Lost and Profound
Octopus 15

Tina Havelock Stevens
Peter Maloney
Tara Marynowsky
Sam Phillips
Patrick Pound
Elvis Richardson with
James Hayes
Giselle Stanborough

Curated By
Daniel Mudie Cunningham

Gertrude Contemporary
22 May – 4 July 2015
Lost and Profound

Daniel Mudie Cunningham

Nostalgia isn’t what it used to be
I can only picture the disappearing world
When you touch me

— Sam Phillips, 2001

In *The Museum of Falling*, Patrick Pound unpacks a large selection of found objects and photographs that come under the taxonomy of ‘falling,’ forming part of his ongoing exploration of the human impulse to categorise, order and curate. One of its curiosities is a found vernacular photograph of a woman falling from a bike and reaching out towards a viewer standing in for a photographer unknown. Frozen mid-accident, her facial expression is a half-smile and her outstretched arm forms a wave. That it is printed on matte photo paper in saturated colour with rounded corners is a clue—along with her retro attire—of a timestamp indicating that it is a ‘happy’ snap from the 1970s.

Fast-forward some four decades and countless photographs just like this one are snapped on digital handheld devices every minute, proclaiming the minutia of our lives to anyone who will follow on social media apps like Instagram. Dipped in retro filters bearing names like Earlybird and Low-Fi, such pictures reveal, as Helen Grace writes, ‘how it is no longer simply light that is filtered but time itself.’

The perpetuation of retro filters that enable the present to masquerade as the past shows how much of our understanding of digital media is a ‘remediation’ of analogue forms. In their book *Remediation*, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin argue that the ideologies of ‘newness’ that underpin new media are based on modernist rhetoric that insists new technologies cannot make significant contributions to culture unless they dispense with the past. Digital media never really break with the formal considerations that structure past technologies; instead they become subject to a process of remediation.
Defined as ‘the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms,’ Remediation relies on the contrasting strategies of transparent immediacy (where representations efface the ‘presence’ of the medium) and hypermediacy (where representations foreground the ‘presence’ of the medium). According to Bolter and Grusin, the ‘double logic of remediation’ is set into action by these dual strategies, whereby ‘[o]ur culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them.’

In a sense, remediation is a process of ‘falling’ back on something from the past. The action of falling: moving from a higher to lower level implies depth rather than linearity, suggesting that time is understood by drilling down rather than looking back. Certainly what is found when digging up or drilling down is the stuff of dead media: relics of planned obsolescence now constituting layers of the earth’s crust. What Jussi Parikka describes as: ‘A planet unearthed by human technologies and then covered with the ruins of those inventions. The earth feeds that process and disappears under it.’

The relentless persistence of the analogue past in present digital forms is a prevailing condition of contemporary visual media culture. To fetishise the past through collecting or curating relics of the past, or making new things in the past’s image, is suggestive of ‘muscle memory’: motor tasks forever imprinted mnemonically through repetition. Once some things are learned, they can’t be unlearned. ‘Like riding a bike,’ to use a truism ripped from Albert Einstein’s aphorism, ‘Life is like riding a bicycle, to keep your balance you must keep moving.’

Frozen in time, the anonymous woman in Pound’s image is mid-fall, implying and defying gravity. Trapped like an insect in amber. Found by an avid artist-collector like Pound, her image ruptures with new meaning now indexed in a ‘museum’ of secondhand things possessed with like-minded ideas.

Lost and Profound considers the interface between obsolescent and new media technologies, exploring themes pertaining to memory, inscription and nostalgia. Most of the artists work with found objects or old media formats—lost fragments of the material world—and subject them to profound renewal and reformatting through video, collage, painting, photography, sound and music. Artists who respond to the material culture around them through collecting and repurposing material illuminate how those objects are devices for memories with uncertain origins, or, signposts for future forms of nostalgia.

The disappearing world where images go to die is the terrain that Lost and Profound navigates. The work in Lost and Profound suggests that memory is a fiction kept warm by the blanket of amnesia that settles as time closes in and obsolescence triumphs. Broadly speaking, the works in Lost and Profound attempt to remember something of the past so that they might re-new the present.

In Lost and Profound, Elvis Richardson scrutinises the visual clues from an anonymous 1950s photo album that she found at a Sydney flea market twenty-five years ago. In studying this collection of black and white photos and their handwritten inscriptions, the artist forms a portrait of Tony, the photogenic figure who presumably owned
the album. Some photos suggest that Tony is a migrant who arrived in
Sydney by boat and who enjoyed the attentions of numerous women
(he photographed them all). Contrasting these images of sexual
conquest are pictures of Betty, his daughter who lived in Panama. On
the back of each photo are brief notes to her absent father. Richardson
boils the narrative down to two blown-up portraits, one of each figure
collaged with handwritten notes. In an unexpected twist, a sound
component by James Hayes is embedded into the images and heard
through headphones jacked into the frames. Titled Episode 1: Dear
Daddy, the melodrama of Tony's compartmentalised, 'episodic' life is
amplified through a revisionist history intersecting fragments of truth
with the manipulations of affect typical of theme music scored for
television or film.

Music as a memory device is also a trope in
the work of Los Angeles–based singer-songwriter Sam Phillips. Lost
and Profound features a selection of found long play album sleeves that
respond to the return of vinyl seen in recent years. Made for the release
of her record Push Any Button (2013), Phillips adapts orphaned album
covers sourced from flea markets by redacting the surface with vintage
magazine collage and ink. Phillips has described Push Any Button in
as 'an impressionistic version of the AM pop radio playing inside her
head’—a way of 'looking at the future through the past.’ The handmade
gesture forges a personal connection between an artist and her
audience. Yet the irony lingering behind this 'retrofuturistic' packaging
obfuscates the reality of a digital economy bolstered by the artist's
online presence through social or streaming media rather than the
record store of the past.

A fascination with bygone music and its
associated graphics also informs Mister Sandman (2015) by Tara
Marynowsky. Trawling archival websites and eBay for found nostalgic
images, Marynowsky scavenges the visual culture of past times. Through
the gentle application of gouache and watercolour, Marynowsky imbues
found text and imagery associated with vintage song sheets with an
otherworldly emotional presence: ‘bringing them back to life,’ as she puts it. Her creative interventions intersect the handmade with mechanical reproduction, elevating these mass-produced artefacts, while simultaneously drawing attention to the ever-changing historical representations of identity, particularly in relation to women and beauty. The placement of each song sheet in a sprawling, lyrical arrangement references a musical stave while also suggesting that each song title becomes part of a longer absurdist sentence.

Cut up text and image combinations carry through in a large selection of photographic collage and text paintings by Peter Maloney. The artist incorporates fragments from tabloid newspaper and magazine headlines with homoerotic male nudes and images of implied violence. In small text paintings, digital interfaces such as text messaging and YouTube are re-oriented, where phrases that one would usually encounter on a screen—such as ‘Answer my text you dick’ and ‘The YouTube account associated with this video has been terminated’—are rendered obdurate, un-linked. Parochial art world commentary is also a recurring theme in Maloney’s text works that isolate the clichés of artspeak with an emphasis on the artist (or perhaps painter?) as overlooked and obsolete in equal measure.

Media obsolescence and its impact on personal archives charges Giselle Stanborough’s installation That really hurts and it’s still hurting (2012). A silent digital projection depicting the artist performing a confessional vlog to camera competes with a 35mm slide projection of YouTube screen captures cataloguing home videos of children called Giselle. As the carousel progresses to the next slide of, say, ‘Kite flying at Giselle’s birthday party with her friends,’ Stanborough appears like a digital apparition, a ghost in the machine willfully inserted in the interface of the YouTube web browser. The frame where the online home video would have been is cut out in a gesture that feels like a soft violence on the many anonymous Giselles living out their lives online. Created in response to the loss of her childhood photos which were destroyed when her father remarried, her work proffers the speculation that today’s digital phenomenon of ‘going viral’ is a flipside to photography as an analogue memory totem, susceptible to loss and ruin. By intertwining the analogue and digital, Stanborough shows how a past where visual recording was less available to the masses or easily lost through destruction or neglect, dramatically swings the other way though the obsessive documentation evident in ubiquitous user-generated recordings shared in the cloud today.

The structure of Lost and Profound, which is situated in both the downstairs galleries at Gertrude Contemporary and the Studio 12 Project Space upstairs, evoke online digital wunderkammers like Google, eBay and YouTube. It seeks to create a visually overstimulated environment—lots of things to see—in which different temporalities, and varying digital and non-digital realities rub-up against one another and inevitably fall away, akin to the experience of searching for stuff online. Catching objects that are literally falling from the edges of our lives is what these artists do.
Call it romance or nostalgia
The hunger behind our memories
We've buried it in code

—Sam Phillips, 1994
explosions rattle the capital

I was never lost, says Maloney

Melbourne returns to normal again

Tasmania 'sick of obscurity'

Dear NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, I HAVE YOU
Love PETER

Sydney 'time bomb'

Drug may slow progress of culture here in Sydney

ICED UP
Artist found guilty of skullduggery

HOLT HAS PROBLEMS
HOW TO MAKE A FRIEND OF FISH

Judge denies sex with rentboy

Artists paid "Now I'm confused"

This painting is an interactive sound work, currently experiencing technical difficulties

Sorry girlfriend your conceptual art gives me the plop
**Artists**

**Dr Daniel Mudie Cunningham** is a Melbourne-born curator, artist and writer based in Sydney. He is currently the Assistant Director and Head Curator at Artbank, and Editor of *Sturgeon*. Previously he has held positions at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and University of Western Sydney. Whether curating or making his interests tend to unify along the lines of an abiding interest in remixing the image streams of art history, queer politics, pop culture, performance and music. He has curated exhibitions at Museum of Old and New Art, Carriageworks, Artbank, Alaska Projects, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Blacktown Arts Centre, Performance Space, Plimsoll Gallery, Firstdraft and MOP Projects. In 2015 he curated a major exhibition and authored a book on the work of Australian artist Kathy Cавалере (1972-2012). His art practice has been widely exhibited and is held in the collections of Museum of Old and New Art, Macquarie University, DLUX Media Arts and Campbelltown Arts Centre.

**Tina Havelock Stevens** is an interdisciplinary artist based in Sydney. With a steady start as a drummer in post-punk bands, she then moved towards observational documentary, video art, installation, performance art, improvisation, composition and sound design, and has been compelled to play a spontaneous composition on a full drum kit while fully submerged underwater; she does so under the moniker of ‘White Drummer’. She screened her work *White Drummer Detroit at Bulletspace, NYC* in 2014, and on returning to Australia completed the durational performance work *White Drummer Rewound Room for Performance Space’s Day for Night at Carriageworks, 2015*, and exhibited *White Drummer Ghost Class at Alaska Projects, 2015*.

**Peter Maloney** was born in Western Australia, and lives and works in Canberra. He adopts a variety of techniques and approaches in his painting practice, including William S. Burroughs-style cut-ups and punk graphics. His subject matter is often derived from tabloid newspapers and magazines, and his work is often characterised by its ‘post-gay, post-AIDS sensibility. Recent solo exhibitions include: *A Focus*, Newcastle Art Gallery, New South Wales, 2014; and *Radar & Other Fabulous Colours*, Utopia Art Gallery, Sydney, 2013. Recent group exhibitions include: *Loose Canon*, curated by Daniel Mudie Cunningham, Artbank, Sydney, 2014; and *Test Pattern*, curated by Geoff Newton, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne and Sydney University Art Gallery, New South Wales, 2012–13. Peter Maloney is represented by Utopia Art Sydney.

**Tara Marynowsky** lives and works in Sydney. Her painterly interventions on found artifacts including vintage photos and song sheets respond to cultural stereotypes and mythical archetypes – particularly of women and beauty – collapsing a strangely familiar past with an unsettling present. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Tide is High*, Edwina Corlette Gallery, Brisbane, 2015; and *Venus of Venus*, Chalk Horse Gallery, Sydney, 2014. Recent group exhibitions include: *Sealed Section*, curated by Miriam Kelly, Artbank, Sydney, 2014; and *Sense of Surround*, Edwina Corlette Gallery, Brisbane, 2014. Tara Marynowsky is represented by Chalk Horse Gallery, Sydney, and Edwina Corlette Gallery, Brisbane.

**Sam Phillips** is a singer-songwriter based in Los Angeles, California. Since her acclaimed debut album *The Indescribable Wow* (Virgin, 1988), Phillips has released eight albums including the Grammy-nominated *Martins and Bikinis* (Virgin, 1994). In 2009, Phillips launched Long Play, an online subscription project where listeners received new work in the form of an album, several EPs, podcasts, and artwork including Super 8 films, collages and Polaroids. A low-fi aesthetic that fused analogue with the digital and brought to life Phillips’ idea of an intimate audio collaboration. Recent exhibitions include: *The Soft Knife*, Firstdraft, Sydney, 2015; and *From The Collection*, curated by Emily Cormack, Warrnambool Gallery and Museum, Victoria, 2015.

**Patrick Pound** is a Melbourne-based artist working across mediums. His work has the look of having been made by someone who has set out to try and explain the world and who, having failed, has been reduced to collecting it. His work is about compiling and constructing evidence and making sense of things. His work poses the world as a puzzle. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Small world*, Stills Gallery Sydney, 2015; *The Museum of Holes*, Castlemaine Art Gallery and Museum, Victoria, 2015; and *People who look dead but (probably) aren’t*, Stills Gallery, Sydney, 2014. Recent group exhibitions include: *Australia and the Photograph*, curated by Judy Annear, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2015; and *From The Collection*, curated by Emily Cormack, Warrnambool Gallery and Museum, Victoria, 2015.

**Elvis Richardson** was born in Sydney and lives and works in Melbourne. His practice instinctively burrows through the sediment of obsolete and interrupted material culture dwelling in the places where the unclaimed and unforeseen meet. Recent solo exhibitions include: Galerie Pompon, Sydney, 2014; and *National House Search*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 2013. Recent group exhibitions include: *Dirt, Dust and Ruins*, Tin Sheds Gallery, University of Sydney, 2013; and *Regimes of Value*, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, 2013. Elvis Richardson is represented by Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide and Galerie Pompon, Sydney.

**Giselle Stanborough** is a Sydney-based artist whose practice addresses online user-generated media and the ways in which such technologies encourage us to identify and perform notions of self. She has an interest in the intersection between image and ethics in the contemporary mediascape. Her work has been shown online in *The Washington Post’s ‘Pictures of The Day’* and in *Hennessy Youngman’s Art Thought*. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Interknot*, Rearview Gallery, Melbourne, 2012; and *Destiny’s Children* (with J.D. Reforma), Gaffa Gallery, Sydney, 2011. Recent group exhibitions include: *Real Life Human Resources*, Firstdraft, Sydney, 2014; and *The Soft Knife*, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, New South Wales, 2014.
Works

**Patrick Pound**  
_The Museum of Falling_, 2012–  
Found objects and songs

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**Sam Phillips**  
*Push Any Button*, 2013  
viny long play record sleeves with collage and ink, HMV stereogram: `Here's Art, Which Ones? Everybody's in the Big Show, Push Any Button, Circus, Living with People, Below Zero, Music Famous, Go with the Crowd?, The Senses, Magic Eye, Mystical Mocies, Eclipses`

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**Elvis Richardson with James Hayes**  
_Episode 1: Dear Daddy_, 2015  
Digital prints on rag paper with embedded looped soundtrack

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**Tina Havelock Stevens**  
_Up There_, 2015  
Installation of videos  
Left: _Sharp Shooting Dad_  
Standard-8 film to digital, 6:02 min  
Right: _White Drummer Ghost Class_  
HD video with sound, 10:59 min

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**Tara Marynowsky**  
_Mister Sandman_, 2015  
Watercolour, gouache, and acrylic on vintage song sheets  
_Octopus_, c.1910, 2015  
Watercolour and gouache on vintage postcards

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**Peter Maloney**  
_Installation of Untitled works_, 2013–2015  
Acrylic, graphite and collage on canvas

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**Giselle Stanborough**  
_That really hurts and it's still hurting_, 2012  
HD video, 35mm slides
OCTOPUS 15:
LOST AND PROFOUND
Curated by
Daniel Mudie Cunningham
Front gallery, Main gallery, Studio 12
22 May – 4 July 2015

The curator thanks the artists and their galleries; Gertrude Contemporary: Emma Crimmings, Helen Hughes and staff; Arthbank: Tony Stephens and staff; lenders of works by Peter Maloney: Gareth Sansom and Neil Hobbs; lenders of works by Sam Phillips: Garrett Manry, Jill Lorenz and special thanks to Eric Gorlain.

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Design Elliott Bryce Foulkes.