

# AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR CONCRETE ART

2006





WELCOME

**‘CONCRETE REALITIES’ “AC4CA 2006” exhibition at G & A Studio, Sydney, 2006:  
and other related projects by the Australian Centre for Concrete Art (AC4CA)**

The Australian Centre for Concrete Art has continually worked towards a concrete reality that deals with the interdependence of artworks and the context of their exhibition. The individuals involved have worked with and challenged the historical context of Concrete Art through experiments concerned not only with their own needs, but also tapping into a rich working methodology born out of early 20th century European art and seminal art movements such as De Stijl, The Bauhaus, Russian Constructivism and Concrete Art. What the artists involved within the AC4CA project demonstrate and are motivated by is a need to consider and expand upon formative modes of practice which deal with the basic elements which make up art e.g. colour, line, construction, materiality and form.

The G & A Studio exhibition ‘AC4CA 2006’ is part of an ongoing project of the AC4CA which has to date completed nine public wall painting projects in and around the city of Fremantle, in addition to the exhibition in the Moores Building (WA), as well as the current exhibition in Sydney.

The diversity of materials, conceptual rigour and differing approaches to work are evident in this show. For example, Trevor Richards multi-panelled wall construction ‘BYOG reflex’ 2006, and Rauno Jarvinen’s banner ‘Tick-ing’ 2005’ both bridge the spatial demarcation between wall and floor, whilst Billy Gruner’s striped laminex painting ‘Purist Painting No.5’ 2006 and Joerg Hubmann’s multi-planed floor piece ‘Construction No.2’ 2006 demonstrate how a reductive system of production produces a multitude of outcomes. What this form of conceptual rigour and subsequent working methodology suggests is a versatility of material among those individuals concerned with an ongoing active engagement with a reductive and more importantly concrete form of intervention.

The act of engaging with a history of Concrete Art and its subsequent outcomes, positions the work within a historical, aesthetic and philosophical setting. It is a tendency described by Dutch De Stijl painter and architect Theo van Doesburg in his 1930 manifesto 'Concrete Art'. What this methodology has allowed from generation to generation of artists is the public and theoretical substantiation of a non-figurative form of depiction that employs shifting monochromatic and geometric forms in painting and sculpture. It allows a way of considering our constructed environments and a way of challenging and reinvesting the art object. Andrew Leslie's '3 monochromes G & A' 2006, Helen Smith's 'Knuff' 2006 and Daniel Göttin's 'Untitled 1-8' 2006 could be seen as perceptual experiments with materials producing a broad range of outcomes. This work displays a sensitivity and awareness of materials that is absent in a lot of contemporary art practice. The work in the exhibition intrinsically demonstrates a vitality and conceptual awareness to both historical and current working methodologies of Concrete Art.

It is necessary to view the context of the exhibition within a wider contemporary scene. AC4CA shares similar concerns with contemporary exhibition spaces such as Sydney Non-Objective (S.N.O), Non-Objective Toowoomba (N.O.T), Centre for Contemporary Non-Objective Art (CCNOA) and Minus Space New York, and recent historical survey exhibitions. In particular in 2004 Los Angeles's MOCA and LACMA held exhibitions respectively titled 'A Minimal Future' and 'Beyond Geometry' showing concrete and geometric artworks from seminal 20th century historical periods. These exhibitions and subsequent works demonstrated a vibrant and diverse methodology of construction and use of materials within structured working conditions. From this historical stance and production of art works, what then does this form of art making have to do with Australia and the many artists who actively work and engage with this form of thinking and production?

The greatest sentiment that Concrete methodologies represent is the way in which we as individuals can produce work that is about the simple pleasures of art making e.g. the notion of the line, the form, the colour, the material, the composition, the construction, the placement, the installation and the support. Even though this form of working methodology is opposed to more emotive forms of production it is not opinionated about them. This form of art making strips away the non-essentials and concentrates on the seminal concepts, issues and methodologies inherent within the making of the work. From Jan van der Ploeg's geometric paintings of shapes and lines '6-Pack' 2006 and 'Balls' 2006, Alex Spremberg's enamel organic patterns 'Light Squeeze' 2005 to Pam Aitken's silent reductive shapes floating on plastic sheets 'Variation on a still point 8' 2006, one is aware of a heightened sense of materiality that crosses borders and boundaries and is actively engaged with its historical positioning as well as current contemporary discourse. These works gather impulses from our constructed environments and urban fabrics creating responses to the way in which we experience and see our many varying spaces, through colour, shape and line.

This work can also engage with and transcend the everyday revealing a universe of cultural artistic significance. It can be extended and developed in new methods of production, such as Billy Gruner's 'Purist Floor Structure No.1' 2006, which utilises the simplified notion of the bakery box as a starting point and from this producing a dynamic yet subtle form, which was small in scale yet weighted in intention. Jurek Wybraniec's 'Welcome Mat 2' 2006 becomes at once an allocated field of artistic inquiry whilst being seen as an everyday household object.

AC4CA has developed a dual system of presentation, between the inside and the outside world, represented by public wall paintings and gallery exhibitions. Andrew Leslie's wall relief '3 monochromes G & A' 2006 (which projects a monochromatic colour onto the wall from inside its aluminium construction) and Daniel Götting's 'Pakenham Street

wall painting' 2003 (which is designed as an articulation of the surrounding built environment it is situated within) illustrate this dual system. Space, time and structure play an essential role in the language of working in these different contexts.

The work amounts to more than the sum of its constituent elements and their materiality as it does not just occupy a particular place in objective space, but transcends it to become something new. It is this objectiveness that enables this work to be constantly regenerative within its methodology. One only needs to look at Jan van der Ploeg's 'Grip' 2003 wall painting in Cantonment Street, Fremantle and 'Grip' 2006 acrylic on canvas painting exhibited at G & A Studios, to see the necessity and vitality of this method of working. It opens up the conceptual framework of the studio inventions to new presentations and further possibilities of invention.

The relationship between art and the space in which it is presented is fundamental for the artists participating in the show, who produce work with a critical potential in relation to the context in which it appears. It is also specific towards the notion of the object. It is through this that the work is based on the notion of radically reducing itself to a pure contingency. All the artists in 'AC4CA 2006' have produced a varied and wide range of responses. Within this exhibition painting becomes object at the same time as it is dematerialised, creating a new synthesis. These artists share an interest in the site or architectural context in which the work is encountered as well as the relationship between object in space and object creating space.

The expansion of painting from the limits of the canvas support enables these artists to see the urban environment as an extension of their studio or gallery practice and as a result the way we see those spaces we construct can be used as a material to be used and adopted, and utilised in the construction of new concrete possibilities.

This form of consideration and production has allowed the work to move from the context of the gallery space and its social, cultural and political positions to a more immediate location situated within our social, cultural and built spaces. This enables each artist to show what a work implies in a determined place, space and time, and as a result heightens that location and makes us ask what that place implies. This form of working methodology contributes to our understanding of the hybridity of our constructed spaces. This type of spatial demarcation is endowed with a double aim: to point out the properties of the space in which it is painted and to point out itself as painting

A seminal issue of the G & A studios exhibition 'AC4CA 2006' is the way the work shifts between traditional art materials of paint, canvas, wood on the one hand and on the other a typology of plastic elements in which colour and form are reified within a zero degree of production, which can be viewed as a verbalization and material construction of time. It is a moment at once set in concrete, visually, while at the same moment extending beyond the limits of the object to offer new possibilities and advancement. The language of this work does not trickle away; quite the opposite it is enduring and reinvigorates a formal approach towards art making. As a result it overcomes the historical baggage and uncertainties forced upon it by those critical of this methodology of production, giving amplified meaning to the individual solutions presented within this exhibition. The affinity towards this field of inquiry and the commitment of both the participants in the exhibition and also the AC4CA has produced an ongoing and positive dialogue within the historical context of Concrete Art through their evolving projects and exhibitions.

The pictorial possibilities of Concrete Art have expanded since the early 20th century. The strength of this work is based on its varying materiality. From classical canvas and paper to a range of manufactured and natural materials such as plastic sheeting, glass and Plexiglas, wood, metal, stone and earth, and the employment of computer and photographic techniques. It is through a resistance to prevailing fashion, that a concrete methodology is able to

maintain a consistency and ongoing development through its many generational shifts. It is a process of making an engaging distinction between composition and construction. Concrete Art can thus be thought of as a self-evident visual language. At the same time it plays out its potential with changing and self-renewing evolution. The identity of colour and form, structures itself flawlessly, and the presentation of each subsequent work invented, exhibition organised or publication produced, is an action of constructing a working methodology which strives for absolute clarity through simplicity of means.

The artists who were involved in the exhibition 'AC4CA 2006' seek to establish colour as its own entity. But rather than dissolving into the immateriality of light, it is as if pieces of colour are hardened into objects. This leads away from painting and expands upon more personalised methods of production into ordinary objects, design, and industrial manufacture. These individuals continue to bring forth a greater diversity of forms independent of the representation of reality. Symmetry, progression and order are all elements, which contribute towards the creation of a sustainable visual language.

For Dutch De Stijl artist Theo van Doesburg, Concrete Art was an art that referred solely to itself, through the clarity of its intellectual design and the limitations of the simple basic pictorial elements. The concentration on the formative processes of artistic production has contributed to the shaping of the term "concrete" which refers to the formation of abstract, conceptual and mathematical aspects, which result in an aesthetic visual language. Geometric forms are thus not merely a result of pictorial formation but also a pictorial means of illustrating intellectual processes and concepts. It is the gathering of artists from a wide range of nationalities that have an affinity with this form of production that has enabled an active, positive exchange of ideas.

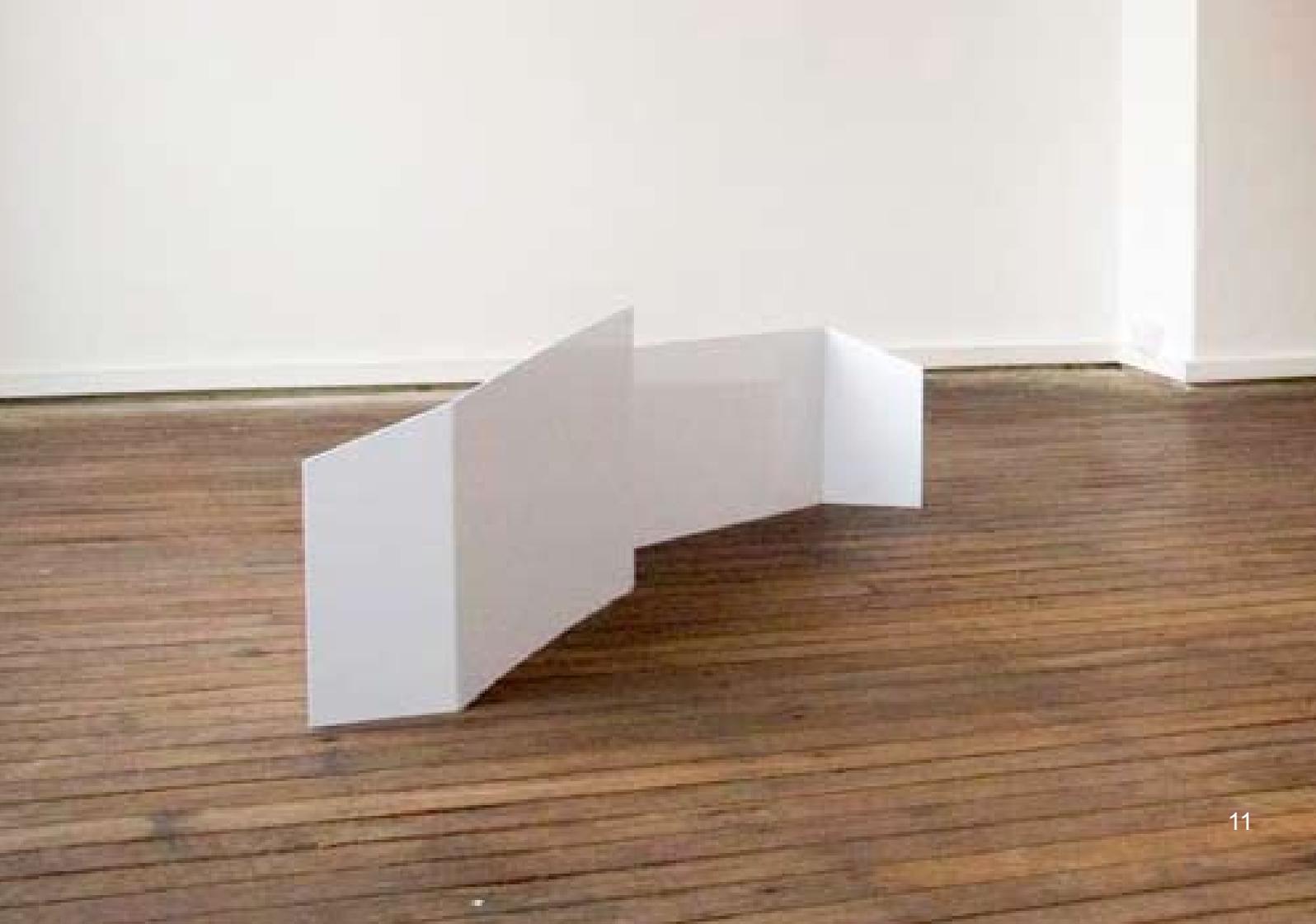
The great advantage of Concrete Art and this form of working methodology is that the artistic canon modifies itself again and again to correspond to changing times and the technical and intellectual principles of the present. This exhibition at G & A studios demonstrates how through contemplation this work is intrinsically situated within the real. The real of those spaces we conceptualise, design and construct. These objects that we are confronted with are at once obvious within their initial viewing yet through contemplation and time, new possibilities and varying degrees of abstraction and reality emerge. What this exhibition demonstrates is that Australia has an active dialogue within a mode of practice that historically has been based within Europe.

It is evident within both this exhibition and other AC4CA projects, that what has been demonstrated is how aesthetic concerns, historical styles and past and present strategies intersect within many various working methodologies. This is what makes this form of work so dynamic and allows it to have a relevant and ongoing development within current contemporary discourse. It has afforded individuals as well as groups of artists a method of production that has continually redeveloped a reductionist notion of colour and construction for a wide variety of outcomes. In the end, the exhibition's most pertinent consequence may be to have very elegantly confirmed the freedom originally conferred on art by the Concrete Art movement. It remains a relevant methodology to be engaged with, and make work by.

Kyle Jenkins  
Toowoomba 2006





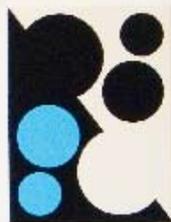
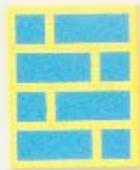




















Daniel Götting  
*Pakenham Street* Wall Painting  
 Fremantle 2003



Jan van der Ploeg's *Grip* 2003  
 Wall Painting in Cantonment St  
 Fremantle

## Works

Trevor Richards	<i>BYOG reflex</i> 2006, wood, acrylic, metal, plastic, spray lacquer dimensions variable	p 9
Rauno Jarvinen	<i>Ticking</i> 2005, acrylic undercoat, bronzing medium and rich gold on cotton 18m x 157cm	p 10
Billy Gruner	<i>Purist Painting No.5</i> 2006, wood, laminex and enamel 100cm x 100cm <i>Purist Floor Structure No.1</i> 2006, powder coated aluminium 40 x 160 cm	p10 p 11
Joerg Hubmann	<i>Construction No.2</i> 2006, timber and fabric 87 x 150 x 200cm	p 12
Andrew Leslie	<i>3 monochromes G &amp; A</i> 2006, anodised aluminium, glass, acrylic 73 x 264cm	p 13
Helen Smith	<i>Knuff</i> 2006, primer silver on plywood magazine files 151 x 105cm	p14
Daniel Götting	<i>Untitled 1-8</i> 2006, acrylic, adhesive tape, cardboard, MDF each piece 12 x 12cm	p 15
Jan van der Ploeg	<i>6-Pack</i> 2006, acrylic on canvas 30 x 24cm <i>Wall painting</i> 2006, acrylic on canvas 30 x 24cm <i>Strip</i> 2006, acrylic on canvas 40 x 30cm <i>6-Pack</i> 2006, acrylic on canvas 40 x 30cm <i>Balls</i> 2006, acrylic on canvas 24 x 24cm <i>Grip</i> 2006, acrylic on canvas 30 x 24cm	p16
Alex Spremberg	<i>Light Squeeze</i> 2005, enamel varnish on wood 179 x 180 x 3cm	p17
Pam Aitken	<i>Variation on a still point 8</i> 2006, plastic grid, plastic sheet polyurethane paint 57 x 233cm	p18
Jurek Wybraniec	<i>Surrogate (Template for Despair, Green + Pink combo #1)</i> 2005 acrylic lacquer on acrylic, 2 units each 50.8 x 40.6cm <i>Welcome Mat 2</i> 2006, rubber floor mat 90 x 120cm edition of 7	p19

**photography**

Acorn

Salvatore Panatteri

Trevor Richards

**AC4CA members**

Pam Aitken

Julianne Clifford

Julian Goddard

Daniel Göttin

Billy Gruner

Chris Hill

Joerg Hubmann

Rauno Jarvinen

Kyle Jenkins

Andrew Leslie

John Nixon

Jan van der Ploeg

Trevor Richards

Helen Smith

Alex Spremberg

Jurek Wybraniec

