragraph on what you would hope an Australian audience would gain from your exhibition.

## Australians at the Venice Biennale

**‘The Venice Biennale is a crucial event to build opportunities for the international presentation of Australian contemporary art...’**

*Professor Ted Snell*

*Chair, Australia Council Visual Arts Board*

Australia first exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1954 and has participated in every event since 1978 (excluding 1984).

The Australia Council for the Arts, the Australian Government’s arts funding and advisory body, has managed and funded an Australian representation at the Venice Biennale for nearly 30 years.

The Australia Council for the Arts is committed to building opportunities for the international presentation and collection of Australian contemporary art, and representation at the Biennale is an important part of this strategy.

In common with 27 other countries, the Australia Council owns a pavilion in the *Giardini di Castello*. The Australian Pavilion was designed by renowned Australian architect Philip Cox and opened in 1988.



Australian Pavilion

### **Why is the Venice Biennale important for Australian arts?**

Australia’s participation in the Venice Biennale has contributed to the professional development of many artists and has opened up significant presentation opportunities internationally.

The Venice Biennale creates opportunities for the international presentation and collection of Australian contemporary art. Australia’s participation in the Biennale has contributed to the artistic development of many artists and made possible international presentation opportunities. It places the best Australian contemporary art into an international context.

The Venice Biennale attracts visitors, artists and art critics from all over the world. It becomes a focus for the art world and is considered amongst the most prestigious events in the international arts calendar.

## Australia's past participation in the Venice Biennale

Year	Commissioner	Curator	Australian artist representatives	State	International survey
1954	Sidney Nolan Daryl Lindsay		Sidney Nolan Russell Drysdale William Dobell	VIC VIC NSW	
1956			Albert Tucker (Italy based)	VIC	
1958	Mrs Mitti Risi		Arthur Streeton Arthur Boyd	VIC NSW	
1978	Daniel Thomas		Robert Owen Ken Unsworth John Davis	VIC NSW VIC	
1980	Mary Shaw	Penny Coleing	Kevin Mortensen Mike Parr Tony Coleing	VIC NSW VIC	
1982	Katrina Rumley		Peter Booth Rosalie Gascoigne	VIC ACT	
1984					Dale Frank
1986	Kerry Crowley	Kerry Crowley Paul Taylor	Imants Tillers	NSW	Maria Kozic

### AUSTRALIAN PAVILION OPENS 1988

1988	Grazia Gunn		Arthur Boyd	NSW	Bill Henson Peter Tyndall Simon Linke
1990	Michael O'Ferrall		Trevor Nickolls Rover Thomas	SA WA	Narelle Jubelin
1993	Judy Annear		Jenny Watson	VIC	Hany Armanious
1995	Ann Lewis	Isobel Crombie	Bill Henson	VIC	Constance Zikos

<b>1997</b>	Michael Lynch	Hetti Perkins Brenda L Croft Victoria Lynn	Emily Kame Kngwarreye Yvonne Koolmatrie Judy Watson	NT SA QLD	Tracey Moffatt
<b>1999</b>	Ron Radford	Timothy Morrell	Howard Arkley	VIC	
<b>2001</b>	Leon Paroissien	John Barrett- Lennard	Lyndal Jones	VIC	Ron Mueck
<b>2003</b>	Victoria Lynn	Linda Michael	Patricia Piccinini	VIC	
<b>2005</b>	John Kaldor AM	Charlotte Day	Ricky Swallow	VIC	Leigh Bowery
<b>2007</b>	John Kaldor AM	Juliana Engberg (Senior Curatorial Advisor)	Susan Norrie Daniel von Sturmer Callum Morton		Rosemary Laing Shaun Gladwell Christian Capurro

Sources: Australia Council; Stephen Naylor

## Year 9-12 Issues for Consideration

- Research and reflect on the participation of Australia at the Venice Biennale. Outline the artforms that each artist presented.
- What story does the list of participating artists tell? Consider issues such as the dominance of certain art forms and practices, gender, culture and race.
- Australia first presented at the Venice Biennale in 1954. What other nations also began to exhibit at this time. Do they have anything in common with Australia?
- Australia has a specifically built, permanent pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Which year did it open? What else was significant about this year for Australia as a nation?
- What does the Australian Pavilion indicate about our acceptance on the world art stage that is the Biennale and our countries commitment to participating in the contemporary art world?

## Timeline: The Venice Biennale, a not so short history

### 19th April 1893

- Born by a resolution by the City Council of Venice, Italy on, which proposed the founding of a “biennial national artistic exhibition” to take place in the following year, to celebrate the silver anniversary of King Umberto and Margherita of Savoy.

### 30th April, 1895

- The opening of the FIRS Venice Biennale event.
- Three committees were formed: one of Venetian artists to develop the program of the exhibition, another for promotion, and another for the Press.
- The pavilion to host the first exhibition was built in the public gardens in Castello, just in time for the opening ceremony with the presence of King and Queen of Savoy, and the enthusiastic participation of the Venetian public.
- There were over 200,000 visitors at the first International Art Exhibition of the City of Venice (later to be called the Biennale because it took place every two years).

### 1897

- The 2nd exhibition and the foundation of the Galleria d'Arte Moderna of Venice.
- The jury set up a Critic's Prize, with the intention of improving the promotion of the event. The Biennale allowed a select few Italian artists, such as Michetti and Sartorio, the opportunity to exhibit in personal rooms, thus inaugurating the new formula of the personal exhibition which was to be adopted as of the third Biennale Exhibition in 1899.

### 1901

- French art, which had been neglected in the first exhibitions, was finally included in the 4th Biennale Works by Corot and Millet and Rodin's twenty sculptures of his personal exhibition received considerable success.

### 1903

- Two novelties were introduced with the 5th Biennale in: one being the inclusion of the decorative arts, furnishings in particular, the other being the Salon des Réfusées, following a dramatic protest due to the verdict of selection, which excluded 823 works out of 963. French Impressionism, by this time a trend already established in Europe, was not considered.

### 1905

- The General Secretary of the Biennale had one of Picasso's pieces removed from the Spanish Pavilion, as he feared his innovative artistic language may cause a public scandal.

### 1907

- The Art of Dream exhibition includes symbolists.
- The building of the foreign pavilions began (7 of them were already built before World War I).
- The first foreign pavilion was that of Belgium.

### 1909

- Three new pavilions were built for the 8th Biennale.
- The German pavilion was built next to the British Pavilion. The pavilion initially hosted Bavarian art, and from 1912, works from all over Germany. Closed during the war, it reopened in 1922 exhibiting works from the then Federal Republic of the German Reich. Property of the Venice City Council, in 1938 it was taken over by the German government, and rebuilt under Hitler's order substituted by a more modern design by Ernst Haiger.

### 1910

- The 9th Biennale was held in 1910, so as not to coincide with the great Art Exhibition which was to take place in Rome, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Kingdom of Italy.
- The presence of renowned international artists at the Biennale became stringer with a splendid Klimt room contrasted that of Renoir.
- Also included in the exhibition were the retrospectives of Courbet and Monticelli.

### 1912

- The French and Swedish pavilions were built. The French pavilion was inaugurated with a personal exhibition of Rodin's work.

### 1914

- Expressionism, was presented with an Ensor personal exhibition.
- The Swedish Pavilion was handed over to the Netherlands.
- The Russian pavilion was built.

### 1914 to 1920

- The Biennale took place twice yearly until the interruption of the First World War.

### 1920

- In the period after the First World War, the Biennale showed an increasing interest towards the most innovative artistic trends.
- Paul Signac, the curator of the French Pavilion, exhibited 17 of his own works and other works by Cézanne, Seurat, Redon, Matisse, and Bonnard.
- The Dutch Pavilion proposed a retrospective of Van Gogh, and the Swiss Pavilion, Hodler.

### 1922

- The first retrospective of Modigliani's work was presented, and in that same year an exhibition of African sculpture, which both caused much controversy.

### 1928

- The Archive of the Biennale was established under the name of the Historical Institute of Contemporary Art.
- The favourable attitude towards French art continued in an exhibition of the Parisian School with works by Bissière, Chagall, Ernst and Zadkine.

### 1930

- The Biennale was transformed by a law into an Autonomous Body. This meant that the Biennale passed from the control of the Venice City Council to the Fascist government.
- The French Pavilion hosted retrospectives of Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Monet, Manet, Degas, and Renoir.
- Great Britain organised personal exhibitions of Nicolson, Epstein, and Moore.
- Germany, prior to the outbreak of Nazism, presented Marc, Nolde, Klee and the Expressionists Dix, Hofer, Beckmann, Kirchner and Schmidt-Rottluff.

### 1938

- Grand Prizes were established within the Art Exhibition.
- As war approached, the number of participating countries diminished considerably, reduced to just ten in 1942.

### 1944 and 1946

- The Art Exhibition did not take place due to the Second World War.

### 1948

- After the Second World War the Biennale resumed with a French Impressionism retrospective.
- The 24th Biennale was significant due to its reconsideration of the avant-garde, even though it still excluded Dadaism.
- The two major events were Picasso's retrospective exhibition (first appearing in the Biennale at the age of 67, presented by Guttuso), and the exhibition of the Peggy Guggenheim collection featuring 136 works by 73 artists.
- This brought contemporary art into lively debate, thanks to the presence of the most advanced trends, such as Cubism and Surrealism. Ernst, Dali, Kandinsky, Klee, Mirò, and Mondrian.
- Only fifteen countries participated in this edition, as many nations were still recovering from the war.

### 1950

- Featured four significant exhibitions on Fauves, Cubism, and Futurism, and the Der Blaue Reiter movement. The Mexican Pavilion was a revelation featured the "four greats": Jose Clemente Orozco, Diego Riviera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Rufino Tamayo.

### 1952

- Comparative exhibition featuring Italian Divisionism (Previati, Pellizza da Volpedo, and Segantini) alongside French Pointillism (Pissarro, Signac, and Seurat).
- A major exhibition of Toulouse-Lautrec prints was presented. The American Pavilion presented Jackson Pollock's action painting.
- The special prize for sculpture was awarded to Alexander Calder.

### 1954

- Surrealism was featured.
- The works of Courbet, Munch, Klee, and Magritte were exhibited in their respective pavilions.
- Australia presents at the Venice Biennale for the first time with artists Sidney Nolan, Russell Drysdale and William Dobell.

### 1956

- De Chirico had refused to exhibit at the Biennale until this year, when he presented 36 paintings in a personal exhibition.
- A significant Impressionist Exhibition presented works by Monet, Sisley, Cézanne, Degas, Gauguin, and Van Gogh. The French Pavilion presented Braque, and Chagall, Austria Egon Schiele and Britain Turner and Henry Moore.
- The central pavilion featured a personal exhibition of Paul Klee and another dedicated to German artists repudiated by Nazism.

### 1960

- The Biennale exhibitions of the 1960s were noted for the great number of artists invited, and to what came to be defined as the "excessive power of the critic", which was seen to impose modes and styles.

#### **1964**

- The sensational arrival of Pop Art gave new life to the Biennale.
- The prize for foreign artist was awarded to Robert Rauschenberg, shifting the focus from Europe to the United States of America.
- Pop Art was also represented by Jasper Johns, Jim Dine, and Claes Oldenburg.

#### **1966**

- The year of optical and kinetic art, and arte programmata.
- Amongst the retrospectives, were those dedicated to Umberto Boccioni and Giorgio Morandi, who died during the period of the vernissage in 1964.

#### **1968**

- The Biennale was struck by the protests. Demonstrations and disorder characterised the 35th edition, artists from many different countries as a sign of solidarity, either covered up their works or turned them over.
- Some historical exhibitions were not even opened.
- The central pavilion hosted an exhibition entitled Lines of Research with works by Malevich, Duchamp, Calder, Rauschenberg, and Gorky.

#### **1970**

- The protests of '68 had left their mark: the Grand Prizes was abolished (although taken up again in 1986 with the Golden Lion award), the sales office was also eliminated, as it was considered an instrument for the commercialisation of art and monographical and celebratory exhibitions were temporarily given up, and instead, thematic exhibitions such as Research and Planning and Art in Society.

#### **1972**

- A comprehensive theme for the Biennale was proposed for the first time entitled Work and Behavior.

#### **1974**

- A sensational decision was taken where for the first time the entire Biennale was dedicated to Chile.
- No catalogue was printed, but was substituted instead by photocopied booklets regarding each exhibition or performance.

#### **1977**

- Became famous as “the Biennale of dissent”, a theme much discussed in Europe at that time. New Soviet Art: a Non-Official Prospective was presented.

#### **1978**

- From Nature to Art and From Art to Nature was the theme of the 38th Biennale, which foretold environmental issues.
- The exhibition featured paintings by Kandinskij, Mondrian, de Chirico, Boccioni, Rauschenberg, Braque, Duchamp, and Picasso.

#### **1982-1986**

- The Biennale was set up on specific themes: Art as Art: Persistence of the Art Work (1982), Art and the Arts. History and the Present (1984), and Art and Science (1986) divided into two sections: the first entitled Between Past and Present, including Space, Art, Alchemy and Wunderkammer, the second The Age of Science including Art and Biology, Colour, Technology and Computer Science, and The Science of Art.

### 1988

- The exhibition theme was The Place of the Artist.
- The Golden Lion was awarded to American artist Jasper Johns.

### 1990

- Future Dimension was the title of the International Art Exhibition.
- Members of the ecclesiastical community protested against the piece by the American group Grand Fury which addressed the subject of AIDS, whilst environmentalists opposed to an art work which involved live ants.
- The exhibition was temporarily closed due to tests carried out on Damien Hirst's piece, a plexiglass box containing a dead cow. The formaldehyde solution, which was used to preserve the cow carcass, started to leak from its container.
- American artist Jeff Koons created life-size polychrome sculptures representing himself and his wife Ilona Staller.
- The American pavilion hosted Jenny Holzer's evocative electronic writings and statements, which received the award for best national participation.
- The British sculptor Anish Kapoor received the Prize 2000 for young artist.

### 1993

- Cardinal Points of the Arts, was the title of this edition, a great international and interdisciplinary overview.
- It included participation by 45 nations, featuring homage exhibitions dedicated to Francis Bacon (who had died the year before), John Cage, and Peter Greenaway.
- The 45th edition was postponed until 1993 in order to make the next edition coincide with the centenary of the Biennale.

- The floor surface of the German Pavilion had been broken up by artist Hans Haake, forcing the visitor to walk on the "debris of a nation". The pavilion won the prize for best national participation.

### 1995

- The exhibition was entrusted to a non-Italian director for the first time, Frenchman Jean Clair, who presented investigations of the face and the human body entitled Identity and Alterity.

### 1997

- Future, Present, and Past, was a reunion of three generations of artists from 1967 to 1997. The exhibition hosted 58 nations, and Golden Lions were awarded to Marina Abramovic and Gerard Richter.

### 1999

- Entitled dAPERTutto (APERTO over ALL) and directed by the Swiss critic Harald Szeemann.
- The Biennale initiated a large-scale renovation project on the historic naval buildings of the Arsenale in Venice (Artiglierie, Corderie, Gaggiandre, and Tese) transforming them into large exhibition spaces.

### 2001

- The 49th International Art Exhibition took place under the title Plateau of Humankind also directed, by Harald Szeemann.
- Szeemann said that "No set theme was applied in choosing the artists; indeed, it is their work which decides the dimension of the event. The Venice Biennale hopes to serve as a raised platform offering a view over humankind".

- A key work by Joseph Beuys, *The End of the Twentieth Century*, was exhibited. Various other artists of the 20th century were exhibited including Cy Twombly, Richard Serra, Niele Toroni and Ron Mueck.

### 2003

- The 50th edition was titled *Dreams and Conflicts. The Dictatorship of the Viewer*. The Director Bonami said the Exhibition, created “a polyphony of voices and thoughts: it is a large body in which different and independent spirits of contemporary art are shown”.
- Other exhibitions which were part of the overall project included *The Zone*, *Fault Lines*, *Individual Systems*, *Zone of Urgency*, *The Structure of Survival*, *Contemporary Arab Representations*, *The Everyday Altered* and *Utopia Station*.

### 2005

- A presentation of two distinct yet complementary exhibitions, *The Experience of Art* directed by María de Corral, and *Always a little further* directed by Rosa Martínez, the first women directors in the Biennale’s history.

### 2007

- Robert Storr becomes the first director from the United States to curate the 52nd edition of the Biennale entitled *Think with the Senses – Feel with the Mind: Art in the Present Tense*.

## Year 9-12 Issues for Consideration

- Select a previous theme and research the world events that place around that time period.
- Discuss the correlation between art practice and social events.
- Review the history of the Venice Biennale. Outline a ‘Who’s who of modern and contemporary art’, creating a list of the major artists who have participated.
- Investigate how the Biennale has presented a lineage of 20th C art history. Plot on a timeline of selected major artists’ art movements and when they were presented at the Biennale. What conclusions can be drawn? Have some artists and art movements been omitted from the Biennale?
- In what way is being shown at the Venice Biennale a form of acceptance by the art establishment. Is this counter to the idea of an avant-garde?
- Is the Biennale just for people operating in the contemporary art world? What might people outside this world gain from experiencing a Biennale?
- How is the character of the Biennale influenced by the history, geography and uniqueness of Venice?

## Selected References

### Venice Biennale 2007 - 52nd International Art Exhibition

Web: [www.labiennale.org/en/art](http://www.labiennale.org/en/art)

### Au3 Venice Biennale 2007

Web: [www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au](http://www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au)

Catalogue: Au3 Venice Biennale 2007 Australia, Australia Council for the Arts, with The Minegunyah Press, Sydney, 2007

DVD: Au3 Venice Biennale 2007 Australia, Australia Council for the Arts, Sydney, 2007

## Participating Artists

### Susan Norrie

Barbara Creed, 'Susan Norrie', *On Reason and Emotion*, Biennale of Sydney, 2004

Juliana Engberg, 'As the world turns', *Art and Australia*, Vol. 41 No. 4, Winter 2004

Helen Grace, 'underground passages', Rachel Kent, 'Painter of Darkness and Light', *Susan Norrie*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2003

Wayne Tunncliffe, Susan Norrie, *Undertow*, AGNSW Contemporary Art Projects, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2003

Juliana Engberg, 'Undertow', *Melbourne Festival Visual Arts Program*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2002

Juliana Engberg, 'Engulf', *Thermostat*, KIASMA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, 2001

### Daniel von Sturmer

Harriet Edquist, Charlotte Day and Juliana Engberg, *The Field Equation*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2006

Daniel Palmer, 'Daniel von Sturmer', *21st Century Modern*, Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2006

Russell Storer, 'Video in the expanded field', *Art @ Australia*, vol. 42, no. 4, Winter, 2005

Justin Paton, 'Clearings: Some times and spaces by Daniel von Sturmer', *Into a Vacuum of Future Events*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand, 2005

Juliana Engberg, 'Loop-back – New Australian art to Berlin', *Artlink*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2003

Catherine Nichols, 'Give the material a spin', *Face Up*,  
Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 2003

Andy Thomson & Tanya Eccleston, 'The Truth Effect', *NEW03*,  
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2003

Daniel Palmer, 'NEW03: David Rosetzky & Daniel von Sturmer', *Photofile*, no. 69, August 2003

Max Delany & Stuart Koop, *Screen Life*,  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain, 2002.

### **Callum Morton**

Juliana Engberg, *Babylonia*, Australian centre for Contemporary Art, 2006

Charlotte Day, 'Catching up with fantasy', *Visual Arts Program 2005*,  
Melbourne International Arts Festival, 2005

Juliana Engberg, 'The Body in the Box', *Art @ Australia*, Vol. 42, No. 4, Winter 2005

Stuart Koop & Vikram Prakash, *Tomorrow Land*, 11th Indian Triennale, New Delhi, India, 2005

Astrid Mania, 'Strike a Pose: Australia Gives Good Face at Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof',  
*Broadsheet*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Dec 2003 – Feb 2004

Richard Grayson, 'The Downside Up Show', *Broadsheet*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Dec 2003 – Feb 2004

Stuart Koop & Philip Brophy, *More Talk About Buildings and Mood*, Museum of Contemporary Art,  
Sydney, 2003

Andrew Mackenzie, 'Messing with Mies', *Broadsheet*, Vol. 32, No. 3. Sept – Nov 2003

Daniel Palmer, 'Callum Morton', *Frieze*, Issue 72, July – Sept 2003

Sebastian Smees, 'Aussie Artist takes his Valhalla to Venice', *The Australian*, Friday June 8, 2007 p.7

Andrew Frost, 'Callum Morton', *Australian Art Collector: 50 Most Collectable Artists 2007*,  
Issue 39, January - March 2007, pp. 146 - 147

Megan Backhouse, 'An imagining of the Taliban at work in Toorak',  
*Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March 2007, p. 16

## International Biennales

Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art

[www.qag.qld.gov.au/apt](http://www.qag.qld.gov.au/apt)

Biennale of Sydney, Australia

[www.biennaleofsydney.com.au](http://www.biennaleofsydney.com.au)

Lyon Biennale, France

[www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org)

Auckland Triennial, New Zealand

[www.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz/exhibitions/0703turbulence.asp](http://www.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz/exhibitions/0703turbulence.asp)

Singapore Biennale, Singapore

[www.universes-in-universe.de/car/singapore/2006/english.htm](http://www.universes-in-universe.de/car/singapore/2006/english.htm)

Berlin Biennale, Germany

[www.berlinbiennale.de](http://www.berlinbiennale.de)

Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, Japan

[www.faam.city.fukuoka.jp/FT/eng/2005/index.html](http://www.faam.city.fukuoka.jp/FT/eng/2005/index.html)

Havana Biennial, Cuba

[www.universes-in-universe.de/car/habana/english.htm](http://www.universes-in-universe.de/car/habana/english.htm)

Liverpool Biennial, UK

[www.biennial.com](http://www.biennial.com)

Taipei Biennial, Taiwan

[www.taipeibiennial.org](http://www.taipeibiennial.org)

Istanbul Biennial, Turkey

[www.iksv.org/bienal/english](http://www.iksv.org/bienal/english)

Shanghai Biennial, China

[www.shanghaibiennial.cn](http://www.shanghaibiennial.cn)

São Paulo Biennial, Brazil

[www.bienalsaopaulo.globo.com/english/default.asp](http://www.bienalsaopaulo.globo.com/english/default.asp)

Gwangju Biennale, Korea

[www.gwangju-biennale.org](http://www.gwangju-biennale.org)

Busan Biennale, Korea

[www.busanbiennale.org](http://www.busanbiennale.org)

## PART B Au3: 3 Artists, 3 Projects, 3 Sites

### Artists in Profile

#### 1. Susan Norrie

*HAVOC* 2007

Video Installation

Location: *The Palazzo Giustinian Lolin near Accademia.*

#### 2. Daniel von Sturmer

*The Object of Things* 2007

Mixed Media Installation

Location: *The Australian Pavilion in the Giardini.*

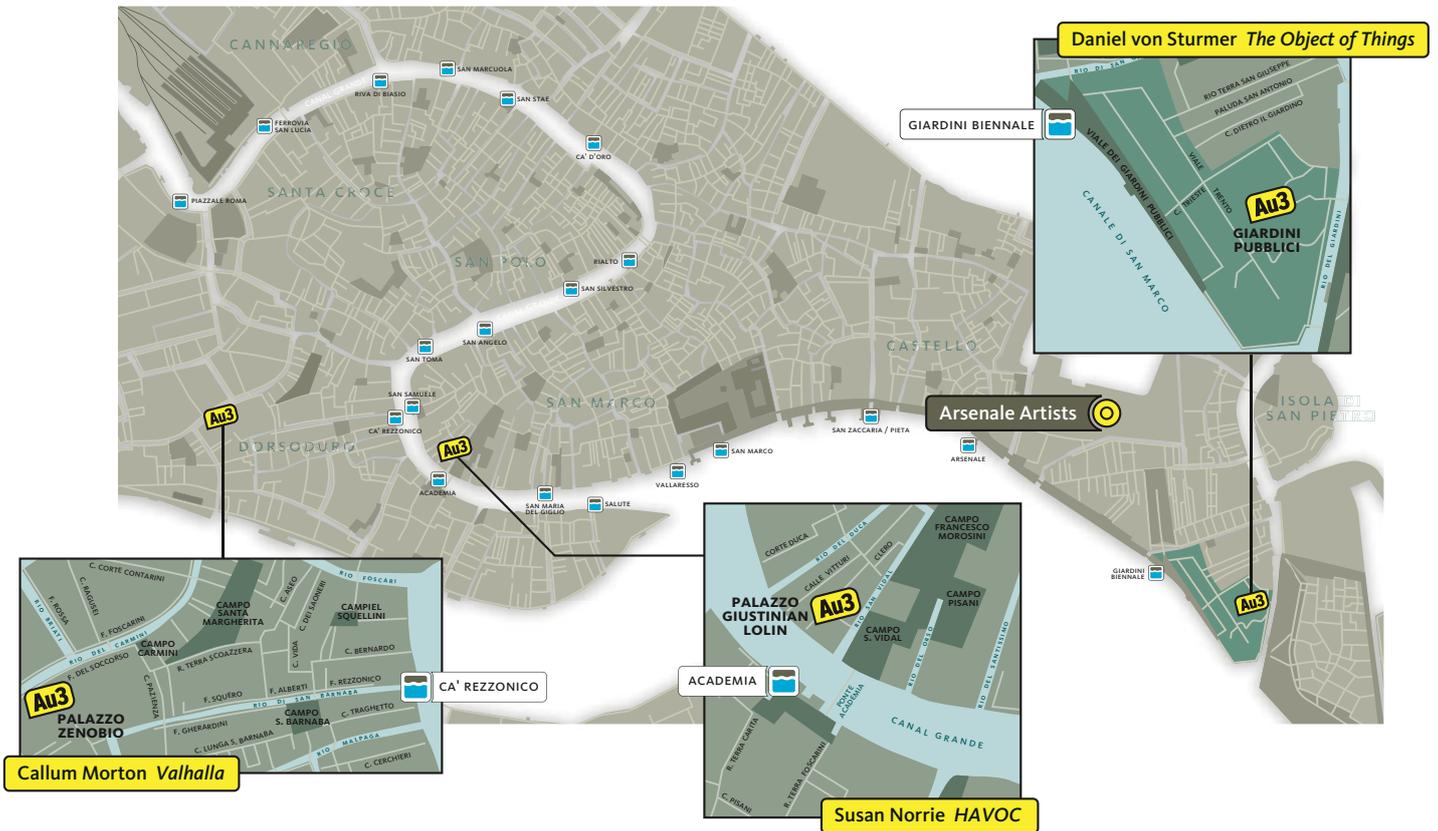
#### 3. Callum Morton

*Valhalla* 2007

Steel, aluminium, polystyrene, epoxy resin,  
silicon, marble, glass, wood, cement sheet,  
plasterboard, airconditioner, pvc pipe,  
corrugated plastic, acrylic paint, lights, sound.

Location: *The grounds of Palazzo Zenobio, near Campo di Santa Margherita.*

# MAP: Au3 Australian artists locations at the Venice Biennale 2007



## 1. Susan Norrie *HAVOC* 2007



Susan Norrie  
*HAVOC* 2007 still  
Palazzo Giustinian Lolin  
Venice Biennale 2007  
DVD installation  
Camera, editing and location sound: David Mackenzie  
Interpreter and journalist: Justin Hale  
Sound design and mixing: Robert Hindley  
Courtesy of the artist

## 1. Susan Norrie *HAVOC* 2007



Susan Norrie  
*HAVOC* 2007 still  
Palazzo Giustinian Lolin  
Venice Biennale 2007  
DVD installation  
Camera, editing and location sound: David Mackenzie  
Interpreter and journalist: Justin Hale  
Sound design and mixing: Robert Hindley  
Courtesy of the artist

## 1. Susan Norrie *HAVOC 2007* Installation views



Susan Norrie  
*HAVOC 2007*  
Palazzo Giustinian Lolin  
Venice Biennale 2007  
DVD installation  
Camera, editing and  
location sound: David  
Mackenzie  
Interpreter and journalist:  
Justin Hale  
Sound design and mixing:  
Robert Hindley  
Courtesy of the artist



Susan Norrie  
*HAVOC 2007*  
Palazzo Giustinian Lolin  
Venice Biennale 2007  
DVD installation  
Camera, editing and  
location sound: David  
Mackenzie  
Interpreter and journalist:  
Justin Hale  
Sound design and mixing:  
Robert Hindley  
Courtesy of the artist

## 1. Susan Norrie *HAVOC* 2007



Susan Norrie  
Photo: Sonia Payes

### Introducing the artist

Susan Norrie works across several media including video, painting, installation and photography. Resident in Sydney, Susan Norrie was artist in residence at the Victoria College of Arts, University of Melbourne and the University of Western Sydney. She received the Seppelt Contemporary Art Award, Sydney and Moet & Chandon Fellowship, France.

### Biography

- 1953 Born Sydney, Australia
- 1972 National Art School, Sydney
- 1974-76 Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne
- Currently lives and works in Sydney

Susan Norrie has had many international solo and group shows. A full listing of these and images of this and previous bodies of work can be found at [www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au](http://www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au)

### Collections

- Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
- Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
- Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland
- Australian National Gallery, Canberra
- The Baillieu Myer Collection, Melbourne
- Sir James and Lady Cruthers Collection, Perth
- Dannheisser Collection, New York
- Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
- Collection Moet & Chandon, Epernay, France
- Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
- National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- Principal Financial Group, Los Angeles
- Wollongong City Gallery, Wollongong

## 1. Susan Norrie *HAVOC* 2007

**‘We are at a critical and significant moment in the history of the world and as an artist one feels enormous responsibility to document the truths of our experiences, not just simply erase history and support a collective amnesia. As Albert Camus once said ‘I am not a philosopher I am an artist’.’**

*Susan Norrie*

### ***HAVOC***

Susan Norrie explores the pervasive geopolitical issues of a changing world in her three room video installation at *Palazzo Giustinian Lolin*. *HAVOC* focuses on man made interventions and seismic disturbances that have wrought devastation to areas of East Java. She documents the resilience of a people confronting disaster, as well as the broader social changes occurring within a culture.

The town of Porong in East Java is now submerged in mud, affected by an unstoppable flow from an underground layer of toxic volcanic mud, accidentally ruptured in 2006. Some of the population turn to faith: mudslides, tsunamis, cyclones and volcanic eruptions have encouraged ancient rituals, animism and sacrifice. Indonesia’s punk movement embraces chaos, questioning traditional concepts of progression and utopia, both eastern and western, and collapsing them into a hybrid.

In a sequence of rooms Norrie presents a shifting havoc of images and tempo. The videos surround audiences with hypnotic, saturating sequences. These visceral videos link to her earlier processes as a painter. Norrie suggests that Indonesia is a microcosm for the broader state of the world. The surge of mud and the dissonance of local punk music are symptomatic of a culture under immense pressure, but also ever present is an extraordinary sense of hope, resistance and survival.

**‘The collaborative process in my projects has forced me to relinquish a certain amount of control and embrace an element of chance and risk. The idea and reality of being in unsafe territory, as well as the intuitive play a large part in my work. I like the idea of free falling into an unknown space. ‘**

*Susan Norrie*

# 1. Susan Norrie *HAVOC* 2007

## Years 9-12 Activities

### Imagine/investigate

- Locate Porong, East Java on a map and its distance from Italy and Australia. What relevance if any does it have to each of these countries?
  - Outline the environmental and social catastrophe occurring there. Who is responsible and who is being affected? What is being done to rectify the situation?
  - Examine the elements that make up *HAVOC*. List and describe them. How would you describe its visual presentation? It has been described as dramatic, operatic and beautiful. Does this choice of presentation by Norrie contradict the subject or charge it with more power.
  - Propose how Norrie has composed all of these elements to make the one artwork and a holistic experience for the audience. Consider how this is similar to the way a painter may compose images, each element in a specific orientation contributing to the overall experience.
  - Outline the range of senses Norrie is activating in the viewer? How does the artist's choice of art form amplify these in a way painting or photography may not. How does the immersive experience also contribute to this? List words to define it.
  - Consider how this strategy is more in tune with experiencing the subject and its location first hand. Being a mediated experience what is lost and what is gained for the audience in relation to the subject.
  - Assess how the qualities of film such as scale, tempo, framing, sound and movement have been manipulated to direct the audience's attention and accentuate the extreme nature of the subject.
  - Discover the location in which *HAVOC* is presented in at Venice. Outline what is unique and particular to this site. Suggest why was it chosen by Norrie and how it amplifies the subject of the work?
  - Investigate how Norrie has made sense of a very large scale event and experience in East Java by breaking it down into smaller more symbolic and more archetypal images and sounds. How does this make the subject more significant and universal for the audience? Examine how *HAVOC* differs from documentary/interview based filmmaking.
- 

### Discuss/debate

- Judge whether you would consider *HAVOC* a passive or active experience for the artist, and the audience. Outline how this brings the audience closer to the experience of the subject but also the artist.
- Speculate on the power and politics of presenting an account of an environmental crisis in the third world in a historic cultural building in the first world. Should art be political? Can it effect change in the world? Examine *HAVOC* and the events in East Java as symbolic of a greater sense of crisis in the world.

- Define the title *HAVOC*. Why do you think the artist chose it? Outline its meaning in relation to the subject but also possible assumptions it may form for an audience as to the experience and presentation of the art work. How does Norrie confound such assumptions?
- Consider the title in a wider global context. Is it a term heard regularly in the media? What sort of events and actions is it associated with?
- Examine how Norrie has used the defining quality of film – time, to great effect, by altering the tempo of images and sound. What parallels can be drawn with the experience of time slowing down in an accident? Do you think the artist was conscious of these symbolic associations?
- Norrie is able to see *HAVOC* as a metaphor for survival and hope. Locate evidence in the choice of images and their composition that may suggest the inhabitants of East Java overcoming their situation.
- Investigate their actual response to the crisis. Have they looked toward science and technology or ritual and tradition at this time? What does it say about their faith in the modern world?

### Research/review

- View Norrie's wider body of work. What art forms has she worked in previously? Is there evidence of these in the approach to her filmmaking?
- Is the subject matter in *HAVOC* one that has been developed and investigated previously? Outline other artworks and their subject matter that has a clear link.
- Examine how the commercial news media has presented this catastrophe in East Java. How does it differ from Norrie's presentation in *HAVOC*. Judge which is more effective in alerting people to the issue.
- Consider the role of the artist as witness and documenter within our world. Present examples of artists across art history who have made this a strategy within their work. What qualities and skills do artists have that make them unique in this pursuit?
- Propose the importance the landscape and environment has to indigenous cultures around the world. Why have industrialised cultures seemed to have lost this sense of connection and what have been the consequences? Investigate these two issues in an Australian context. What is the role of the landscape our culture, mythology and art practice?

### Key Words

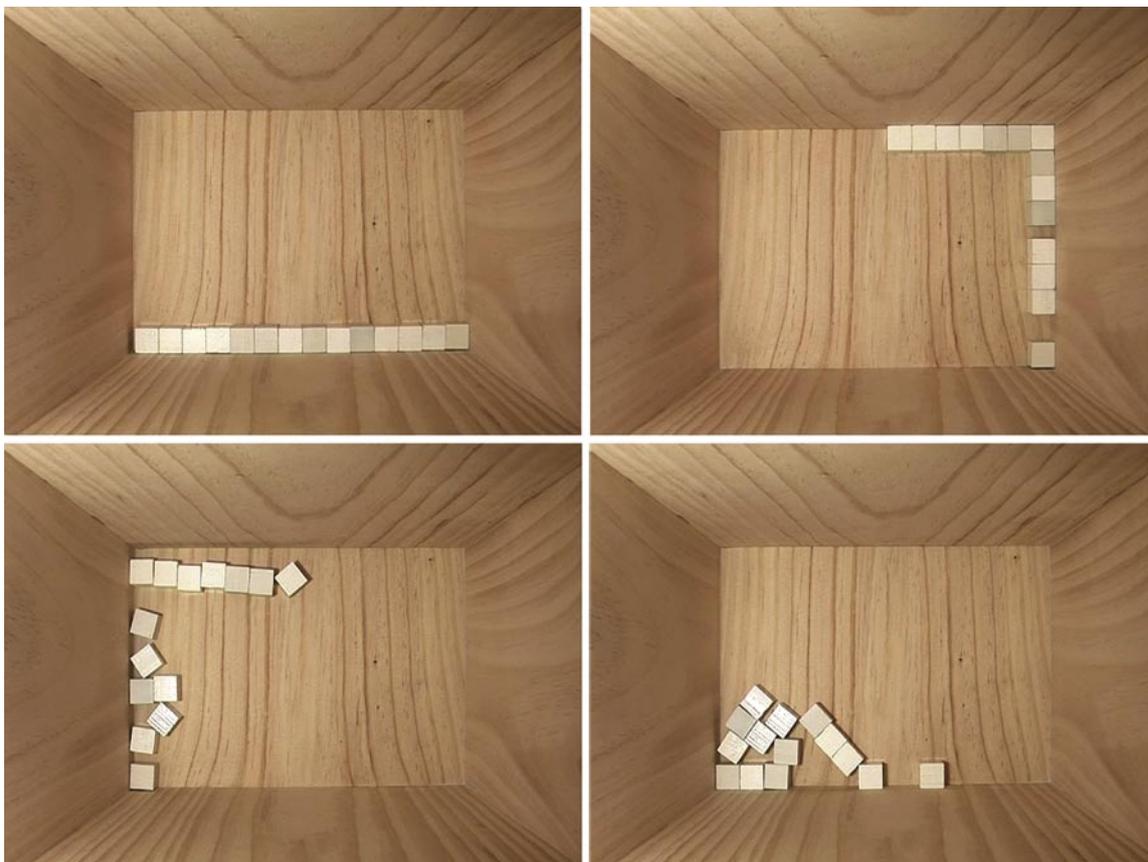
geopolitical, installation, *HAVOC*, interventions, seismic, disturbances, East Java, resilience, social, culture, toxic, faith, ancient, rituals, animism, punk, chaos, traditional, utopia, hybrid, hypnotic, saturating, sequences, visceral, microcosm, dissonance resistance.

## 2. Daniel von Sturmer *The Object of Things* 2007



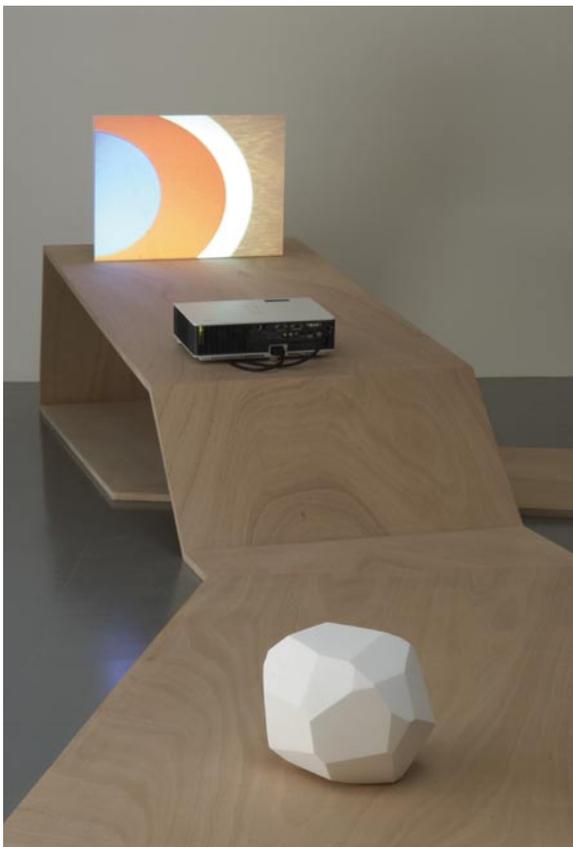
Daniel von Sturmer  
*The Object of Things* 2007  
5-screen video installation  
Dimensions: various  
Venue: Australian Pavilion, Venice  
Venice Biennale 2007  
Acknowledgements: The Australia Council for the Arts  
Courtesy of the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

## 2. Daniel von Sturmer *The Object of Things* 2007



Daniel von Sturmer  
*The Object of Things* 2007  
5-screen video installation  
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## 2. Daniel von Sturmer *The Object of Things* 2007 Installation views



Daniel von Sturmer  
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Daniel von Sturmer  
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and Anna Schwartz Gallery

## 2. Daniel von Sturmer *The Object of Things* 2007



Daniel von Sturmer  
Photo: Eamon Gallagher

### Introducing the artist

Daniel von Sturmer works within a range of media, which explore the relationship between pictorial space and real space, expectation and perception. His 'experiments with space' aim to test how it is we see what we see –using illusion, psychology, memory and meaning. Video sequences confound viewers' sense of space, scale and orientation through experiments with gravity and weightlessness, movement and stillness.

### Biography

- 1972 Born Auckland, New Zealand
  - 1993–96 RMIT University, Melbourne, Bachelor of Arts, in Fine Art, Honours
  - 1997–99 RMIT University, Melbourne, Master of Arts by Research
  - 2002–03 Sandberg Institute, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Currently lives and works in Melbourne, Australia

Daniel von Sturmer has had many international solo and group shows. A full listing of these and images of this and previous bodies of work can be found at <http://www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au> and [www.danielvonsturmer.com](http://www.danielvonsturmer.com)

### Representation

Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne  
[www.annaschwartzgallery.com](http://www.annaschwartzgallery.com)

### Collections

Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne  
Bendigo Region Art Gallery, Victoria  
The Michael Buxton Contemporary Australian Art Collection, Melbourne  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney  
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

## 2. Daniel von Sturmer *The Object of Things* 2007

**‘In all my years of visiting the Australian pavilion, since the day it opened, I believe that Daniel’s exhibition reveals its true beauty and elegance as a space. It is indeed a pavilion with a difference with a thought provoking exhibition tailor made to every unique aspect of its interior.’**

*Professor Richard de Marco  
Demarco European Art Foundation*

### **Daniel von Sturmer shifts the perception paradigm**

*The Object of Things* is a multimedia installation created specially for the Australian Pavilion.

In *The Object of Things* video projections and objects are brought together atop a long plywood platform, a continuous floating plane which folds into, over, around and through the space, shifting heights and direction as it goes.

The videos are small in scale and projected onto custom-made screens on the plane’s surface. They play with painterly values of colour and form, scale and framing, flatness and depth, using acrylic paint, colour transparencies, modelling clay and wood.

Von Sturmer explores the way the meaning of something can be stretched to fit or connect to another concept; how language structures our thinking and apprehension of the world; the interaction between ‘pictorial space’ and ‘real space’, between expectation and perception.

The videos represent another kind of space that expands the reading of actual space. They describe a kind of looking – where the ordinary and expected assume another order of signification. They relate to both sculpture and painting and invoke art history more than film history, using processes of modernism and minimalism, studio bound experiments and a kind of interrogation of material potential.

**‘Daniel’s exhibition challenges the visitors with its architectural elegance and unique integration of media and objects. In Daniel’s work the representation of objects has shifted to a minimal ethereal thread unifying the unique and two levelled pavilion.’**

*Lance Fung  
Curator of the SITE Santa Fe Biennale 2008*

## 2. Daniel von Sturmer *The Object of Things* 2007

### Year 9-12 Issues for Consideration

#### Imagine/investigate

- Identify the materials and objects Von Sturmer has used in *The Object of Things*. Would you consider them everyday items that may be found anywhere? Assess if there is a significance to and strategy behind the simplicity of materials used by the artist?
  - Examine why Von Sturmer's work can be associated with painting, architecture, video and sculpture and yet can not be categorised as any one of them. Identify the characteristics of these art forms and evidence of them within *The Object of Things*.
  - Consider if *The Object of Things* is one artwork or many placed together? What, if anything unifies them as one composition for an audience. Are these different to the unifying elements of more traditional art form?
  - Examine the key values within painting such as colour, form, scale, framing, depth, flatness and surface. Investigate how these elements contribute to the illusions of space that this art form has mastered. Are they evident in *The Object of things*? Compare the language of video including zoom in and out, pan and track, the close up and the long shot with painting's values. What parallels can be drawn?
  - Identify the ways does Von Sturmer uses video to manipulate the viewer's perception of objects, transforming the 'banal' and 'ordinary' into the 'eccentric' and 'extraordinary'. Propose how animating the inanimate object focuses the audience's attention on their physical qualities and the process of art making?
  - Explore the ways Von Sturmer use plywood runways and platforms to focus the audience's attentions and lead them through the composition of the artwork. Is it a linear, straightforward journey? Are the physical rollercoaster twists and turns within the work also symbolic? Speculate on what this could be?
- 

#### Discuss/debate

- Consider if The object of things is more a documentation and presentation of experiments with materials rather than a finished artwork. Is it possibly both - a set of ideas and an outcome simultaneously?
- If painting is two dimensional and sculpture is three dimensional, what is video? Identify each of the dimensions and video's defining fourth. What does this fourth dimension offer Von Sturmer when investigating and experimenting with the issues of illusion, perception and reality?
- Propose how Von Sturmer's presentation of video events on small flat screens evokes a sense of another space outside of the one we know. In what ways is this a direct acknowledgment of art history and what painting has always done while also speaking to the future and new technologies like virtual reality with which to know our world.

- Define what the term 'seeing is believing' means. Does it still hold currency today? How does Von Sturmer challenge this idea with his moving objects? Is *the Object of Things* as much a call to being a proactive critical analyser of what we see? Propose why is it more relevant than ever to living in the contemporary world? Identify other contemporary artists interested in similar ideas.
  - Consider the presentation of *The Object of Things*. It was designed specifically for the Australian Pavilion in Venice Biennale. Analyse how Von Sturmer has incorporated the qualities of the space and its architecture into his work. Propose how this amplifies the scale and experience of artwork for the audience. Are they still just moving around the space of the artwork or are they moving inside and through the artwork? Examine the parallels between the audience's act within the artwork and the objects on the video screens.
  - Speculate on Von Sturmer's process for creating a work such as *The Object of Things*. Is it as simple as it looks? How precise do you think the installation within the exhibition space needs to be to make the work successful both materially and conceptually?
  - Conclude what the subject matter of *The Object of Things* is? Can it be categorised and defined as one thing? Is this symptomatic of the complexity of contemporary art and as such the contemporary mediated, non-linear world in which we live.
- 

### Research and review

- Discover the relationship between discoveries in scientific practice and advances in visual arts practice throughout history. Have artists be known to also be active within science and vice versa?
- Outline the similarities between an artist working in the studio and a scientist working in their lab. What are the aims, process and results of both? Suggest the ways Von Sturmer's practice seems blur these between these two disciplines.
- Examine Von Sturmer's practice as part of a continuum within art practice. Locate artists within art history that have investigated: illusion of space and perceptions of reality and the manipulation of materials and its trace in the artwork. Propose which artists Von Sturmer's work might best identify with and present the reasons.
- Define pictorial space and real space? Outline how painters and sculptors approach space in different ways- one more abstract and one more concrete. Present examples of the ways Von Sturmer is investigating both of these approaches to space simultaneously in his work.

### Key Words

objects, plane, space, videos, scale, projected, painterly, colour, form, scale, framing, flatness, depth, meaning, concept, language, pictorial space, real space, perception, ordinary, sculpture, painting, modernism, minimalism, experiments, material

### 3. Callum Morton *Valhalla* 2007



Callum Morton  
Study for *Valhalla* 2007  
Venice Biennale 2007  
digital image  
Courtesy the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

### 3. Callum Morton *Valhalla* 2007

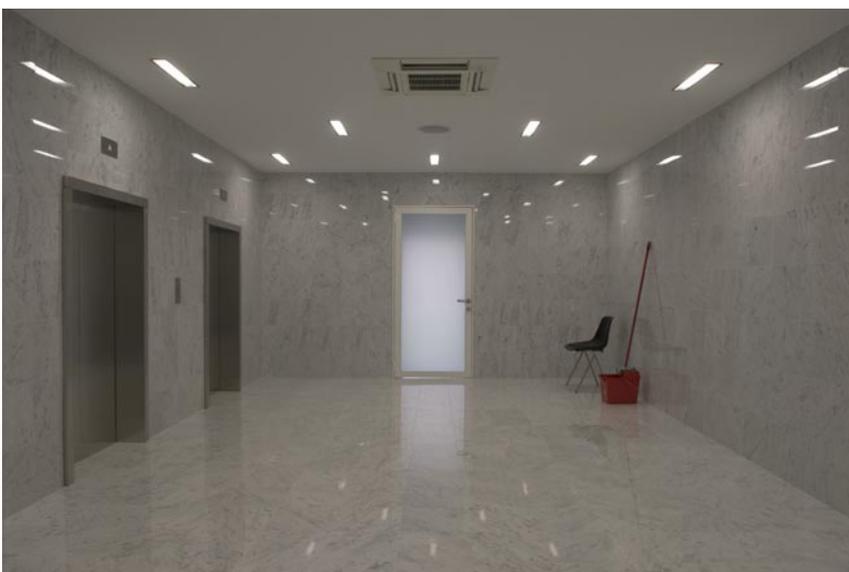


Callum Morton  
Study for *Valhalla* 2007  
Venice Biennale 2007  
digital image  
Courtesy the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

### 3. Callum Morton *Valhalla* 2007 *Installation views*

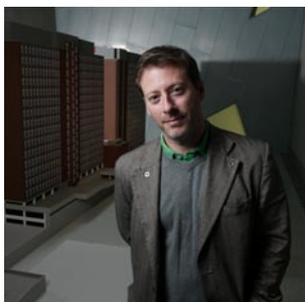


Callum Morton  
*Valhalla* 2007  
Night View  
steel, polystyrene, epoxy  
resin, silicon, marble,  
glass, wood, acrylic paint,  
lights, sound, motor  
465 x 1475 x 850cm  
Palazzo Zenobio  
Venice Biennale 2007  
Courtesy the artist,  
Roslyn Oxley9  
Gallery, Sydney  
and Anna Schwartz  
Gallery, Melbourne



Callum Morton  
*Valhalla* 2007  
Interior  
steel, polystyrene, epoxy  
resin, silicon, marble,  
glass, wood, acrylic paint,  
lights, sound, motor  
465 x 1475 x 850cm  
Palazzo Zenobio  
Venice Biennale 2007  
Courtesy the artist,  
Roslyn Oxley9  
Gallery, Sydney  
and Anna Schwartz  
Gallery, Melbourne

### 3. Callum Morton *Valhalla* 2007



Callum Morton  
Photo: Eamon Gallagher

#### Introducing the artist

Callum Morton examines iconic architectural forms, pitting ideal designs against the fate of buildings over time, as they're subjected to the realities of habitation and the colonisation of capitalism. Lives appear to unravel in these pristine modernist icons while their forms are propagated in commercial franchises such as hotels, convenience stores and shops. Recently, Morton's flawed monuments have been joined by models of buildings and urban elements 'after architecture' that are reduced to richly symbolic holes, piles and ruins.

#### Bibliography

- 1965 Born Montreal, Canada
- 1983-85 Bachelor of Architecture, RMIT, Melbourne
- 1986-88 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting), Victoria College, Melbourne
- 1996-99 Master of Fine Arts (Sculpture), RMIT, Melbourne
- 1996-98 Lecturer in Photography, Media Arts Department, Deakin University
- 1997 Visiting Instructor, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, Los Angeles  
and Artist in Residence, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
- 1997 & 2001 Lecturer, Landscape Architecture, Melbourne University
- 1997-2001 Lecturer, Sculpture Department, RMIT, Melbourne
- 1997-2003 Lecturer, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne
- Currently lives and works in Melbourne, Australia

Callum Morton has had many international solo and group shows. A full listing of these and images of this and previous bodies of work can be found at [www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au](http://www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au)

## **Representation**

Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne  
[www.annaschwartzgallery.com](http://www.annaschwartzgallery.com)

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
[www.roslynoxley9.com.au](http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au)

Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Los Angeles  
[www.karynlovegrovegalleries.com](http://www.karynlovegrovegalleries.com)

Gimpel Fils, London  
[www.gimpelfils.com](http://www.gimpelfils.com)

## **Collections**

Artbank  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Corbett and Yueji Lyon Collection  
Ferriers, Sydney  
Goldman Sachs JB Were  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Minter Ellison  
MONA Collection  
Monash University Gallery, Melbourne  
The Michael Buxton Collection  
Queensland Art Gallery  
Private Collections locally and internationally

### 3. Callum Morton *Valhalla* 2007

**‘So I decided to remake this house as a fiction; not whole and complete, but as a stripped-out ruin, rising back up like the dead do, all rotting flesh and cracked limbs, torched, sutured together and shot through with holes, like a ghost-ride in the theme park of my life.’**

*Callum Morton*

#### **Callum Morton’s holes, piles and ruins**

*Valhalla*, at Palazzo Zenobio, is a ruined building, his childhood home: ‘torched, sutured together and shot through with holes. A monument to all those skeletal structures left dangling after disaster strikes’.

The modern dream home, designed by his architect father, was inspired by US architect Louis Kahn and featured concrete blocks, with a raw ‘truth to materials’ modernity, and an all white interior. It was briefly inhabited by the family, later sold and gentrified, demolished and is now a vacant block.

Morton draws parallels between this ‘local and particular’ house, reduced to rubble, with the mass-produced modernism of the buildings of Gaza, Baghdad and Kabul. ‘The erasure of property development meets the erasure performed by warfare and disaster.’

The house, reconstructed to 3/4 scale in Venice, is no ordinary ruin. Visitors enter an immaculate interior space, a corporate cavity where lifts light up and malfunction, screams are heard, seismic shudders are felt, and muzak soothes. Allusions to the catastrophe movies of Hollywood, ground zero, and various war zones are coupled with the traumatic site of domestic destruction.

*Valhalla* further explores Morton’s interest in the relationships between psychologically charged interior spaces and the public face of buildings, personal biographies and global events, and the destiny of ideal design in the world.

**‘The longer I thought about this house the more I realised how it still exercised a significant influence on what I do. Its image had haunted my dreams for years, as much a result of the trauma involved in its loss (particularly for my mother, who had planted and nurtured a thriving native garden and loved being there) as the actual house itself.’**

*Callum Morton*

### 3. Callum Morton *Valhalla* 2007

#### Years 9-12 Issues for Consideration

Imagine/investigate

- Is *Valhalla* crumbling, rebuilding itself or in limbo? In what ways has Morton rendered the building like a ghost? What does the ghost symbolise?
  - *Valhalla* is a replica of the artist's family home. It was the family's dream home but they only lived in it for a short time. As a voice recording tell the life story from the building's point of view – being built by the Morton family, sold, done up, demolished, its land now vacant. Does it have a message to pass on?
  - Consider the relationship between the exterior and the interior of *Valhalla*. Describe these spaces and the state they are in. Outline the contrasts between them physically and conceptually. What experiences might these provoke in the viewer?
  - Consider how you would negotiate your way around Morton's *Valhalla*: from afar, up close, from outside to inside, through its play of sound and light. Propose your strategy and how it would help you to make sense of the experience. Propose how these layers of experience may immerse the audience in the work and allow them to be an active part of it.
  - Create a list of words of associations with the idea of a 'home' and a 'house'. What is the difference? Can they be one and the same? Is one more a physical object, place or space, while the other an emotional and intellectual idea? What makes a house a home?
  - Outline the types of materials used to build *Valhalla*. Are they what you expected? How do they differ from materials your house is made from? In what way does this help transform what seems like a building into something else – perhaps an artwork. Does altering the scale of the building into 3/4 model of its original size contribute to this re-interpretation?
  - Suggest Morton's process for making *Valhalla* – beginning with design, construction, transportation and installation in Venice. What would have been the challenges for Morton in realising *Valhalla*?
  - Discover the personal biographical link to *Valhalla* for Morton. How has the artist attempted to develop the artwork beyond a particular meaning for himself to a more universal one for an audience?
- 

#### Discuss/debate

- Examine the ways your home might reflect who you are and your identity? Suggest what a home can symbolise in your and other people's societies? Conduct a survey. Is there a common theme to most people's view of 'home'.
- Outline what architecture can symbolise about a culture. Present some examples of buildings that have symbolic value and why.
- Assess whether you would categorise Morton's art making practice as design, architecture, installation, sculpture or something else. Discover how each of these art forms contributes to his art making process.

- Investigate Morton's larger body of work and consider the types of popular and commercial references that recur in his work. Outline his use of the language of Hollywood horror and special effects films and theme parks in *Valhalla*. Suggest how these devices may engage or manipulate an audience.
  - Judge if the subject of Morton's work is as much about time and memory as a home or a building. How has the artist made this sense of memory material?
  - Examine the importance of the where *Valhalla* is seen by an audience. How does the site in Venice, Italy affect the way it can be read or understood. Consider how this could change in other display contexts such as an Art Gallery, a warehouse or on a block of land in the Australian suburbs.
- 

### Research/review

- Define the term *Valhalla*. What does it mean and where does it come from. Suggest why Morton has used this title and how it extends the meaning of the artwork. How has this concept been subverted through the audience's experience of the space inside the building?
- Present cases in the historical and contemporary world of how the destruction of buildings can be a positive and negative action, an indication of defeat or sign of victory, an act of regression or an act of creation. Why is it that ruins in Venice and Rome are considered different to those in Gaza and Iraq? How does *Valhalla* propose these questions? Does it offer an audience any answers?

### Key words

*Valhalla*, monument, truth, materials, modernity, mass-produced, modernism, reconstructed, corporate, muzak, allusions, catastrophe, ground zero, domestic, psychologically, personal, biographies, global, destiny, ideal, design