

Uncovering the Once Discovered: Infozone Residency + Exhibition Project, State Library of Queensland.

About the Artists:



DENNIS KRATZ are collaborative interdisciplinary artists who work with photomedia, video and new media. Teaming up in 2004, they participated in Bathurst Regional Council's Hill End Artist in Residence Program where they developed the new media projects *Guided by Voices* and *To Rose (My Love)*. In 2005 they were awarded a residency at Marrickville, where they collaborated with artist Graham Chalcraft to develop *Secrets of the City, Gumbrorra Swamp Thing!* Dennis Kratz recently received funding from the Australia Council for the



Arts Literature Board to develop *Diorama: Constructing a Virtual Memory*.

Queensland urban Aboriginal artist **ARCHIE MOORE** is a text-based mixed media artist. The experience of racism in the predominantly white environment is reflected in his work. He graduated from QUT with a BA in Visual Arts in 1998 and in 2001 traveled to Prague on a Samstag Scholarship. He has since been in numerous group and solo shows, including a group show in Belgium.

About the Programmer: **RORY HERING** is a dynamic multimedia developer who specialises in abstract and mathematical artwork utilising cutting edge development tools.

Photographer: Tamara Dean

Doing history

Linda Carroli

The slim volume slipped out of the row of books lining the timber shelf into my hand. And it is rather a slim volume, a cheap 1961 Pelican paperback that splits and cracks as I open its brittle spine and delve into its pages. Its title poses a question, "What is History?" and, in its now yellow pages and time-wearied style, E.H. Carr explores this question with wit and verve.

If, as Marx once proclaimed, history does nothing, what answers are we seeking from history when we explore it with seeming method and intent? Marx may well have a point on this question of history. Is history merely dormant waiting for someone to do something with it or about it? Perhaps to activate and enliven it from its slumber, to force us to face it in some way or other, to grasp at fleeting insights that so easily slip from view, to free us from its sometimes ruinous and shameful legacies.

For Carr, history is indeed a social process, something we are engaged in as social beings and involving a continuous dialogue between present and past, historian and their facts. However, the rightful sources of these facts remain contested. History doesn't settle like dust or like some kind of residue. It is something we produce, recount and produce again in so many ways, always from the vantage point of the present. We can contest and revise history in the face of new evidence, found voices and rallying desires.

History is always provisional, always polyvocal. Thus, veracity, as a practice, is fraught and more concerned with plausibility than absolute truth. I am often taken aback by the expression, 'the facts speak for themselves' because it is rather a spurious claim. A fact (say, a discovery) often sparks conjecture or deduction rather than a self-revelatory narrative. Facts have no agency and are ordinarily a matter of interpretation, circumstance or deduction. While some facts are indeed self-evident, an advocate or teller must usually establish their factuality for the narrative to be established.

History involves seeking and finding, investigation and immersion to churn an endless assemblage of stories ranging in intensity from mythic to epic. It would seem that history is indeed determined by its ability to be narrativised (or recorded). The term 'prehistory', which is generally defined as the history of humankind prior to recorded history, attests to that. What is meant by

recorded history is the incontrovertible written word. Through the elevation of the written word as the only carrier of fact, the oral and the pictographic are relegated to some netherworld of the unbelievable, where they are silenced, overwritten or disrupted because only the textual traces of the past warrant serious reflection.

Ann Curthoys and John Docker revealed the doubleness of history in another book that poses a question as its title, *Is History Fiction?* They propose that there is space between the scrutiny of historical sources and the literary forms of history. This space between "gives it ample room for uncertainty, disagreement and creativity".¹ Sarah-Mace Dennis and Svenja Kratz, in collaboration with Archie Moore, explore this space between - these nuances and vicissitudes of history and historical practice - in their interactive video installation *Where Whispers Walk*. As artists they engage in their own dialogue with the past, evoking stories of the Brisbane River's natural, cultural and social history. It is a questioning and evocation of history "as a continuing practice, an always porous, shifting, inventive, self-transforming discipline".²

Where Whispers Walk is an interactive work that allows you to determine how history unfolds - or at least your own journey through it. You are not literally transported into the past but rather you determine how this past plays out in the here and now. As I read my history texts, I find myself somehow interpolated with those words. So too in *Where Whispers Walk*, you walk into this version of history. You are interspersed in the scene and narrative. That is all you can do with history - impose yourself as a force of presence and interpose your agency. Thus there is an acute object lesson involved in the approach taken by Dennis, Kratz & Moore that is in keeping with the reflections about and thoughtful interrogation of the work of history by Carr and Curthoys and Docker.

They have delved into and shuffled historical, geological and archaeological sources to explore and conjure the changing landscape of the river. The work acknowledges that the fortunes of a place are tied to its waterways - from the balance of ecology to the networks of societies to the flux of economy. It is not seamless or sequential. It is not continuous or consensual. It is not merely a series of causes and effects that topple like so many dominoes in a row. In some way we make it happen.

Linda Carroli is a writer, editor, researcher and Director of Harbinger Consulting.

¹ Ann Curthoys and John Docker, "Is History Fiction? The necessity for and difficulty of finding the truth in history", <http://evatt.labor.net.au/publications/papers/162.html> Accessed 10 September 2007

² *ibid*

Where Whispers Walk

Dennis Kratz + Moore exhibition dates:
15 October 2007 – 06 January, 2008.

This exhibition is one of a series of screening programs held in the State Library of Queensland's Infozone.

Artists are invited to explore the State Library and investigate new ways of interpreting and responding to the collection.

This unprecedented collaboration between the State Library and contemporary artists reflects a new direction for the State Library.

Libraries are a social experience, as well as an artistic nucleus for communities, as well as an art and discuss communal issues. Infozone Residency + Exhibition Project is presented by the State Library of Queensland in collaboration with Artworkers Alliance.

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01



02



03



04



Images 01–04 stills from interactive video animation 20 minutes

Dennis Kratz & Moore would like to acknowledge Kath Kerswell, Tania Schafer, Janice Kuczowski, Tony Stephens, Linda Carroli and Penny Packham for their contribution to the project.