

2HB

2HB *vol.1*

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Opening Speeches

The audience are gathered in the top mezzanine of a city gallery. Pausing expectantly from their chatter, they look across some roughly hewn wooden constructions filled with mud, towards four men who stand facing them.

PRESIDENT:

I would like to thank our sponsors and the board for their continuing investment in this very building – the very clay of our existence here. Our esteemed Director would like to say some words.

[Mild applause]

DIRECTOR:

Thank you President, for your kind opening. I would like to talk about this exhibition we have the good fortune to see in front of us.

Imagine this, [emphasises with hands] the clay is the life. This man digs it out from the banks of the mighty River. He sweats under the sun and freezes in the rain, as he prepares to heave this clay, the stratified conglomeration of time, the very material God made the first humans out of, into this gallery. As the soil is shovelled into the plastic bags, so too is the flora, carried with it. Its roots adhere tenaciously with the same dogged persistence that this artist has towards breathing life into his creations.

Now in the gallery, a second life has begun. This man alone [clasps artist on shoulder] scoops the clay out of the containers and places it within the pyramids of charred wood he has placed upon the gallery floor. The wood itself is an archaeological find, blackened by the weight of ages that kept it hidden under the riverbanks, sleeping, until the artist found it and dragged it back from the dead. Its rawness is here for all to see. Its geometric planes bring order to the organic mud that rests within it. It lies like furrowed land waiting to be planted.

Remember my friends. [Significant pause] The clay is the life.

[Round of applause]

CURATOR:

Yes, we are proud indeed to have this man in our midst, who toils for us. As we have gone about our day in our offices, this man, this worker, has done our dirty work for us. He is in it to his elbows. And all for us!

If we were to touch what he has taken, we could return back to nature! We would step aside from our geometric plan desks. We would walk away from air conditioning to feel the wind on our faces. We would perceive layers of time. We would become people where the mud was enough for us. Mud people. For this, my friend, we thank you for showing us how our lives should be.

[Curator applauds artist, audience join in fervently. All look at artist expectantly]

ARTIST:

I cannot speak for others. Just myself.

I want to be part of the problem. I want to be questionable not congratulated for my actions that are part of this malfunctioning society. Where is our sense of community, of us reaching out to help each other? We only help ourselves and get further into the mire of our own making.

I want to get dirty. I must be in shit up to my elbows because it signifies the fucking shit I myself am in. I am in fear of losing my job, in fear of losing food for the table. I fight failure all the time. I always rush. My mother comes tomorrow, and my girlfriend. What am I to give them when I live in so disorganised a state? I am a prisoner to my mobile phone. I must be here and here at a certain time. Yes I did not answer you and yet you can reach me in my dislocation. I want to be alone. The clay is the shit.

Yet I am in love with poetry. And all of this I try to do with a joyful spirit.

That is all I want to say.

[Confused and lesser round of applause as the speeches have come to an end]

The idea was a pronounced failure

We are the leaders of this first anxiety workshop but we feel anxious too.

Lack of inclination and attitude

Boss:

I have perceived, Jon-Paul, that you demonstrate no inclination towards wanting to complete your tasks well and that your attitude can often be wrong in the workplace.

EMPLOYEE:

I will endeavour to improve, now that you have pointed out these things to me. I look forward to our next focus meeting.

Boss:

Thank you Jon-Paul. We have set some targets and let's see how things go.

BOSS THINKS AFTERWARDS:

That was tough. I want people to like me but this is not an appropriate desire in the work place. I have followed procedure and Jon-Paul knows what he has to work on.

EMPLOYEE THINKS AFTERWARDS:

My boss tells me I lack inclination and attitude. With these things missing how can I ever hope to have an entrepreneurial idea? I will never get the patent for the miniature slip mat that stops tired mortuary students from knocking sharp medical implements onto the floor. I will never discover the spray agent that detects cancerous cells from a sick person's breath. Without these skills I may never add up to much, say, be thought of as the key person who must be invited to a think tank, who can think past the first tired questions, straight to the second round where it matters, where things can be done. I guess my general lack of substance disappoints him inexorably. I will sadly never create for him the moment where:

THE MOMENT:

I feel good about my achievements and myself for having managed my team, because boy, the times have been rocky. And look at us now – I have steered my department through this awkward period of change. My leadership coupled with the efforts of Bernice, Hal and Jon-Paul have made things truly happen. The difficulties and how we positively viewed them as challenges made us a stronger team. This won't go unrecognised!

EMPLOYEE'S GIRLFRIEND'S OPINION ON HEARING EMPLOYEE'S THOUGHTS ON MATTER THAT EVENING:

Yet you have really amounted to something as you stick in his mind. In fact he cannot get you out of it during his downtime. There you are in his conversations with his gay lover who begs with him to use the remaining space in his brain to diversify into having interests other than work. He thinks of you when he feels alienated from the leisure group he was persuaded to join where they chat about the pole dancing kit they have just installed in their homes or their love of books where the children have had a hard life because they were ugly or abused. His very normal yet ageing parents have stopped listening to his essentially similar problems because they need him now to be the adult and do the things they want to avoid and to do it quickly because time is speeding up.

His psychoanalyst has asked him to see his life as two columns: the work column and the personal life column. Which one towers above the other? Which one does he invest more in? It is time to nurture the shorter column. With care and attention it shall rise to become in perfect balance with the one that initially flourished because he knew easily how to tend to it.

EMPLOYEE'S RESOLUTION ON MATTER:

Yes, I may have initially stopped him from progressing in work and in life. There is no doubt about that. But one person cannot cause it all. It is he who must change his attitude.

Lowerarchy

Tonia left the group. Karen left the group. Robert was removed from the group.

Automatic

MAN 1:

I struggle to understand the notion of 'automatic'. There are some automatic things I cannot do such as:

Stand up straight without thinking: straighten back.

Fall asleep on public transport.

Fall asleep next to a great girl in bed.

Operate a car like it's second nature.

Write more than a paragraph.

Run instinctively towards the net for the killer shot.

Get on immediately with small children.

React like an adult, not like myself.

MAN 2:

You do understand automatic.

MAN 1:

In what way?

MAN 2:

Your distorted unhelpful thoughts are automatic.

No.42 uses her aggression

No.42 says her first reaction is to be sad, not angry.

Shout at her and find out.

I see... No.42's sadness strategy is her controlling strategy. What does she fear?

No.42, where does your pride lie?

Is it your position at work? The money you earn? Your innate need to arrive on time? Are you treated fairly?

Ah, No.42 is becoming frustrated. She thinks she has lost control over external factors affecting her important values. No.42 is not getting what she expects.

Why are we shouting repeatedly at No.42?

To give her a target for her new found anger. This could provide the energy she can utilise to burst the barriers stopping her from reaching her goals.

But look! No.42 is now hostile.

Does she not know that hostility is far worse than anger? Anger is not as bad as hostility. Hostility means not accepting the unchangeable. Maintain your hostility and you do not accept reality ever. Your hostile goals can never hope to be achieved.

Ok No.42! Just use your aggression!

Sick Flatmates

The two women share the same physical and mental space both as flatmates and in their consideration that they are singularly adrift in a harsh world. Woman 1 has had a minor breakdown the day before and is now fearful that stress in the workplace is pushing her over the edge. She voices to Woman 2 that she needs to strip her life back to simplicity, to be quiet and to slowly build up her strength. Woman 2 struggling to make conversation says, 'How will you operate at work with all that change taking place?' 'I can't consider that just now', Woman 1 barks, 'I have to narrow my focus just to get on with the main things important to me!' Woman 2 covers her mouth and says 'Sorry, sorry'. Woman 1 is secretly annoyed. Woman 2 has patently not listened to Woman 1's plans for recovery.

Left to contemplate, Woman 1 feels guilty for her dark thoughts towards her flatmate. Ten minutes later she knocks on Woman 2's door that is ajar, then sticks her head around. 'How are you?' Woman 1 asks Woman 2, knowing this is always an empathetic opening gambit. Woman 2, working on an endless sewing job for a group of emaciated dancers whose movements are forever chafed by the harsh seams she offers them, is hunched over the sewing machine. 'I just don't know, I have lost my confidence.' In a bid to outweigh this negativity, Woman 1 tries to throw positivism on the scales of mental health. She cites all the good things and pro-activeness of Woman 2 that have led her to this current job. In response Woman 2 says, 'I don't know, I just think I need to be quiet, to be by myself and slowly build up to what I want to be doing'. Her spirits slump further as she imagines this narrowing of her life. Woman 1 is quietly disgruntled that Woman 2 is so patently borrowing from her own theories for the heroic journey from loneliness to happiness.

She is about to mention how they mirror each other when the apartment phone rings. Woman 2 races to pick it up.

'Ah Jean-Michel!' she bellows, barely containing her glee. 'How lovely to hear from you!'

Today in Graffiti School

EX-PUPIL:

On the first day in Graffiti School we did 9am – 10am tags. 10am – 11am was outlining. Noon – 1pm: Japanese Manga animals and their application in an urban context. 1pm – 2pm, we get instructions on colour and application techniques. 3pm – 4pm, we watch a video of end to ends on moving train stock. 4pm – 5pm: a short history of heaven spots.

Fuck Graffiti School.

We decide to leave of our own free will, as we do not get this rigid concept. We go home and throw a wild party.

The job never ends for the paranoid

I slice my finger when cutting red vegetables and do not see the blood.

Underground

VISITOR:

I have really enjoyed this visit to your hometown. What a beautiful place!

INHABITANT:

You really think so? Since my affair, I find the place so small. I used to be happy to live and work here, as there are so many layers to this small town. On the surface we all had our children, walked our dogs and talked to each other. Yet underneath our town houses' cellars there are medieval Roman streets. When I was in my basement making my paintings, repainting again and again until the motifs brought together my imaginary world with these images from the capitalistic media, this collision of fantasy and fact was enough.

But since I met my younger multi-media girlfriend who looks at the world's problems and wants to make actions in the public place, I am not happy here. My personal history and the history of this town no longer hold any charm. So I live mainly here until my child is old enough to make her own way in this world. My wife moved out and has her own life. And I enjoy travel to cities of millions of inhabitants. I find my new creativity in learning from other cultures and working out what our collective personal responsibility is towards them and their struggles. They are alive now. There is no time for contemplation of beauty in their streets. It is here I find the relevance and feel alive.

In the end

In the end, it can be more than you need
But, as a kind person, you will forgive me

New Walden

STEVE RUSHTON

I find it difficult to estimate the size of the facility because I have been party to so many experiments in which everyday objects were expanded or reduced in size that it is hard to conceive of a 'true size'. In the facility, everyday objects would be surreptitiously substituted for identical objects that were marginally bigger or smaller. A tool that had previously seemed perfectly fashioned for my hand, a potato knife for instance, would suddenly become unmanageable. In due course, as my environment expanded, I was given to believe I was shrinking. I remember the control allocated to this particular experiment seemed unusually proportioned, as if he was swelling before my eyes. As he asked me questions about my recent experiences he seemed to be expanding, his shirt, two sizes too small for him and buttons straining. My collar hung like a fairground hoop around my neck.

If I were to base my judgement of the size of the facility on my experience, because my perception of it has been influenced by the constant changes in the values of size, I would say it was somewhere between 1000 square kilometres and the span of my arms at my current size. When calculating the size of New Walden one must also account for the many 'off shore' annexes. I heard talk of the island, the rig, the summer camp, the network, the c3, the watchtower, the station, the studio, the baby gym & c

It is a credit to the experiments conducted there that I am able to entertain an outside possibility that the facility occupies negative dimensions, that it is somehow folded into an envelope in space. This would also account for the fact that you have been unable to locate New Walden thus far.

I also find it hard to estimate how long I spent in the facility. During my stay there were so many reversion to day one year zero, or the julian calendar would be replaced by the metric calendar (ten days per week, ten months per year, ten hours per day, 100 seconds per minute) and so many experiments in which seconds, minutes, hours, days and months were extruded or contracted that it is hard for me to keep track of time. It is also worth bearing in mind that in the more extreme periods of the experimental administration time was reversed.

STEVE RUSHTON **New Walden**

Let's say I came to New Walden in the ninth month of the second year zero (year 5). Given the age at which I arrived (24) and using my own body as some sort of marker of biological time, taking account of the balding, wrinkling, sagging and stiffening, it is possible that I am now in my eighth decade, but it is also possible that I am much younger and the experiments have taken an inordinate physical toll on me. On the other hand, the manipulation of time within the facility may have had a more fundamental affect and been more rapid and deep than I estimate. This may mean that, despite appearances, I am younger than when I first arrived and many of the things that dwell in my memory have yet to occur.

When you picked up the dingy, I told you my name is citizen 7, subject n, good parent, different lover, librarian, naive subject, docent, guard, prisoner, learner, control and the experimenter. I must add that I have been the subject of a series of memory experiments which have yielded some curious symptoms I came to New Walden in the ninth month of the second year zero (which I believe I may have already mentioned), this was the fifth year after the facility became operational, I was 24 years old. I felt I had come to the end of my life and – lovelorn as only a 24 year old could be – I threw myself into the river. I was picked up by a submarine and brought to the facility. I have two equally vivid memories of where I was when JFK was assassinated. I was a pilot; I crashed my plane into a mountain and was brought to New Walden by the tribespeople who dragged me from the wreckage. I was a good student and excelled academically. I was a poor and rebellious student. I turned my back on authority, experimented with drugs, committed a series of minor crimes. I dropped out and established a commune, we built a geodesic dome and began to build an alternative society. I started my own business at the age of 19. I invented something like the microchip. I was musically gifted but lost my ability to play the cello after my car crashed into a tanker carrying radioactive waste. I gained psychokinetic ability and became the subject of curiosity to the scientific community and was smuggled across the border to New Walden. I also recall an experiment in which I was placed in a lab with another individual with whom, over the course of what seemed like decades, I exchanged my memories. One by one, from the first memories of infancy to the moment when we entered the experiment, we carefully peeled away each delicate

recollection and grafted them on to the history of the other. I find it impossible to find an order for the memories I went in with, they are dim and unreliable impressions. I even have a fading memory (almost certainly false) that I was once dr. julius lazlo, the founder of the New Walden Behavioral Research Institute.

The architecture of New Walden was always changing, as was the landscape in which the facility was situated. In one architectonic variant there were a series of sets, lots and laboratories that radiated out from a central square. The site was covered by a geodesic dome. The dome opened to the sun like a massive eyelid that regulated the duration of the days and nights. A monument to the founding of nuremberg, kasper hauser usually occupied the centre of the square. The monument took different forms; sometimes a bronze or stone statue of varying degrees of abstraction, sometimes a night-time slide projection, a human tableau, a hologram or a laser display. The laboratories changed their format all the time, some were vast, labyrinthine structures in which people would participate in experiments lasting a generation, others were simple offices in which tests involving the manipulation of wooden blocks or mild electric shocks were conducted. In these, I suppose, data would be compiled which would have some bearing on the suitability or otherwise of the subject for a forthcoming experiment. Conversely, it may have also been the case that the experiments provided data on the experimenter that could be used later. Sometimes the data would provide the beginnings of a script around which an experiment could be improvised spontaneously. It was after participation in a few such low-grade experiments that I quickly realised that the experiments within New Walden followed an aesthetic rather than a scientific logic.

I understood the experiments, and the culture within New Walden itself, to be a self-organising system, an open structure – like flocks of migrating birds, a coral reef or cloud formations. The performance of experiments, the gathering of data, the formation of new experiments and the allocation of roles are held together by an emergent organizing principle. It may have been the case that some conscious body set New Walden in motion, but I am sure there is no omniscient hand to steer the process, no ‘mastermind controller’, as you suggest. The experiments in New Walden were generated through the feedback of a number of elements that contributed to the outworking of a complex system.

I admit some of your reservations to this argument. The principle of self-organisation does not explain everything. I do not know how the transportation of newly mature adults from the baby gym to New Walden was organised for instance. I know nothing of the baby gym’s activities, under what circumstances the children are conceived and raised, what type of training they receive at the annex. But the whole point about a self-organising system is that all parts do not need to be conscious of each other. Like other social, political and economic systems, New Walden is an ecology.

Sometimes, usually following my elimination from a particular group, I would become part of a crowd. Crowd events usually took place in the square, the site for the various rituals such as the establishment of a new day one year zero, or the ringing of a regime change, the crowning of a king or the deification of a potentate, and very occasionally a crucifixion or execution.

On one occasion I emerged from a laboratory after what seemed like a particularly long episode in the sleep room to find the landscape totally changed. None of the larger structures remained and many of the laboratories were now charred, smoking ruins. The contents of the laboratories had been salvaged from the fires and I walked through corridors of cages in which baby rhesus macaques clung to the ragged automata of their wire-framed mothers, who spat cold air and shot spikes at their clinging infants. A green light cast by banks of monitors on which the image of a lissajous wave threaded into itself. The rain fell through the slit of the dome’s eye as I walked toward a hamlet of adobe shelters, each populated by a small group huddled around a tv set that showed an ongoing experiment in another part of the facility. The tv showed a group of people in orange pyjamas sitting in a laboratory set up like a suburban house. They would talk to each other and occasionally undertake a task devised by their control. The object of the experiment was to stay in the laboratory for as long as possible, the experiment would finally prove that a particular person had managed to stay in the laboratory for a particular length of time.

On another occasion I walked out of an experiment to find myself alone in the central square of New Walden where every surface was mirrored. The floor, walls and the dome all reflected back their own image, and mine,

into infinity. After several minutes of faltering to find my feet I began to feel nauseous and groped for the first open door to a laboratory I could find.

...the ginger haired majority experiment, the inconsistent variables experiment, the no control experiment, the 'I am your father' experiment, the helium discourse experiment, the atlantis experiment, the resolution of conflict through violence experiment, the cartoon pornography experiment, the microscopic gestures experiment, the after-image experiment...

I find it impossible to say how many people were occupied in experiments in the different laboratories within the facility. One seldom ran into the same person twice. Sometimes a person would bear a resemblance to someone you had met before, a friend from a previous experiment perhaps, but their look of non-recognition would be so profound as to scorch any earlier memory of them from your mind. In the facility the role is the only important thing, the same faces may reoccur, a lover from one experiment may wear the face of a cold-faced guard in the next. I think her name was carol. I forget the name of our child.

Following my rescue, here aboard the ship, I came across a category of person I never encountered in New Walden. A cleaner. In New Walden. I never saw anyone cleaning and nothing ever needed repairing.

When you picked me up you asked me how I came to be in the facility, what I did in the facility and how I came to leave the facility. Outside the parameters of a given experiment, the only real thing in the world I can be certain of is this sentence as it forms in the air, as the proceeding sentence falls into an abyss. As I speak it the sentence rises to meet me, to carry me into the present, where memory is formed. The only piece of wisdom I have taken from New Walden is that reality is made and re-made.

And now that I have been deemed 'harmless', as your purser put it, I appreciate the freedom to leave my cabin on the yacht club balcony and wander as I please around your ship, the fantasia is an amazing creation, like an ocean city. I find that for the first time in many years I am obliged to do nothing, I am left to simply observe the human organism in its pursuit of

pleasure. I watch people playing golf at the lawn club, whilst others prefer to negotiate the hair-raising turns of the formula one simulator; the restaurants and bars are splendid. I have yet to find something called the interactive 4-d cinema. And I'm also astounded by the new friends I have made, like the widow muriel tanner who sells antiques on something called the internet, her cousin stanley martchmain, who until his recent retirement spent every day between nine and five, from monday to friday, testing peoples' eyesight. francesco folengo, former warehouse owner and currently a breeder of racehorses smiles, shakes his head slowly and offers me another drink when start to I tell him about New Walden. As the sun sets, after a relaxing visit to the aqua solarium and dinner in the main dining room in the company of my growing circle of friends, I find myself drawn to the sky observation lounge, I curl up in one of the shell-like chairs and gaze at the constellation above me which assumes a startling definition in the profound darkness that clings to the ocean. I imagine this huge city sliding on the curve of the earth's horizon, the ocean and the cruise ship hang in space where there is no up or down, no north or south. I imagine the precession of my own life, orbiting a multitude of centers, as if on the edge of an lissajous wave as it loops around, always changing, weaving through chaotic morphologies, and yet always somehow bending itself back into the same shape.

Colophon

Writers' biographies:

JENNY BROWNRIGG

Jenny Brownrigg is curator at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Dundee (2002 –). She was co-curator of The Young Artists' Biennial *Absent Without Leave (AWOL)*, 2nd Edition, Bucharest, Romania, (2006). As a writer her publications include *Nature Centre* (Grizedale Arts, 2000) and *Romantic Vanguard*, (Royston Road Project, 2002).

STEVE RUSHTON

Steve Rushton is a writer and editor living in Rotterdam.

Publications include *The Milgram Re-enactment* (editor), *Experience Memory Re-enactment* (co-editor) and *Hurts So Good*. Between 2006 – 7 he curated the project *After Neurath: Like Sailors on the Open Sea* at Stroom, The Hague. Projects scheduled for 2009 include *Who, What, Where, When, Why and How* (with Rod Dickinson) and *A Short Film About War* (with Thomson & Craighead). He is a co-founder of the research group *Signal: Noise* which investigates the prevalence of notions of feedback in contemporary culture.



2HB is a journal published four times a year by the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow. Experimental and creative writing in contemporary art practice are central to the concerns of *2HB*.

Edited by Francis McKee and Louise Shelley

ISBN 978-1-873331-34-7

© 2009, Centre for Contemporary Arts, the artists, the writers

Published March 2009 in an edition of 300 by Centre for Contemporary Arts

Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow www.cca-glasgow.com
The CCA is supported by the Scottish Arts Council, Glasgow City Council
and by the National Lottery through the Scottish Arts Council.

CCA is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

Registered Company No: SC140944

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