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1. See for example “Wood is Good”, various found locations, Wellington, NZ. 1999., “Malevich’s Wallpaper*”, 52 Gallery, Wellington, 2000, “Fidelio”, Enjoy Public Gallery, Wellington, NZ. 2003.

2. See for example Pierce, C.S. (c.1894 MS), “What Is a Sign?” Published in part in CP 2.281, 285, and 297–302, and in full in EP 2:4–10. Pierce Edition Project E-print.

3. Bugden, E. “Bring on the Beautiful” in *Natural Selection* (2004), Issue 1, pp. 3–4.

4. As a formal aside, it is worth noting that Wynnychuk’s early work drew heavily from the aesthetics of the index, which in its original formulation in the 1970’s had a kind of pastoral or low-culture quality, but by the early-2000’s had become—productively for Wynnychuk—highly conventionalized. See for example, Krauss, Rosalind “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America” (1987) in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (1985), MIT Press, pp. 196–209.

5. “Venn for Head”, 52 Gallery, Wellington, 2004.

6. Plan and elevation of Masaccio’s Trinity according to Sampaolesi (1962, fig. C. opp. p.52) in Sampaolesi, P., Brunelleschi, Club del Libro, Milano, 1962.

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Masaccio’s Trinity (ca. 1425, Fresco, Church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence).⁶ Here a profoundly radical, virtual space emerges from the geometric process of modeling rays of light according to the Laws of Perspective, which themselves are nothing less than the description—in graphical terms—of a set of physical processes centered around optics and human physiology.

Where is the work of Sampaolesi? Is it the drawing—clear and distinct in its own right? Or rather the profound sense of testing and explication that sits beside and around Masaccio’s Trinity? The interpretive force of Sampaolesi’s drawing constantly directs the viewer back to the fresco of Masaccio and vice versa, and yet nothing conventionalized is required in the relationship between the two: they are able to stand both together and apart.

Similarly, in the floor-based work “NGO”, recently shown at Waikato Museum of Art (2012), the physical properties of the object arise directly from processes (here, in part, the chaotic postal delivery service from Wynnychuk’s Papua New Guinea-based studio) whose origin lies within the wider, non-material context of the project, thus bringing into play a direct series of physical operations which bind the two.

Wynnychuk’s sensitivity to the sculpture potential of material processes (both physical ones, such as hanging, folding, propping, crushing; and cultural processes, such as postal services, urban regeneration, aid-work, laundry, dimensions of carry-on luggage, and so on) allows him to produce an object-based practice whose material logic—encompassing constructional, material, formal and surface characteristics—is related in a complex and direct manner to non-physical systems.

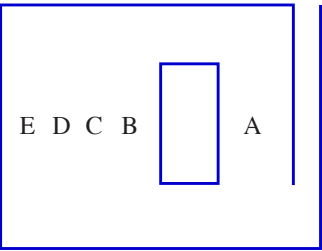
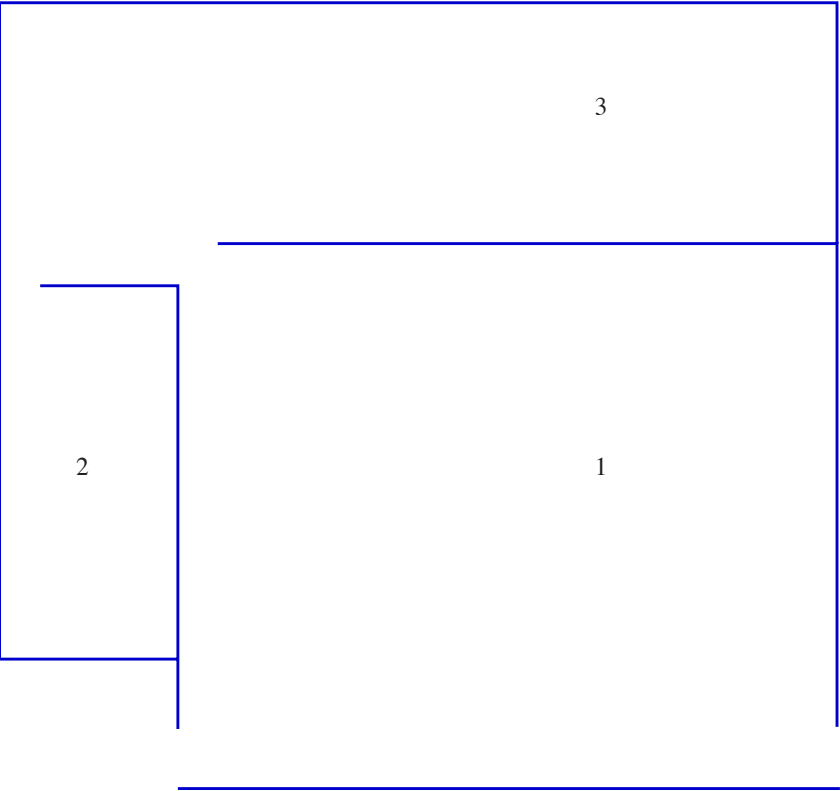
The discursive space of the object is constantly implicated in the formal qualities of the work, which is experienced by the viewer as a kind of intensification of meaning, or object saturated with meaning. The potential of this approach is that Wynnychuk remains able to engage with the breadth of the world around him (his practice remains, I think, characterized by a profound and optimistic curiosity about the world), without jettisoning—or devaluing—the disciplinary specific instruments that lie within the limits of a sculptural practice. In this sense, it is no coincidence that Wynnychuk began his formal training within a Print Department and remains skeptical, but nonetheless aware of disciplinary edges.

If many of Wynnychuk’s early engagements with the limits of a sculptural practice can be understood as exercises testing the symbolic to destruction, then his recent work shows the fruitful results of this research: a network of complex, confident works that affirm the possibility of the sculptural object, while remaining fundamentally open to the world beyond their limits.

Main Gallery
George Egerton Warburton
Steaming ties

Mezzanine
Nicki Wynnychuk
he-made-it-sexy-
but-he-has-no-touch—
like-a-love-song-to-chocolate/

ARTSPACE™



Main Gallery
1 *Steaming ties* (2013)
Stainless steel, mixed media, HD Video/Continuous loop.
Filmed by Nick Roux.
2 *Why are you wearing athletic gear if you’re not playing any sport today?* (2012) HD Video 26.06 mins.
3 *Boredom is a Desk With Legs in a Fish Spa* (2012)
HD Video/Continuous loop. Actor: David Wells.
Filmed by Nick Roux. Microphone wrangler: Robbie Dixon.

Mezzanine
A timber, paint & glue
B glycee print on foam core
C fibro cement, timber, steel and glue
D glycee print on foam core
E timber, paint, glass & glue

George Egerton Warburton
Steaming ties

George Egerton Warburton (1988, WA, lives in Melbourne) presents a trilogy of works for his first international solo show at Artspace.

The main gallery is taken over by an expansive mobile, employed as a sculptural tool by the artist. The entity acts as a diagram in space, an almost autonomous being that fluctuates together with the ideas and things that are attached to it.

To the extremity of one of its limbs a screen is suspended, which plays *Steaming ties*, a cinematic pan of a live chicken filmed in the artist’ studio. In the film, the animal shows its disinterest in the objects that have been arranged around it for possible interaction, while the soundtrack consists of the uncanny reproduction of the barking of a police dog attacking a burglar as heard over a CB radio in the artist’s kitchen.

Egerton Warburton’s works often take their cue from incongruous elements and ideas, that are both personal and affective, but of which the artist is notably not in control. A moral conundrum usually lies at the basis of his works: their ethical and aesthetic repercussions need to be considered.

In the artist’s world, rationality and unmediated animalistic instincts are in perpetual struggle. Artmaking allows for some licences and glimpses of freedom but those are confined to the parameters of a certain language.

In his works, the artist seeks an autonomy that does not conform and operates through absurdity. In the back galleries, on show are two video works which explore the arbitrariness of what we see, hear and feel.

In the small gallery, *Why are you wearing athletic gear if you’re not playing any sport today?* (2012) is an auto-reflexive film documenting the theft of a camera. In a single take, the footage escorts us past landmarks of Imperial Rome and sites rendered notorious in Italian cinema.

And playing in the long gallery is the film: *Boredom is a Desk With Legs in a Fish Spa* (2012) in which the camera follows the protagonist, an aging man on a scenic farm, as he changes character eight times and delivers a scripted prosimetrum. His actions and emotions move in and out of sync, describing something other than what he articulates.

Synesthesia is at the heart of the project, that is a condition in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to involuntary experiences. One could say that it is a state in which individual’s actions describe something other than what they are communicating verbally or emotionally. What appeals to Egerton Warburton is the ability to account for slippages and misunderstandings through synesthesia.

The mobile embodies such tensions and offers a bridge to the viewer, as well as a visualisation of the way in which the moral balance lingers in nature, as you give or you take away.

Nicki Wynnychuk
he-made-it-sexy-
but-he-has-no-touch—
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DOUBLING-UP
Jason Whiteley

On several occasions in the past,¹ Nicki Wynnychuk’s work has involved objects placed in a gallery context which appear ‘art-like’ in their physical characteristics, but do not—as conceived by the artist—actually constitute the work. In this essay I want to explore the status and usefulness of these objects, which have curiously disappeared from his output in recent years. Furthermore, I want to suggest that the way these objects function can provide a means for thinking about the development of Wynnychuk’s complex sculptural practice.

Over the last decade, Wynnychuk’s work has engaged with two distinct realms: on the one hand, an open-ended, object-based practice which has produced a successful and coherent formal, material and colour language; and on the other, a non-material network of ideas that have probed at the social and cultural milieu which establishes the way art-objects are valued and interpreted.

I want to argue that for Wynnychuk, the relationship between these two realms has changed over time from the symbolic to the indexical, terms drawn from Charles Pierce’s—admittedly dated, but nonetheless useful—system of organizing sign relationships according to three types: iconic, symbolic and indexical.

To recap: the icon is a sign which visually resembles or imitates its object and tends to exist in a form that is both scalar and non-material; the symbol is a type of sign with a conventionalized relationship to the object, in other-words, by general agreement it could be replaced with another symbol and suffer no loss of legibility; and thirdly, the index, which according to Pierce, shares a ‘real relationship’ and is therefore intrinsically linked to its object in an actual way, irrespective of interpretation. An indexical sign is therefore experienced as natural, as in the pairing smoke/fire and exists prior to conventionalized terms.²

In two early exhibitions, “Malevich’s Wallpaper*” (2000) and “Fidelio” (2003), Wynnychuk begins by placing a number of objects within the gallery that invoke the historical formal language of the Constructivists. Taken together these objects exhibit a high-degree of internal coherency and suggest to the viewer that the experience of the work is complete in the act of viewing, whereas—in Wynnychuk’s conception—the “real” project of the work lies elsewhere.

“Malevich’s Wallpaper*” was held in a commercial gallery space and consisted of a number of small objects arrayed across a single wall. Following the sale of each object, the artist suggested an unusual system of exchange whereby he offered to refund the purchase price of the work in exchange for an image of the object installed within the owner’s domestic environment. For Wynnychuk, the “real” work was a bound folio of these images. More radically, the well attended public exhibition opening for “Fidelio” consisted of two rooms of wall and floor based works, within which actors were secretly filmed interacting in scripted and awkward ways with unsuspecting viewers. Again, for Wynnychuk, the final form of work was a DVD documenting these interactions—with the objects appearing only incidentally on screen.

Although leaning heavily on the gallery context, both “Fidelio” and “Malevich’s Wallpaper*” situate the actual work outside of the possible systems of exchange offered by this context. This highlights the limit of the relationship between the physical objects deployed in the gallery space and the final form (or rather formlessness) of the work: neither are able to provide a meaningful context for interpreting the other, since their relationship, at heart, is arbitrary.

In this sense, Wynnychuk’s physical objects and the subject of his work (the project) can be understood as having a symbolic relationship following Pierce: a connection clearly exists between the two, and yet it is entirely predicated on a pre-agreed system of conventions destined to fail in that they cannot be meaningfully established with the viewer beforehand. For the viewer, this linguistic limit is necessarily experienced as a form of duplicity—a source of frustration for at least one commentator at the time.³ “Fidelio” and “Malevich’s Wallpaper*” demand to be approached either within a narrative, non-physical system of exchange, or on purely formal terms as a system of physical objects.⁴ And yet neither mode of interpretation is able to sufficiently describe the totality of the project.

In the 2004 exhibition “Venn for Head”,⁵ Wynnychuk began to explore a strategy for negating this tendency for objects to degenerate to the status of props. “Venn for Head” comprises of a series of works incorporating physical processes directly into the means of production: for example tracing stones directly on paper, or a video of the artist building a fire playing in reverse. I would argue that within Wynnychuk’s practice, this use of physical process has been the key to reconfiguring sign relationships away from the symbolic and towards the indexical, in which non-physical systems and the physical properties of the works themselves have become inextricably connected.

As an example, the most powerful illustration of the productive capacity of indexical relationships I know is Piero Sampaolesi’s geometric development of