

# SILK AND LACE

## 13TH ANNIVERSARY GIFTS

EXHIBITION PREVIEW

FEATURING

EXHIBITION RUNS

TUESDAY  
10 APRIL  
AT 5.30PM

DARCELL APELU  
EMMA FEBVRE-RICHARDS  
JACQUELYN GREENBANK

11 APRIL -  
12 MAY 2012

LONNIE HUTCHINSON

JAY HUTCHINSON

MOTOKO KIKKAWA

SAM OVENS

JILL SORENSEN

THIS EXHIBITION INCLUDES A  
PERFORMANCE BY JILL SORENSEN  
THAT WILL TAKE PLACE BETWEEN  
12 AND 2PM ON TUESDAY 10 APRIL  
IN THE OCTAGON.

When I started at the Blue Oyster in January 2011 I came with some knowledge of the space and its history. In my first few weeks, and then in the months following, whenever I talked to someone who may have had a knowledge of the gallery I would ask them about their perspective of the Blue Oyster and what memories they had of it. In doing this I was attempting to build a collective memory for myself. This folly of creating a potted history has been attempted over and over again by those working within the Blue Oyster. This process was discussed by Ali Bramwell in an essay published on the occasion of the Blue Oyster's Tenth Anniversary:

The Blue Oyster has an institutional memory that is both administrative and social in structure, and each of these takes a distinctive form. The most obvious institutional idea of memory rests in administrative details, but, despite the best of intentions, the Blue Oyster's records are patchy... Social memory is held in the continuity of shared experience... Hence, the balance of social memory is held in the recollections and reminiscences of people who were there at the time and then passed them on to others who care enough to hear them. Myth-making is part of the slippage; exhibitions become stories to be retold... Elisions, errors, and lacunae have crept in when systemic continuity has faltered from time to time. Hence, from the outset this curatorial project is one of recovered or reconstituted history, sitting in the space between memory and actuality.<sup>1</sup>

The curatorial project that Bramwell mentions here is the Tenth Anniversary show, where artists who had shown at the Blue Oyster sometime during its ten year history were asked to re-exhibit work, partially or in their entirety, at the Blue Oyster's current premises on Moray Place. In true re-constitutional style, *Silk and Lace* borrows from this curatorial vision and twists it a little. It also borrows from another Blue Oyster curatorial tradition: celebrating time passed with an exhibition of material pertinent to the traditional system of measuring and celebrating anniversaries (first

year paper, second year cotton and so on). The thirteenth anniversary ought to be celebrated with the presentation of a silk or lace gift. Ten artists were approached at different times and in different situations to be part of the exhibition. Two of the original artists dropped out.

The remaining eight artists have all taken different routes to arrive at their new work. Some pieces have evolved from ongoing conversations with the artists or from proposals. In part, this discursive process reflects the Blue Oyster's system of selecting projects, and touches on the problematic way in which written proposals are expected to be physically realised. This process is, in itself, characterised by flux and adaptation. By enacting this, *Silk and Lace*, celebrates the tenuousness of the relationship between the gallery staff, the artist, and the space, and highlights the need for regular communication between all parties involved.

Attempting to pin down the history of the Blue Oyster has been slippery at the best of times - in asking artists to produce new work I hope that the investigations into the past will illuminate areas of darkness and cause surprise leading to the creation of new points of entry into old myths. *Silk and Lace* is an attempt at a conversation with the artists and the art community of the Blue Oyster, Dunedin, and New Zealand.

To borrow from Catherine de Zegher and Gerald McMaster, the two artistic directors of the upcoming Sydney Biennale, 'In the arts, as elsewhere, analytical reflection has led to an understanding that human beings are highly dependent upon our often overlooked relationships with others and with our common world.'<sup>2</sup> *Silk and Lace* eschews history for a dynamic conception of activity. And further to this it asks us to embrace the unexpected and the disruptive, to expose the social relations behind the exhibition, so often hidden, or poorly camouflaged behind a screen of curatorial objectivity. These relations are critical to the creation of personal and collective narratives in our lives and in the spaces in which we interact. Why then should they be prohibited in the gallery space?

<sup>1</sup> Ali Bramwell, Unstable Institutional Memory: 10 Years at the Blue Oyster, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine de Zegher and Gerald McMaster, Exhibition Overview, "<http://bos18.com/exhibition-overview>"