

Lucy Gunning, born 1964, UK

Climbing Around My Room

1993

Video, sound, duration: 7:30 minutes, television monitor, shelf

Climbing Around My Room is a video installation by British artist and filmmaker Lucy Gunning. Born in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Gunning undertook a Masters of Fine Arts degree at Goldsmiths College of Art between 1992 and 1994, making critically acclaimed video works in her time there as a student including *The Horse Impressionists* and *Climbing Around My Room*.

Now a notorious work in the artist's oeuvre, *Climbing Around My Room* has the intensity of a fantasy born from hours of idle introspection alone in one's bedroom. In the video we see a woman in a red dress traversing the confines of her room. We witness her strength and resilience as she contorts her body between and on top of shelving, moving along skirting boards and hoisting herself up to rest her foot on a coat hook. Her manoeuvres are swift and agile, the floor an unnecessary anchor in her rhythmic circling of the space. Yet the video reveals a grittiness to her actions as we hear her breathlessness, see the bruises on her legs and dirtiness of her feet.

Gunning is often misconstrued as the girl climbing around the room whereas she is in fact the person filming her. Following her every move and angle from behind the camera lens, Gunning had to move just as much as the performer. Interpretations of *Climbing Around My Room* have often focused on the auto-eroticism of two bodies in space suggesting an enactment of desire. For the artist, the video is about investigating one's internal space.

The presentation of *Climbing Around My Room* extends elements of the video through its manipulation of space and its relationship to the viewer. Intentionally displayed on a television monitor on a shelf above head height, the artist dictates its viewing angle. Perhaps not conducive to comfortable viewing, the work requires you to look up and to modify your viewing position to its terms. Its presentation is suggestive with the room's limits echoed in the square mass of the monitor, its weight on the shelf symbolic of a body and its screen a container for the body in space.

Displayed in the context of the Dome Gallery with its Art Deco design and architectural nuances, *Climbing Around My Room* brings a heightened awareness to interior spaces and the physical and psychological spaces which can confine or frame us.

Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali Gallery, New York.

Hiraki Sawa, born 1977, Japan

Dwelling

2002

Video, duration: 9:21 minutes

Hiraki Sawa's videos explore psychological landscapes and fantasy worlds, bringing together domestic and imaginary spaces that touch on ideas of memory, displacement and migration. *Dwelling* is one of the artist's best known animations and was completed while he was still a student at art school.

In *Dwelling*, Sawa has used computer animation to miniaturise a fleet of aeroplanes which glide around an apartment's interior. Taking off and landing on every available surface, the aeroplanes fly around their domestic surroundings from living room to bathroom, skylight to dining table. The hum of the aeroplane engines provides the video's audio and is a reminder of their gargantuan proportions in reality. As the number of aeroplanes increase, so does their dominance of the apartment's space and their procession on their inscrutable routes occupies entranceways, corridors and surfaces.

Putting the miniaturised aeroplanes in motion gives the fantasy world created by the artist a greater sense of reality. Shot in black and white, *Dwelling* has the feel of a real-life computer game, yet here the aeroplanes seemingly fly of their own volition. The act of miniaturising the aeroplanes recalls a childhood game where huge objects in the distance are measured between forefinger and thumb. While we know that aeroplanes are huge in scale, when viewed from the ground they often appear as a distant outline—a small fleck in the sky like a bird. Sawa's playfulness of scale brings these contrasts of scale to the fore.

Ever timely and poignant in 2021 when international travel is heavily restricted, *Dwelling* may precipitate a fantasy of travel and hints at the possible hallucinatory effects of lockdown life. Akin to a dream, *Dwelling* may conjure thoughts of a solitary apartment dweller drifting in and out of sleep, thinking of a time when they will be able to board a plane and see loved ones again—a thought at the forefront of many people's minds the world over.

Conversely, it is important to consider a more sobering take on the imagery of aircrafts with their use in warfare and missile strikes a real and pervasive threat to many global communities. Through this lens, the aeroplanes in *Dwelling* evoke fear rather than fantasy.

Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York.

Jeremy Leatinu'u, born 1984, Tāmaki Makaurau

Building monuments and folding forts upon a slippery ocean and a moving sky
2021

Cardboard, tarpaulin

Newly commissioned by Gus Fisher Gallery, this installation signals a return to sculpture in the artist's practice. Best known for using moving image and performance, here Leatinu'u returns to the origins of his artistic practice and a preoccupation with the form, geometry and materiality of objects. *Building monuments and folding forts upon a slippery ocean and a moving sky* is informed by the artist's experiences of warehouse labour and his time moving and stacking boxes in distribution centres in Auckland. The artist has also been informed by Minimalist artist Sol LeWitt's wall drawings and structures, and artists associated with the land art movement such as Christo and Jean-Claude who famously wrapped the Berlin Reichstag in fabric in 1995.

In this installation, Leatinu'u uses cardboard boxes and tarpaulin as his sculptural framework to create a series of new assemblages every two weeks throughout the exhibition's duration. A box is a vessel, container, shipment, carrier of goods, object to be moved and stacked and a commonplace item for workers, yet it may also be a metaphor for housing, change, motion and temporality. Presented in multiplicity, stacked uniformly and towered high, the sculptural configurations impact the room's layout and how we experience it. Considerations of scale, placement and weight meet with bodies in space, each configuration dictating how we encounter the room and where we can fit into its sculptural arena. Employing methodologies of stacking and building, Leatinu'u's sculptures will become increasingly elaborative, each illustrating a breaking away from an original cube formation. Blue tarpaulin and its deep colour is evocative of tones of sea and sky which are placed in dialogue with their cardboard counterparts. Whether hanging overhead, displayed like a wall-painting or as a physical partition in the space, the tarpaulin acts, as the title suggests, as 'a slippery ocean and moving sky'.

The apparent solidity of the formations brings into question the fragility of its cardboard base—a material able to be dented, ripped and weakened with water. As hollow vessels, their solidity is illusory as objects whose function is as containers to be filled. Rearranging and stacking these boxes requires repeated action and precision. With identical proportions, the boxes lend themselves to formation yet bringing them into exact alignment is a task where methodologies of stacking and building become a means of striving for perfection.

Leatinu'u invites audiences to join him during each re-configuration and watch as new forms are created. New configurations will happen on July 10th & 24th, August 7th & 21st. Please see the Gus Fisher Gallery website for further details and how you can be involved.

Courtesy of the artist

Amy Jean Barnett, born 1986, Te Whanganui-a-Tara

Beneath the Shore

2021

4-channel sound installation

Amy Jean Barnett is a Wellington based composer and artist. Her work in this exhibition continues a residency project at Toi Pōneke Arts Centre where she focused on soundscape ecology in New Zealand's marine environment. The site of Gus Fisher Gallery on Auckland's original shoreline and proximity to the Hauraki Gulf informs Barnett's new multi-channel sound composition which combines her own field recordings with those sourced from scientists at the Leigh Marine Laboratory on Goat Island.

By working in collaboration with Dr Craig Radford, Dr Matt Pine and Louise Wilson at the Leigh Marine Laboratory, Barnett gained access to numerous hours of hydrophone recordings. Placed at various locations around the Hauraki Gulf, these hydrophones record the nuanced sounds of the underwater environment – capturing the sonic reverberations of reef fish, sea urchins, dolphins and snapping shrimp. The hydrophones also capture distant noises such as the murmur of boat engines –a reminder of the ecological impact of human activity on the sonic ecosystems of marine life forms where sound is used to navigate and forage underwater. Using hydrophone recordings and audio from her own field recordings, Barnett has rearranged this material into a spatial sound composition.

In the context of the exhibition, Barnett's acousmatic composition responds to themes of movement and change. Conceived as a four-channel sonic artwork, the audio features recordings of waves that phase in and out, their pace slow and meditative akin to breathing. These sonic recordings of the ocean's movements are paired with material from hydrophone recordings that capture the unique sounds of marine life resonating beneath the surface.

Reverberating through the Dome Gallery's space and in dialogue with the free-flowing fabrics of Salome Tanuvasa, Barnett's sonic composition ebbs and flows, reminding us of the sea as a site of movement from one place to another, and of the distinct worlds operating above and beneath the ocean. Looking outwards and beyond the gallery's own site, Barnett's work hints at the existence of distant spaces and sounds beyond our own immediate environment.

Courtesy of the artist

Józef Robakowski, born 1939, Poland

From My Window 1978 – 1999

2000

Film, transferred to digital from 16mm, duration: 19:05 minutes

Józef Robakowski is one of the most celebrated Polish artists and filmmakers associated with the neo-avant-garde movement of the 1960s and 1970s. After studying art history at Copernicus University in Torun and later attending the state film school in Łódź, he began working as a photographer and filmmaker. He co-founded artist groups such as Zero-61 and Film Form Workshop, and was one of the first generation of Polish artists to work with video.

From My Window belongs to a series of films by the artist that comprise what he terms “my very own cinema” or “personal cinema.” Shot between 1978 and 1999, it captures episodes of everyday activity that occurred within the 20-storey high-rise complex where the artist lived—a building ironically called the Manhattan of Łódź. Originally filmed on 16mm film capturing each shot in silence, Robakowski narrates the film from a position of nostalgia admitting that this narration may be seen as a creative interpretation imposed on reality. *From My Window* therefore blurs the boundary between documentary, voyeuristic observation and surveillance with the role of the narrator shifting between different voices and opinions.

Robakowski treated the camera as his confidante, with some of the narrator’s commentary revealing of his own feelings and the socio-political climate of Poland under Communist rule where everyone spied and was spied upon. As the narrator reveals intimate moments of his neighbour’s lives, the act of informants and incriminating desire is touched upon. An ironic reaction to the purported homosexual encounter of his neighbour’s dog is indicative of the artist’s own repressed desires of men and a challenge to the absence of homosexuality in public spheres. While Poland was one of the first countries to de-criminalise homosexuality in 1932, many, and especially Polish authorities during the Communist era, pretended it didn’t exist.

In the film we witness the narrator’s attentiveness to the slightest changes to public space and his musings on the activities of his neighbours. Each and every detail is touched upon with the tiniest of changes or activities sparking a story that may provide an insight into the personal world of the filmmaker as well as the one presented to us in the film. Imagery of a few moving cars becomes a story of Robakowski’s then wife’s penalty for a parking violation while a scene with two young girls walking between buses turns into a commentary on the booming tourism industry. From witty anecdotes about his neighbour’s car racing antics to observations on annual May Day marches, the film importantly surveys Poland’s social and political transitions over two decades from post-war Socialism to the collapse of the Eastern bloc in the 1990s.

Witnessing so many changes, the film draws to a close as planning permission is granted for a five-star hotel to be built in front of Robakowski's building, obstructing the view from his window in 1999 and ending his long-term visual diary.

Courtesy of the artist and MOCAP, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow.

Salome Tanuvasa, born 1987, Tāmaki Makaurau

Untitled

2021

Acrylic on unstretched canvas, acrylic on gallery wall, fabric, mixed media

Occupying the ornate Dome Gallery is an ambitious site-specific project by Salome Tanuvasa that brings her artistic practice into dialogue with the gallery's Art Deco interior. Often working in intimate domestic settings, Tanuvasa's project for Gus Fisher Gallery sees the artist's practice extend beyond usual methods to a context layered with stories pertinent to the gallery's building, such as its site on Auckland's original shoreline.

Working in situ with an internal logic of visual language that is in dialogue with her locale, Tanuvasa's immediate surroundings inform her decisions around scale, form, colour and gesture as she searches for something satisfying within her vernacular of marks and strokes. For this exhibition, Tanuvasa has worked on-site at the gallery to create these artworks with each work a direct response to her immediate context. The Dome Gallery is replete with visual details—its former function symbolized in the zigzag motifs that were a popular abstract representation of radio waves and electrical currents. It is this detailing—the sunburst motif glass dome, geometric designed inlaid doors and decorative plaster moldings of the ceiling—that have helped to inform the artist's response.

Tanuvasa's painting has, in recent times, become a more layered and fuller landscape where bold shapes and forms occur through gestural mark-making and bright hues, the swiftness of the artist's brushstrokes resulting in a plurality of empowered abstraction. The opportunity to work on a new suite of site-responsive commissions has enabled Tanuvasa to take a freer approach, encouraging an experimentation with materials and scale not explored before in the artist's practice. The two vibrantly coloured patch-work style fabrics demonstrate a new route for the artist where her painted forms are realized as cut-outs. With these fabrics, Tanuvasa echoes the process of making in her painting through the time-consuming method of hand-stitching—a contrast to the speed at which her painted works are produced.

Citing an influence from Modernist artist Cy Twombly in her language of painting, Tanuvasa's approach to making and visual language is also informed by philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti and his concept of total awareness. As stated in his book *The First and Last Freedom* (1954), Krishnamurti states,

If we can understand ourselves as we are from moment to moment without the process of accumulation, then we shall see how there comes a tranquility that is not a product of the mind, a tranquility that is neither imagined nor cultivated; and only in that state of tranquility can there be creativeness.¹

¹ Jiddu Krishnamurti, *The First and Last Freedom*, first edition. (USA: Harper & Brothers, May 1954), page 28.

As colours from the glass dome recur in forms painted directly onto the gallery walls, vast swathes of fabric float mid-space with their companion painted forms echoed in the fabric's capacity for movement. Mirroring the size of walls and length of the gallery, Tanuvasa uses the limits of the space filling and covering its dimensions with ease.

In *From our Beautiful Square*, Tanuvasa's response embraces the exhibition's key tenets of movement and change. Made in the context of an unfamiliar surroundings, Tanuvasa's work speaks to a way of making sense of the environments we find ourselves in and to holding power within them.

Courtesy of the artist and Tim Melville Gallery