

Another Lovely Daze Jenny Gillam and Eugene Hansen

The artists have constructed a slick environment, but the imagery is somewhat unsettling and neurotic.

A projected image fills the rear wall of the installation space: a hypnotic video loop of a woman clutching an alcoholic drink and swaying deliriously. This video loop is flanked by shimmering vinyl-cut images on the adjacent walls: two goldfish and a mirrorball are depicted on the left wall; two silhouettes of nude boys urinating are presented on the right.

Four rocks—located in the corners of the space—pulse this installation with a loop of lush, minimal house music. Jenny Gillam and Eugene Hansen underpin their composition with a narcotic four-to-the-floor rhythm, deploying both aural and visual metaphor to achieve this: a metronomic kick drum accents four beats to each bar; and this music emanates, quite literally, from four rocks on the floor.

As with some of Gillam and Hansen's prior collaborative efforts,¹ this project also incorporated live audiovisual performances. Two performances took place on opening night: Gillam (mixing video) and Hansen (mixing audio) performed a set together, and Hansen (now on video) performed the second set with me² (mixing audio).

Indexes to a nightclub environment—house music, DJ/VJ performances, mirrorball—offer a key theme for this project. Seen in this light, the central image of the delirious woman foregrounds the influence of alcohol and other substances in clubbing culture. The title of the work, *Another Lovely Daze*, reinforces this notion—slightly romanticising her swaying state of drunken delirium.

While some elements directly evoke nightclub subculture, other imagery begins to trouble the metaphor. Perhaps the vinyl cut fish allude to short memory—living in the moment—those fleeting encounters that you would never hope to remember the next day. And what of the twin figures urinating? They could be seen as other revellers in the periphery, passing the waste products from whatever they have imbibed, drunk enough not to bother finding the bathroom.

OK, I'll sober up from the shimmering seductions of this delirious superficiality.

Another Lovely Daze does not offer a simple didactic description of a subculture numbing itself from dominant norms. The nightclub is clearly referenced, but offset against another site of leisure: the suburban garden. As the publicity material for this show notes, Christchurch—a regular stop on the international DJ circuit—is also known and currently promoted as the 'Garden City'.

Gillam and Hansen's inversion/conflation is complex: the nightclub is an urban environment, constructed for the leisure pursuits of a certain *sub*-culture; the garden is *sub*-urban, but remains a territory that alludes to the norms of a dominant culture.

If the drunken woman sways neurotically in her own suburban back yard, how might we reread these same images? The goldfish are at home here—domesticated pets swimming



about, but the mirrorball is now incongruent. The twin boys are perhaps neighbourhood children urinating in rebellion against the oppressive norms of suburbia—but does their transgressive act ultimately reinforce the authority of those same norms? Urinating on a garden does, after all, provide nutrients which help that ecosystem to grow and flourish.³

As Gillam and Hansen's exploration of urban and suburban sites of leisure/pleasure is an ongoing project, perhaps the secret of this piece lies in the title of the work, which deploys that ubiquitous word 'another'. This is certainly not the first time that dominant cultural norms have been troubled. This is a cyclical loop of tension and release.

Daniel James

- 1 *Insidious Pop II (Drift)*, NZ Film Archive, Wellington (2007) and *It's a Lovely Daze*, Ocular Lab, Melbourne (2007) were multimedia installations which incorporated audiovisual performance.
- 2 This performance was presented under my former surname, Agnihotri-Clark.
- 3 A comparison could be made with the other project presented by The Physics Room at the same time: Adam Hyde, Julian Priest and David Merritt's *A Geekosystem*. While Gillam and Hansen's project addresses consumption for leisure and pleasure, *A Geekosystem* explicitly addressed the ecological concerns associated with the consumption of technology.