

the indeterminate precision of narrative

thesis statement

by

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Doctor of Philosophy

School of Arts & Social Sciences

2008

This document is submitted in partial completion of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, at Southern Cross University, NSW, 2008.

Statement of Sources

I declared that the work presented in this thesis statement, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at any other university.

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Abstract

The indeterminate precision of narrative is the culmination of multiple exhibitions that engage with the uncertain, unfixed and yet simultaneously accurate and truthful nature of story telling. There is no single narrative that explains our historic present. To tell a story is to re-tell stories from the past in order to create coherent narratives in the present. The narrative structures the exhibitions enquire into focus on images and objects that speak to the body in hybrid forms. The significance of the research lies in its response to and engagement with contemporary theoretical debates that currently surround images of the body. By enacting the text of everyday life, the body becomes not a product but a processor of everyday life. The research conducted made use of traditional and contemporary image making tools such as oil painting interfaced with embedded plexiglass imagery sourced through digital means and includes the design and development of a website that publishes the research outcomes. The research advances our general knowledge in the innovative use of materials that speak to conventional and contemporary accounts of the body.

Arts-practice-led research was the methodology identified for use in the research and involved a process of information gathering; including non-linear systems that are inclusive, chaotic, and holistic. Various visual and multi-media methods of selection, analysis, synthesis, presentation and communication including journals, digital photographs, proofs and drafts were engaged in. Arts-practice-led research is pluralistic in approach; uses multi-method techniques tailored to the individual project; reflexivity is acknowledged and the interaction of the researcher with research material is recognised. Within this field the researcher reflects-in-action and reflects-on-action and is adaptive. These systems explored how my ontological position and the methodologies outlined were catalysts for studio production.

The aim of the research considers how this methodology impacts on the lived body that is determined and specific. The narrator of the stories I tell must be conceived not just as a personal presence but also as a form of action that operates at a level fundamentally contradictory to the action of the story. This action is identified as performative. The narrative act has a status independent not just of the content of the telling (story and characters), but of any final meaning of the story. The association of the latter with “the author” is nowadays considered naive; but it is in fact no less naive to associate such meaning with “the narrator”. What we have traditionally called the narrator is not a fixed entity capable of dictating a determinant meaning but is the discourse produced by the act of narrating, a discourse which makes meaning and cannot specify it. The narrator is not assigned an “author function” that separates itself from the text in order to force conformity on it. If this were the case, the progress of the multiplicity (rhizomic in structure) of discourse would come to a stop and in so doing assign to the story a non-performative status. The narrator is that multiplicity or act performed. This refers to both studio process and installation space.

Acknowledgements

I sincerely thank my supervisors Gary Jolley and John Smith for their generosity in both time and encouragement. Warren R Flynn and Taw Adams-Flynn must also be thanked for their continued and unwavering perseverance and patience. I would also like to thank Southern Cross University, Graduate College for their support.

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