



Elizabeth Delfs and Britt Salt
The Overlap + The Intersect

FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE





Elizabeth Delfs and Britt Salt *The Overlap + The Intersect*



The title of Elizabeth Delfs and Brittany Salt's first collaborative exhibition, *The Overlap and The Intersect*, elegantly alludes to the artists' working methodologies, which are driven by experimentation with the juxtaposition and spatial possibilities of a variety of materials. It is equally relevant to the relationship between their practices, which, although aesthetically distinct, share numerous overlapping concerns.

Contextually, their works sit at the intersection of multiple disciplines, inspired equally by art, design, craft and fashion. Of particular significance is the influence of architecture – a practice that they feel has a resonance with textiles in its bearing on the body's relationship to space. Salt's works often utilise common architectural materials (such as flyscreen and aluminium), exploiting their spatial potential to compare the construction of buildings to the construction of textiles. Delfs' non-gender-specific wearable objects meanwhile serve to blur the boundaries between garment and sculpture and, by extension, the body and the built environment. She recently began branding each work with her 'logoture' – a combination of a logo and a signature, thereby refusing to label them exclusively as either art objects or couture.

Another concern central to their practice is their fascination with line. Indeed, their decision to exhibit together grew from a conversation about this shared obsession, and in both their works countless lines are variously drawn, printed, tied, cut and folded. Lines denote both connection and tension – two

words that equally allude to the dynamics of a creative partnership – as well as demarcation. However, whereas a line is commonly understood to indicate the edge or border separating two planes, for Delfs and Salt it becomes a tool for the transgression of such borders – a line that they delight in crossing. A seemingly two-dimensional pattern printed onto one of Delfs' objects may be revealed, upon close inspection, to be fleshy, tactile puff paint, effectively conflating drawing and object. Salt's drawing of almost-parallel lines also defies expectation, dissolving from minimalism into chaotic optical illusion the more one gazes at it.

Whilst the positioning of their practice serves to blur the lines conventionally drawn between disciplines, their works are equally ambiguous in their materiality, reflecting a shared fascination for the properties of materials not common to a gallery context. For Delfs, the use of rubber, plastics and foam reflects a desire to redefine conventional notions of beauty. She cites the influence of glass artist Dale Chihuly, whose most dramatic installations involve the placement of his vast sculptural forms within classical architecture, thereby accentuating their alien beauty. Delfs' objects are designed to occupy space with a similar sense of unfamiliar sensuality. In Salt's works meanwhile, the 'ephemeral or transient visual qualities' of certain materials are used to problematise conventional expectations regarding the substantial and insubstantial – walls are constructed from thread and pillars from malleable flyscreen¹.

Though intentionally low-tech (one series simply comprising six sheets of folded cartridge paper), Salt's works possess a subtlety not often witnessed in emerging artwork. Their simple elegance belies a considered theoretical complexity. Influenced by conceptually-driven Japanese architect Toyo Ito, she shares his fascination for problematising the boundary between interior and exterior spaces, her works commonly involving the folding or overlaying of materials. I also find her work reminiscent of Brazilian artist Lygia Clark's *Propositions* series (produced between 1966 – 1968), not only in its use of simple and commonly-available materials, but also in the performative – or rather process-driven – approach she takes toward them. In Clark's case, this was to further a phenomenological agenda, intended to shock the body through the repetition of simple actions to inspire uncanny sensation². Salt's works operate in a similar manner, but instead of performative outcomes, they induce visual shocks. Interacting with her work sees forms dissolve and re-form, lines explode into chaotic pattern, the solid melt into the formless, outside conflate with inside – as in her series of sculptural forms in which flywire is overlayed to produce an optical moire effect that continually rearranges itself within the moving gaze. Like buildings, her works are designed to be seen from all angles, interacted and lived with.

Though no less refined, Delfs' work is as excessive as Salt's is minimal, her wearable objects variously creased, crimped, sliced, burnt and printed, whether existing in space as sculptural forms or enfolding the body to distort the wearer's silhouette. Whilst her material palette speaks of the industrial, the use of labour-intensive traditional textile processes and the incorporation of conventional garment-fastening devices (such as buttons and hooks) somewhat provocatively connotes wearability. She shares Issey Miyake's obsession with the challenge of creating garments from a single length of material, in many cases, the simple act of cutting allowing for surface and structure to implode (again reminiscent of Lygia Clark, in particular her 1964 work, *Trailing*). This conflation of interior and exterior reflects Delfs' research into the recent digital revolution in architecture – in particular the so-called 'blobmeister' movement that utilises computer programs to create forms, that until recently were considered impossible to construct in the non-virtual world. Though Delfs' designs are not digitally generated, they reflect our changing understanding of the built environment and its corporeal

repercussions – garments for bodies (and spaces) in a state of digitally-driven evolution.

Aesthetically and conceptually, both Delfs and Salt are inspired by a well-established movement of contemporary hybrid practice, citing such international artists and designers as Maria Blaisse, Caroline Broadhead, Zaha Hadid and Reiko Sudo as influences. Closer to home, their critical engagement with textiles as a strategy for negotiating the built environment recalls recent works by Perth artists Moira Doropoulos, Pearl Rasmussen and Ainsley Hillard. Doropoulos' *Transitions – Unravelling Tradition* exhibition in 2000 saw her stitch a length of rope through the walls of the Verge Gallery, whilst Rasmussen's 2004 *slip* literally incorporated the laneways and pavements of Perth's West End. Both these exhibitions tracked paths through the city that the audience were invited to follow, whilst Hillard's recent installations have been designed to direct the audience through the work like the weft of a woven tapestry. Doropoulos, Rasmussen and Hillard have all studied and taught in the textiles department of Curtin University of Technology, where Delfs and Salt recently completed their degrees in the newly re-named Faculty of Built Environment, Art and Design. Whilst such titles change in a seemingly random manner and often on an arbitrary basis, these various artists' works evidence that faculty-driven critique can successfully inform valid academic inquiry.

This legacy is somewhat ironic in the context of Perth - a city with a notoriously bland approach to architecture, public art and urban design – making Delfs and Salts' architectonic textiles all the more vital. In fostering a more considered appreciation of how we engage with the spaces we occupy, both artists realise the enormous potential for relating to the world around us through materiality.

Andrew Nicholls

Andrew Nicholls is an artist and writer, curator and designer, based in Perth, Western Australia

¹ Artist's statement, 2005

² Bois, Y. & Krauss, R. *Formless – A User's Guide*, Zone Books, New York, 1997, pp158–161

ELIZABETH DELFS

Born 11 January 1984, Busselton, Western Australia

EDUCATION

2003-2006 Bachelor of Arts (Fashion and Textile Design), Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

EXHIBITIONS

2006 *Moo'ved by Wearable Art*, Denmark Community Centre, Denmark, WA

2005 *Talente*, International Trade Fairgrounds, Munich, Germany

MATTEReality, The Moores Building, Fremantle, WA

Kraft, T L Robertson Library, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

5th Biennial International Juried Wearable Expressions, Palos Verdes Art Centre, Palos Verdes, USA

Off the Wall, Curtin Graduation Exhibition, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, WA

Degree Show 2005, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

GRANTS

2005 Travel Grant, Faculty of Built Environment, Art and Design Department, Curtin University of Technology

International Artflight Grant, ArtsWA

PUBLICATIONS

Sophia Travers, Young Talent Time, *Craft Australia*, July 28 2005

Ric Spencer, *MATTEReality*, *The West Australian*, June 18 2005

BRITT SALT

Born 23 September 1985, Geraldton, Western Australia

EDUCATION

2006 Bachelor of Arts (Art) (Honours), Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

2005 Bachelor of Arts (Art), Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

EXHIBITIONS

2006 *New Design 2006*, Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design, Sydney, NSW

New Design 2006, Melbourne Museum, Melbourne, VIC

New Works New Faces 6, Perth Galleries, Subiaco, WA

2005 *Degree Show 2005*, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

Melville City Art Award, Melville Civic Centre, Perth, WA

Kraft, T L Robertson Library, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

Postcard, Tangent Gallery, Perth, WA

MATTEReality, The Moores Building, Fremantle, WA

Exposure, Lime Gallery, Fremantle, WA

Relocated, Tangent Gallery, Perth, WA

2004 *Junk to Funk*, Lime Gallery, Fremantle, WA

From the Margin, Acolyte Gallery, Perth, WA

So Far, Acolyte Gallery, Perth, WA

Art in Bloom, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, WA

Converge, Acolyte Gallery, Perth, WA

Drawn, Tangent Gallery, Perth, WA

Contemporary Edge, Acolyte Gallery, Perth, WA

Acolytes, Acolyte Gallery, Perth, WA

2003 *01 to Present*, Kurb Gallery, Northbridge, WA

COLLECTIONS

Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

Private Collections

PUBLICATIONS

Emily Howes, Emerging - Brittany Salt, *Object*, Issue 49, April 2006

Ric Spencer, *MATTEReality*, *The West Australian*, June 18 2005

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2006 Sessional Technician, Fashion and Textiles Department, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

2005/06 Gallery Manager, Goddard de Fiddes Gallery, Perth, WA

2005 Curator, *The Sitting*, John Curtin Gallery, Perth, WA

2003/05 Gallery Co-Manager and Curator, Acolyte Gallery, Perth, WA

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