[RE]VIEWING BIG BROTHER

AND

[PER]FORMING THE REAL

[JENNA CORCORAN]

ABSTRACT

This research project, *[Re]Viewing Big Brother and [Per]Forming the Real*, set about a critical examination of watching and being watched; specifically, 'everyday' people in the traditionally private space of the home mediated by surveillance technologies.

The research methodology was practice-based, and fundamentally undertaken creatively, resulting in an exhibition of artwork and this written exegesis supporting it. Looking at the presence of Reality TV in the home, the exhibition juxtaposed the everyday with the spectacle, while the exegesis questioned the theoretical, metaphorical and methodological intricacies of creating a [hyper]reality and of [per]forming the real.

Conclusions arising from the theoretical and creative research, and demonstrated in the exhibition, included how the visibility of private spaces transgressed the real to the hyperreal, the identification of such hyperreal spaces, the importance of the media to validate existence and the overall performance of that existence.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Jenna Corcoran, declare that the PhD exegesis entitled *[Re]Viewing Big Brother and [Per]Forming the Real* is no more than 30,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This exegesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this exegesis is my own work.

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Jenna Corcoran

CONTENTS

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PROLOGUE

[Re]Viewing Big Brother and [Per]Forming the Real, the title of this project, describes both the theoretical and written approach and the practical and creative approach to this PhD by exegesis and exhibition. Firstly, the phrase *[Re]Viewing Big Brother* can be read in different ways. It can be taken in the popular culture sense as a critical examination of the Reality Television show that graced our TV screens for a decade. It may also be understood as taking another, different or mirrored look at the ubiquitous Big Brother, surveillance. This also alludes to video and surveillance style artwork created for this project. *[Per]Forming the Real* relates to the performative aspect of my artwork and alludes to how much of the real is actually performed as a result of living one's life under surveillance. Breaking it down further, we have *Forming the Real*, which describes the formal and structural artwork created for this project. The *Real* is a somewhat ambiguous yet encompassing term used to describe everyday life, the physical and philosophical aspects of living in reality, experiences and expectations, feelings and processes, relationships and thoughts.

The following exegesis attempts to be a logical and rational explanation of the intuitive and irrational process of this creative research project. Over the period of this project many ideas have come and gone, only to come back again at a latter stage in the creative or theoretical exploration and make sense. At the time, when I was either busy in my studio making, on the computer editing video, reading journal articles or writing, or with my nose in a book and my head in a daze, ideas would form, artworks would be constructed in my mind. But quite often I had no idea, no conscious idea anyway, what they actually meant, and if they 'worked' or 'fitted in' with my project and what I wanted to explore. Some ideas didn't work or fit, so were let go after some exploration. Evidently I followed certain paths of enquiry, to discover the intuitive ideas that worked within the overall scope of the project.

Traditional academic research insists on posing a problem and confronting it with evidence. However, in my case, I never set out a problem *per se*. I identified a topic I wanted to delve into, but it was not going to be a topic that I could resolve with traditional academic enquiry. I quite simply wanted – no, needed – to explore these thoughts and put these ideas forward in a way that made sense to me - visually and creatively.

The thoughts that have sustained this creative research project have been influenced and inspired from a vast pool of resources, from a great many disciplines and from a number of different thinkers and artists, too many in fact to discuss within the confines of this exegesis unfortunately. I have taken from them what spoke to me, what jumped out of the page of a book or from an artwork in an exhibition, and applied them to my practice and research. In the end, however, this intuitive, open and *drifting* mode of enquiry flowed and formed a cohesive project.
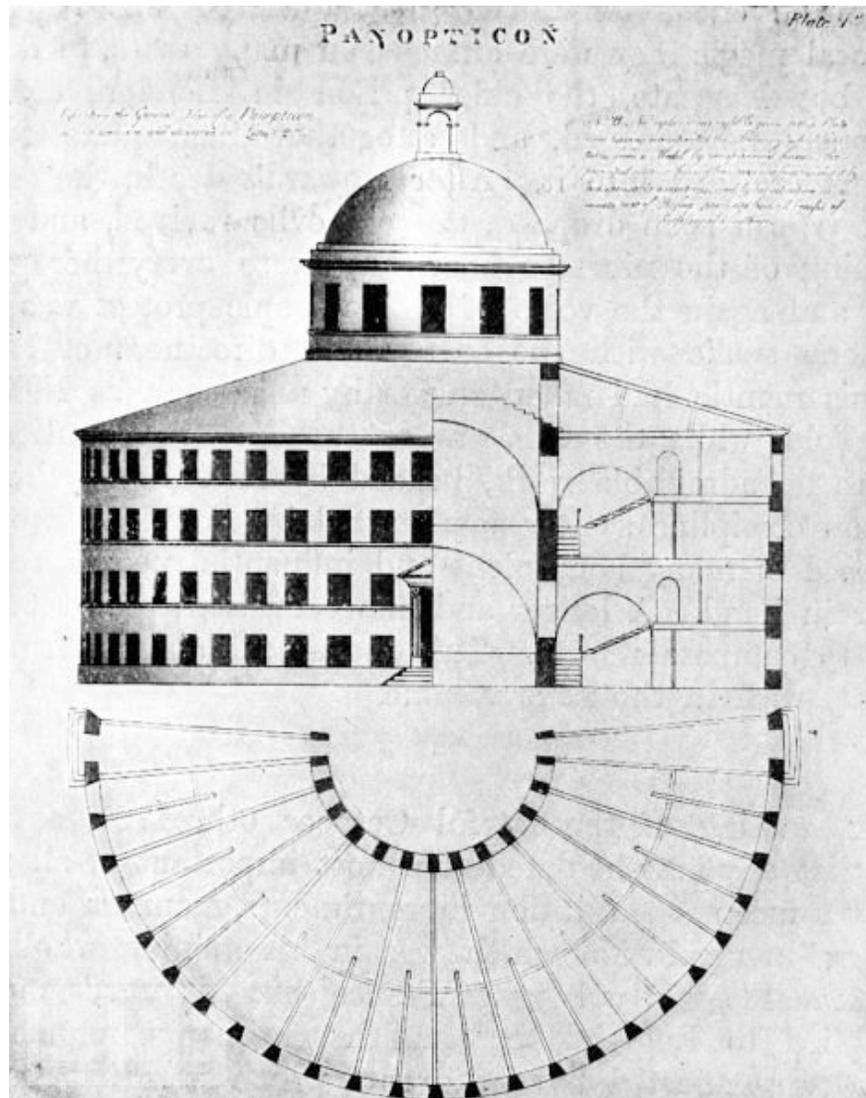
Jeremy Bentham *Panopticon Penitentiary* 1785, Drawing

This project emerged from an interest with the technology of surveillance, and the still to be fully determined role it plays in everyday life. Jeremy Bentham's 18th Century Utilitarian Panopticon penitentiary design (1785) of an annular building of cells surrounding a central watchtower, where a single supervisor is placed to invisibly observe the inmates, is a remarkable control mechanism identified by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). The light interior of the panopticon prison is in contrast to the dark dungeons of Piranesi's *Carceri d'Invenzione* (*Imaginary Prisons*) (1749-50) signifying social change, where fear and paranoia were synonymous with social control and the greater moral good. Bentham and Foucault recognized the control device's functionality in all areas of society, from schools to hospitals to the military. The 'few watching the many' of the panopticon model is synonymous with today's CCTV and electronic surveillance practices, where one must behave as though they are potentially under surveillance at all times. However, the *détournement* of surveillance has shifted the mechanics of watching from the panopticon to include the synopticon (Mathiesen 1997) where the 'many watch the few', an idea supported by Zygmunt Bauman (cited in Lyon 2001, p. 92). Mathiesen argues that the synopticon means that society has become a 'viewer society', or as Debord would call it, a 'society of the spectacle' (1977). However, as Crary rightly points out, the "opposition between spectacle and surveillance became untenable" (1990, p. 112). Surveillance and the spectacle occur concurrently. From this it became clear to me that there was an issue and a debate around this technology. It had extended beyond the bounds of its use as a control mechanism and became something of a tool for entertainment. This led my enquiry to Reality TV. Of course this was not a new discovery by any means. Surveillance techniques and entertainment have collaborated for a long time, as early as 1948 with *Candid Microphone*, renamed and reformatted as *Candid Camera* (ABC) in 1949 (Clissold 2004, p. 33). The 1970s saw *An American Family* (PBS, 1973) and the lives of an ordinary American family on television screens around the US. Australia and Britain were treated to the 'cashed-up bogan' antics of *Sylvania Waters* (ABC/BBC 1992) residents Noeline Baker and Laurie Donaher and their adult family (interrogated in the *Reality Check: Watching Sylvania Waters* exhibition at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery in 2009). And of course, we have had the renowned and prolific *Big Brother*, dominating television and cultural debate over the past decade.

Via the research conducted for this project it became apparent that Reality TV, and other versions of real life caught by surveillance or video cameras, were not actually real. They were representations of real life, which transcended the real to the *hyperreal*. A hyperreal representation is more real than real, to the point where it has surpassed the need for an original. It was this revelation that directed an obvious change in my creative enquiry; but to a degree, one that already showed signs of becoming present in my artistic practice anyway.
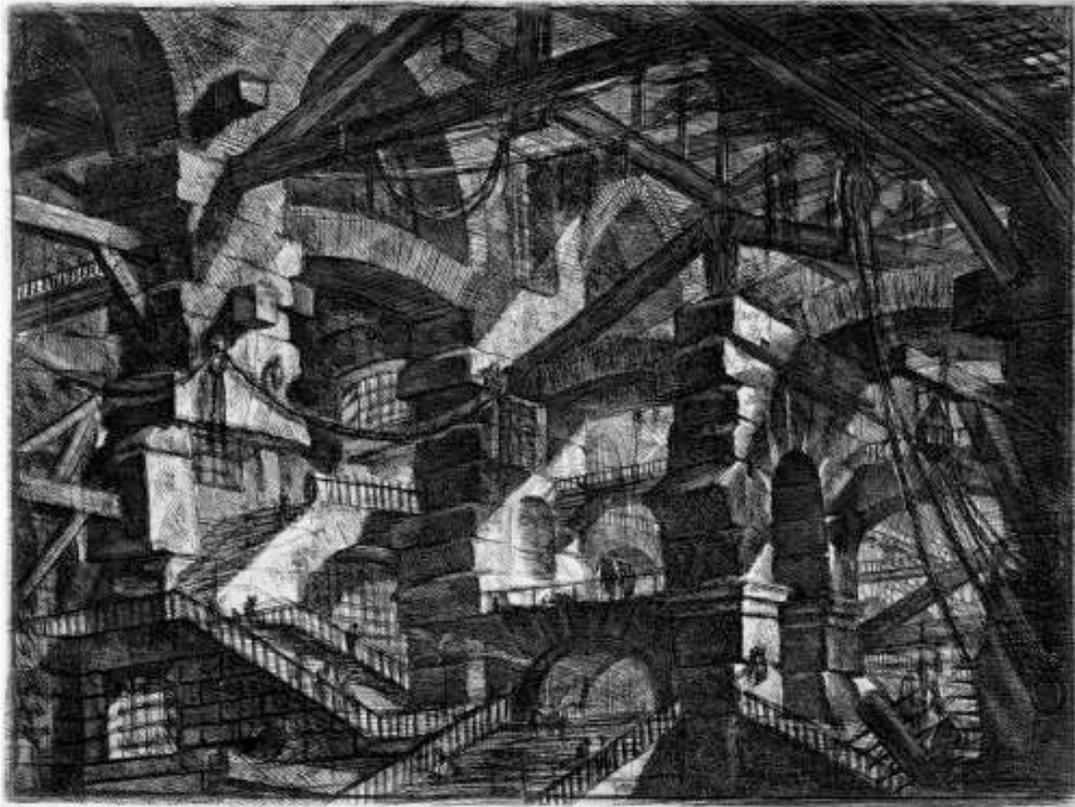
Piranesi *Carceri d'Invenzione (Plate 14)* 1749-50, etching.

John A Douglas *Ask Noeline… Not the Ogre* 2009, Video installation

Methodology

Theoretical enquiry and creative practice interacted, intertwined and became interdependent in the production of this exegesis and the accompanying exhibition. Theoretical enquiry provided the intellectual basis for the creation of artwork. Practical discoveries informed the thesis and paralleled the line of intellectual thought.

The methodology undertaken in this research was *practice-based*. This method fundamentally relied on artistic practice as research and finished artworks as outcomes. The process of art making and the creative outcomes directed theoretical enquiry. Thus, practice informed theory, and vice versa. Theory too informed creativity working within this methodology. I like to describe it as an ascending spiral of concepts, a whirlwind of theoretical and creative ideas colliding and amalgamating to eventually produce an informed, creative and technically developed comprehensive project.

Practice-based research is a practical and justified approach to a creative PhD. Its unpredictability challenges conventional analytical and critical methods, and traditional qualitative and quantitative methodologies, as its goal is to "complicate and augment everyday phenomena" (Grech 2006, p. 40). This ultimately was the underlying premise of the overall project. Grech believes that the appearance of practice-based research work as imprecise and illogical makes it seem "too tentative to be useful in a rigorous scientific or academic environment" (ibid. p. 38), where its innovative reference to, and articulation of, reality "may undermine the authoritative power of scientific [and academic] language" (ibid. p. 39). Studies indicate that researching visual artists and institutions are keen to continue developing the discipline-specific methodological framework for practice-based research (Petelin 2006, p. 32).

Practice-based research is a reflexive process, subjective and reverberative. Research of this type allows for the researcher to incorporate their own "subjective experience of things and events" into the work (op cit, p. 38). This allows the researcher to discover innovative forms of articulation, which leaves the work open to the subjective interpretation of others, and can lead both the researcher and audience to unexpected discoveries, a method I tend to apply when exhibiting my artwork in general. The research allows for tangential discoveries and trajectories that lead to surprising realisations, which adds an element of "chaotic uncertainty" (ibid) to the dynamic of the work. In this sense it is like the Situationist's *derive* site specific performance method of "a technique of transient passage through various ambiences" (Debord, in Kaye 2000, p. 117).

Structure of Thesis

This thesis is presented as two parts – by exhibition and exegesis. The foremost component of this thesis is the artwork and exhibition. The intention was to have the exhibition before the submission of the exegesis. That way it opens up the artwork to interpretation, particularly by the examiners, allowing the artwork to speak for itself and making explicit the intention and meaning. The nature of the exhibition is that it relies on the viewers input, both physically and intellectually, for the whole thing to work.

The work shown in the exhibition had video, sound, sculptural and installation elements. It was imperative that I allowed for the medium and style of the artwork to form naturally and intuitively. I undertook this as a "space orientated artist", one who is "more likely a sculptor than a painter, an architect sooner than a musician or poet" (Lefebvre 1991, p. 30). *Space*, once thought of and described in terms of geometry and Euclidean, is a concept no longer belonging only to mathematicians, and has been returned in part to the domain of philosophical thinkers. Space is infinite and absolute, it is all and nothing, it is empty and full. It implicates *time* and *energy* (Lefebvre 1991, p. 11-12). It was imperative that time was also an integral facet of the artwork. All of the other elements and motifs, such as the house, miniaturisation and mirrors, evolved naturally via the creative research process.

The exegesis is divided into two parts. Both parts will delve into the visual and written literature that has informed the work, as well as my creative discoveries, trajectories and output along the way.

Part One – Experimentation and Exploration is an overview of the creative process and the theoretical and philosophical enquiry over the duration of this project. The exegesis includes early experimentation and a detailing of the works of art not shown in the final exhibition, incidental discoveries, discussions on *Big Brother*, and the attempt of pulling it all together to make sense of it all.

Part Two – The Exhibition will look at the outcome of that process, the final showing of the artwork in exhibition. It will take the form of a guided tour of the exhibition, beginning with an introduction to the space. Each artwork will be analysed and critiqued individually and then the exhibition as a whole will be discussed as a single, comprehensive living, moving work of art. Some artworks are referred to by their title; others are untitled and will be referred to by their working title or description. In the description of some artworks I refer to the protagonist as either in the first or third person. This simply reflects the impact it had on me as the viewer of the work as well as the creator. The nature of the final exhibition, being site specific meant some works were adapted or materialised according to the space when I was installing it, while others were left out altogether simply because they didn't work with the space.

INTRODUCTION

On each landing, opposite the lift shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. **BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU***, the caption beneath it ran.*

George Orwell *Nineteen Eighty-four.*

"Big Brother is everywhere, watching us, controlling us" rapped the modern day poet on my radio as I drove along Melbourne's Western Ring Road, a highway like many others watched over by numerous speed and traffic control cameras. This coincidental recognition was the catalyst leading to a hyperawareness of all references to surveillance and watching, in all its forms.

Songwriters and musicians, just as other artists, have long referenced the world they live in, a modern world favouring vision and the visual (Crary 1990; Jay 1993) becoming a postmodern world of overwhelming visibility and representation, a world obsessed with watching and being watched. According to Sutton and Wilson (2004, p. 310), Australia's open-street surveillance experience has only just begun, compared to that of Britain, *the* most watched nation, which has rapidly increased the surveillance of its citizens since the 1990s (Norris & Armstrong 1999, p. 39). British rockers Hard-Fi reference the pervasive use of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) in their homeland, with their albums *Stars of CCTV* (2005) and *CCTVersions* (2006), and their promotional imagery and gig posters. This pervasive imagery, as well as the increasing pervasiveness of surveillance technology, was the inspiration behind my 2006 solo exhibition, *CCTV: The Omnipresent Gaze* at Trocadero Artspace, positioning that the prevalence of closed circuit and electronic watching effects the behaviour of those in its presence. Using CCTV technology with real and dummy cameras, a bank of monitors and warning posters, my art interrogated the audience, asked them to look at their behaviour in that space and other surveillance spaces and initiated *normalised* and *other* types of bodily conduct. *CCTV* instigated self-surveillance, the surveillance of others, and toyed with the notion of time via methods of real-time surveillance and pre-recorded surveillance footage.

Hard-Fi *Stars of CCTV* 2005 and *CCTVersions,* CD cover art 2006

J. Corcoran *CCTV: The Omnipresent Gaze* 2006, Poster

Anecdotally, I have noticed an increase in the prevalence of electronic surveillance in my everyday life. Experiencing electronic surveillance in my workplace has allowed me the perspective of visual surveillance techniques and effects; I have the problem/privilege of being on both sides of the surveillance camera. I am watched while I work and also have the power to watch customers in my store. Hypothetically, just going about your daily tasks, you are likely to be caught on camera countless times; driving to work, speeding or running a red light, filling up the car with petrol, paying for the petrol, parking the car at the train station, waiting for the train, travelling on the train, leaving the train station, walking through the CBD, entering the building you work in, passing through the foyer, in the elevator, entering your office…and it is only 9am. You are likely to be caught on camera several times during the rest of the day too, in places like banks, shopping centres and restaurants. But not only are we exposed to surveillance of our public lives, we also willingly put ourselves and our private lives under surveillance, with personal home CCTV systems, gated communities, handycams, webcams, YouTube and Reality TV. We are willingly exposing ourselves, making ourselves visible not only for the sake of personal security, but also for personal entertainment, gratification and validation.

J. Corcoran *CCTV: The Omnipresent Gaze* 2006, 4 Channel video, Production stills.

As a result of this preliminary research it is evident that surveillance technology is multipurpose in effect. Lyon describes surveillance as being Janus-faced: it is protective and proscriptive, controls and constrains (2001, p. 3). The installation of a surveillance network can serve panoply of purposes; a simple typology of surveillance use identifies economic, political, crime prevention, health, control, social sorting, anti-socialisation, voyeurism and entertainment (Lyon 2001). Traffic control and speed cameras are installed for safety, economic and political purposes. Surveillance used in the retail sector and the workplace is used to stop theft, increase productivity, monitor staff and induce compliance for economic, control, and managerial purposes. The *détournement* of surveillance's *raison d'être* however, has evidently resulted in voyeurism and the spectacle. The *scopophilic*, active (male) gaze (Mulvey 1989) mediated through surveillance technology watches an unsuspecting passive subject (traditionally female) as an object of desire. While the *spectacle* (Debord 1977) of everyday life as surveillance becomes entertainment.

The increased prevalence and reliance on surveillance and surveillance technology, as well as the social implications and governmental power exploited by surveillance, has been topical for big budget Hollywood films and independent films alike. *Minority Report* (2002), *Enemy of the State* (1998) and *V for Vendetta* (2005) are just three that expose the dystopic and totalitarian possibilities of a surveillance society, resonating with Orwell's seminal book, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). The independent film *Red Road* (2006) exposes the humanistic cost of surveillance, where the protagonist, a CCTV operator, becomes dangerously obsessed with the people she watches on a daily basis.

Still from *Red Road* 2006

The mass media, on the other hand, are not so pessimistic about surveillance technology infiltrating society. We are continually subjected to surveillance images of crimes, new surveillance technologies and calls for increased national security. Surveillance pictures of perverts on trains, art heists and 'dole bludgers' regularly make the news or current affairs programs, and recently the media obliged in demonstrating the accuracy of facial recognition technology and full body x-ray scanning at airports. Recent anti-terror laws have meant that governmental authorities have increased powers of surveillance (Parliament of Australia, *Surveillance Devices Bill* 2004), a development heralded by the mass media. The "black moustachio'd face" of Orwell's Big Brother (1949, p. 8) is starting to look *not so fictitious* after all.

Full body x-ray scan.

Big Brother 8 Australia 2008

Positioned somewhere in between these two popular ideals we have Reality television. Reality TV exposes the technological capabilities of surveillance, the ability to see all, yet it does so in a non-threatening, entertaining way. New York artist Julia Scher says "Reality TV is our attempt to come to grips with the constant intrusions on everyday life" (cited in Rush 2003, p. 36). Peter Weibel suggests the panoptic principle of Reality TV, where "everything must be seen and all must be shown" is a model "for becoming immunised to the society of the future" (2002, p. 15); that it dilutes the negative aspects of a surveillance society into one of pleasure and entertainment. *Big Brother* (*BB*) (Endemol Southern Star) has enjoyed success in at least 20 countries (Johnson-Woods 2002) in over 40 versions (Biressi & Nunn 2005, p. 11) over the last 11 years since it first aired in The Netherlands in 1999. The Australian format of the show initially sees approximately 12 contestants enter a house for up to 3 months. Once inside the house there is no contact with the outside world, no newspapers, no pens and paper, no telephone and no broadcast television. The housemates' only explicit contact is with Big Brother (the show's producer/s) and occasionally with the show's host/s; however, it is common knowledge that the housemates also talk to a psychologist and have had contact with crewmembers. The housemates cannot leave the compound – a domestic space of a communal bedroom, bathroom, toilets, dining and lounge room, kitchen, and an outside area with a gym and pool/spa – unless they are evicted, forced to leave by Big Brother or forfeit the game. They are locked in the space, for weeks and months, doing even less than what they would do in their real lives. The absolute banality of this show is what attracts us, the uninteresting excites, and yet it is this which is our downfall. It is this which erases experience and reality, as Baudrillard points out referring to the French version of BB, *Loft Story* (Baudrillard 2001).

The first chapter of the exegesis examines the very early experiments in video and surveillance in the studio. These are then contextualised within the history of early video art, notably the work of American artist Bruce Nauman. Following on from this, chapter two introduces the construction and formal exploration of my practice, and establishes the importance of the model, the house and the television within the project.

Chapter three describes the process whereby I installed surveillance cameras in my house and for months filmed aspects of my everyday life. This led my research down a not entirely unexpected route, where I started to incorporate performance into my artistic practice. Chapter four makes some conclusions regarding the direction of my art in response to the in-progress showings of the video/installation/performance work.

From part two, chapter five establishes the context of the final show, and introduces the space so integral to the site-specific installation exhibition. It responds to recent shifts in contemporary art where houses and the suburban landscape have become celebrated exhibition spaces. It addresses the spaces and artworks within, and positions them within the context of contemporary visual art, while referring to theorists and thinkers of everyday spaces, including Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau.

Chapter six continues the exploration of the exhibition space and artworks. In particular, this chapter will look at models and miniature representations of space and the hyperreality and inauthenticity of such spaces. It posits that these spaces are representations, images, reproductions of an original; much like an image in a mirror. The chapter ends with an explanation of the infinity mirror bathroom installation, comparing it to Dan Graham's 'pavilions.'

Chapter seven looks at the two artworks that attempted to push the boundaries of privacy and exposure further than any of the previous works. The artworks were not as shocking as anticipated, indicative of a society where the boundary between acceptable private and public exposure is skewed.

PART ONE – THE EXPERIMENTATION AND EXPLORATION

Chapter 1

Surveilling Video

This chapter details the early video experiments I conducted in my studio, and notes the similarities to and influence by integral experimental video artists, with reference to the artist as subject and the notion of narcissism.

Embarking on this project I was interested purely in the capabilities of analogue visual surveillance technology and was engaged by the low quality surveillance aesthetic. The raw grittiness of the images of an age gone by had a quality to them that is lack lustre by today's high definition standards, but is considered utterly genuine in its portrayal of reality (Clarke 1997, p. 23; Jay 1993, p. 131; Moran 2005, p. 86). It reminds me of an era I long to have been alive for; that pertinent and revolutionary era of free love, youth culture, bohemian lifestyle, rock and roll, political protests, second-wave feminism and early video art.

Bruce Nauman *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* 1967-8,
10 min, black and white, silent, 16 mm film on video.

My early experimentations with video art for this project mimicked early video art experimentations from the 1960s, where artists "used the video camera as an extension of their own bodies and as participants in performances, linking the physical and the conceptual" (Rush 2003, p. 9). In my studio I would set up a surveillance camera, connect it to a small analogue television screen, into which a camcorder was plugged to record the images onto digital video. My first experiment involved attaching the surveillance camera high on the wall, presiding over my studio space. Visually guided by the monitor I then proceeded to mark out the very outer edges of the space visible to the surveillance camera with whatever materials I had lying around in my studio; mainly cardboard scraps and tubing. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this work was aesthetically and conceptually informed by Bruce Nauman's oeuvre, from his early 'representations' to the later *Mapping the Studio (Fat Chance John Cage)* (2001). His video work of the late 1960s documented a series of regimented activities perform in his studio, in which he concentrated on a single task, such as *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (1967-8), *Wall-Floor Positions* (1968) and *Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube* (1969). These black and white films or videos show the artist experimenting and exploring with the physical space of his studio with his physical being. In his 2001 *Mapping the Studio*, Nauman recorded the nocturnal goings-on in his studio, where mice and a cat navigate the darkened space populated with remains of other finished or unfinished projects. Like Nauman, I let the camera record even during the times when I wasn't in the studio, and I often recorded until the tape ran out.

The surveillance footage in this first experiment starts off jerky as the camera is put into position on the wall. Initially the perspective is nauseating. The camera is sensitive to light and adjusts slowly to subtle changes. Footage is high contrast black and white, but of low quality. The images playing in real-time on the TV reflect back at the camera via a mirror on the far wall. I leave the studio.

Watching this at a later time, in another place, I was in suspense – I was keen to watch what happened in the room after my departure. Needless to say, not much happened. But it was interesting to note that I, as the audience, was much more intrigued in the surveillance footage when nothing was happening than when I, as the subject, was in the room and something was happening. I was not particularly interested in watching myself, but the anticipation or possibility of something happening which kept me watching. I wondered if

BB's housemates watch broadcast footage of themselves once leaving the house, if they watched the entire series or just certain episodes or days, if they watch it to see themselves or to see what happened during the times they weren't about.

Watching myself move through the studio, knowing that it wasn't a planned performance, but simply a recording of unscripted happenings in the space, I became aware of my body, and the small, unconscious nuances of movement it expresses. From my hair flick to the rubbing of my injured shoulder, seeing myself on television annoyed me. This prompted the question: what do *BB*'s housemates feel when they catch sight of themselves on TV once outside of the house and back in the real world? If they were aware of what they looked like to the watching audience would they have acted differently?

Still taken from surveillance camera experiments in artist's studio 2007

Referring to Vito Acconci's 1971 *Centers*, American art critic Rosalind Krauss incorrectly generalises that video artists are fundamentally narcissistic (Rush 2003, p. 10); Reality TV contestants may be, but video artists? Generally not, as Michael Rush identifies in *Video Art,* video artists were more occupied with critiquing mass media and television. And this was also the case regarding myself and my video art. *BB* contestants and audiences alike (which are one and the same anyway) are a prime example of the Narcissus myth/theory. McLuhan (1964) concludes that televisual technology is an extension of the body and that we have become fascinated with our own images, but by doing so we are in danger of becoming a "servomechanism [of our] own extended or repeated image" (p. 41).

> To behold, use or perceive any extension of ourselves in technological form is necessarily to embrace it. To listen to radio or to read the printed page is to accept these extensions of ourselves onto our personal system and to undergo the 'closure' or displacement of perception that follows automatically. It is this continuous embrace of our own technology in daily use that puts us in the Narcissus role of subliminal awareness and numbness in relation to these images of ourselves. By continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servomechanisms. That is why we must, to use them at all, serve these objects, these extensions of ourselves, as gods or minor religions (ibid, p. 46).

Not only did I feel uncomfortable with watching myself on TV, I also concluded that it is unfathomable for (the image of) my body to be stuck at that place at that time. My body has been captured by the surveillance camera, doing nothing particularly spectacular, but captured nonetheless, and suspended in time as it is contained by the Mini DV tape used to record it. It is stuck in the represented space of my studio, unable to do anything other than what it did on that day. My body is also subject to the whims of surveillance time. As linear time moves forward unstoppably towards the future, surveillance time can be stopped, paused, rewound, fast-forwarded or slowed down. Surveillance space-time can be edited, copied or deleted. My body, recorded in linear time moving through three-dimensional space, has been transcended beyond the conceivable limits of time, by not only existing in the future, but by the future holding a mutable existence of my body.

Vito Acconci *Centers* 1971, black and white, sound, single channel video, 22:28 min.

In the surveillance space-time representation of the studio, the demarcation of surveillance space created by the lengths of cardboard appear vertical on the screen, running along the very extreme of the picture edge, but in real space-time they ran at an angle from the camera, and they were laying horizontally flat on the floor. The perspective of the camera has distorted what was the three-dimensional space of the studio – it has flattened it, and contained it inside the rectangular frame of the television screen. The camera flattens, compresses and miniaturises space to fit it inside the confines of the box. This brings to mind the scene from *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971), where Mike Teevee physically shrinks to fit inside the TV. Size and scale is violated via television, to the point where it is irrelevant.

My early video art experiments, initially occupied with basic video technology and aesthetic, ended up focussing more on myself, the artist, as subject, and my interaction with space, which was in turn contained and altered by the video camera.

Chapter 2

Construction Introduction

The corner is a sort of half-box, part walls, part door. It will serve as an illustration for the dialectics of inside and outside.

Bachelard *The Poetics of Space.*

My previous art experiments lead me to interrogate space as captured by the video camera, and to extend on that I began to construct my own spaces to experiment with and on. This lead me to realise a more formal element in my creative practice, one which was to become integral in the final works.

I constructed a small, half box structure from some recycled timber I had in my studio, and attached the camera to the inside plane. The inside space of the corner was captured by the camera, represented on the monitor and recorded to digital video. The abstraction of the space from its original context and construct distorted and manipulated the perception of that space – the image represented could easily have been of a large empty room instead of the small structure it was. I attempted to make the physical edges of the real space one with the visual parameters of the represented space on the television screen, so in a similar vein to the previous experiment I traced around the very outer edge of the camera's gaze onto the timber.

The result wasn't unexpected; the image on the monitor was unchanged, except for a sketchy black border that seemed to hover around the edge of the screen. However, the half box form was different, not only in the physical sense in that it had been violated by the artist's hand armed with charcoal, but perceptually. To look at this space now was like looking at a television studio, a space contrived for viewing via a monitor, and somewhat structurally deformed, as if it would fall apart if not experienced in this way, and that it could never again just be the half box, or simple corner, that it once was. This demonstrated the violation,

destruction and reconfiguration of three-dimensional environments via the camera, and the representation of three-dimensional space on the flat surface of the television monitor.
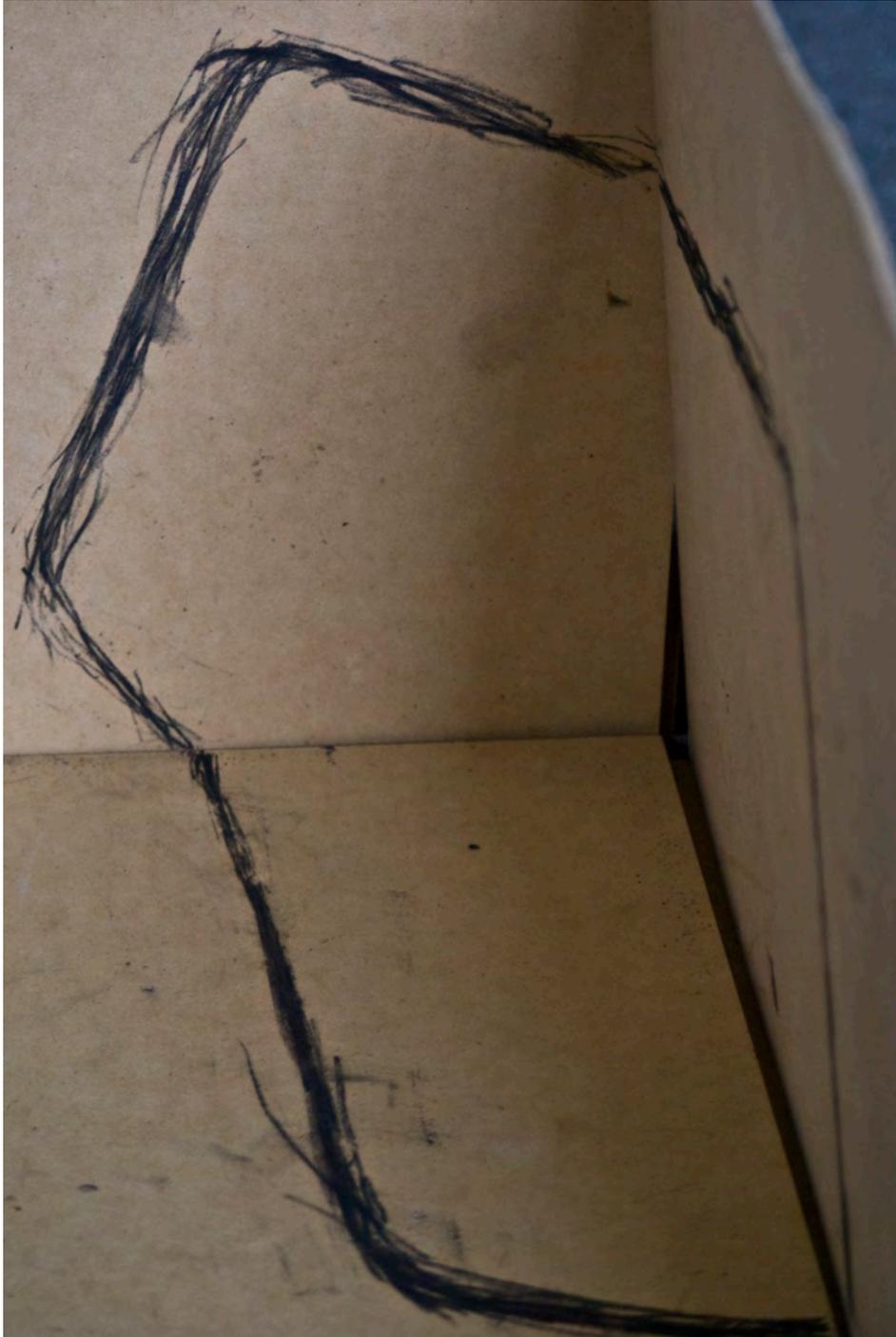
J. Corcoran, Corner experiment (documentation) 2007, reused timber, charcoal

J. Corcoran, Corner experiment (documentation) 2007, reused timber, charcoal

J. Corcoran, Infinity TV experiment (documentation) 2007, reused timber, TV, black and white surveillance camera

In an attempt to create an infinity of televisual/mediated space I placed the TV within the gaze of the camera. However, the camera was static and the TV was visually quiet, and the angle the camera was on (relative to the TV) created just a few repeated TVs and not an infinite number of them. This was an attempt at an electronic version of the Infinity Mirror, inspired by interdisciplinary Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. A major retrospective - *Yayoi Kusama: The Mirrored Years*, held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2009 - showcased her oeuvre of reflection, repetition, representation, accumulation, abstraction, illusion and hallucination. *Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field* (1965) featured her characteristic polka-dotted soft sculptures covering the floor of a mirror-walled room. The infinite, enigmatic and fantastic world of repetition and reflection seizes the viewer as a part of the work, where their image is manipulated, fragmented and abstracted by the constructed environment.
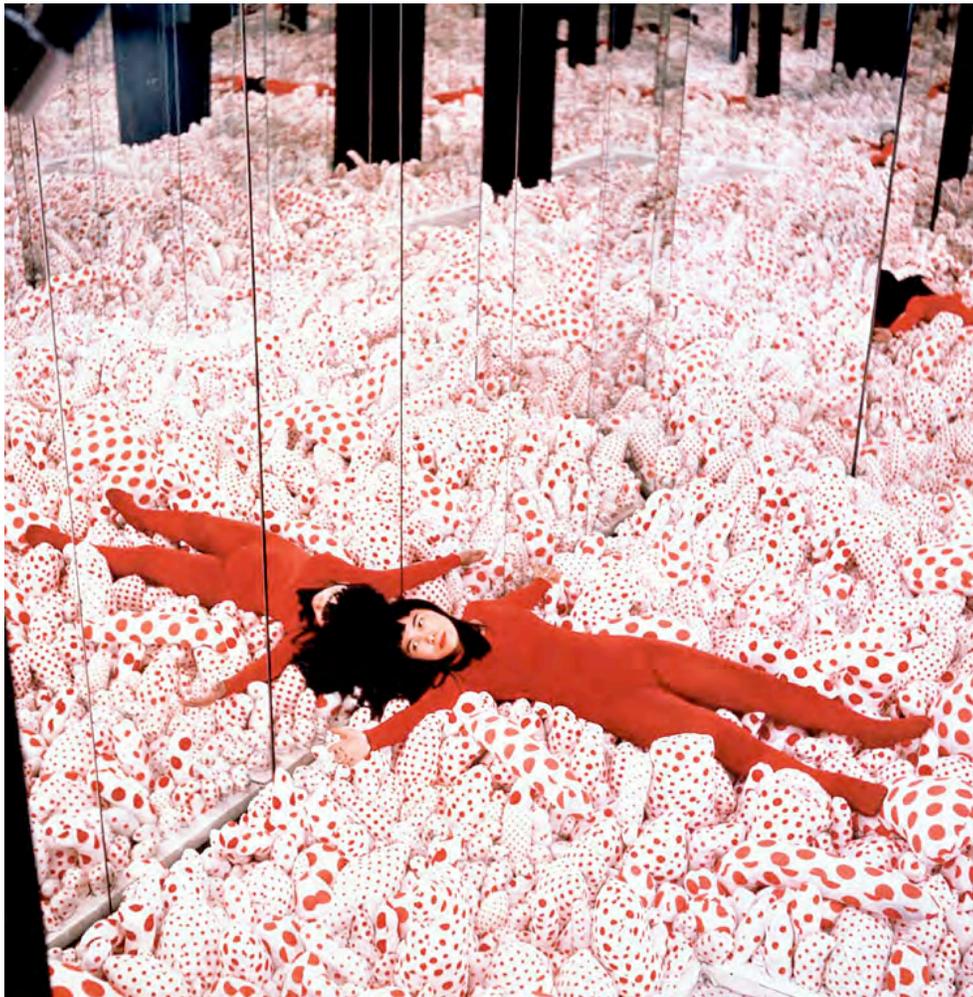
Yayoi Kusama *Infinity Mirror Room: Phalli's Field* 1965, Sewn
stuffed fabric, board, mirror room without ceiling, 8 x 15 x 15 ft.

Referring to the occupation of space in a different way are Rachel Whiteread's renowned sculptures of domestics forms, makes physical and tactile the negative space of everyday environments. Whiteread's earlier work of casting discarded household items, including bathtubs, sinks and beds, expanded to the more significant casting of houses and other architectural structures. Whiteread identified the life and memories these spaces once housed, and made them concrete, to memorialise and immortalise them in a creative sense.

Rachel Whiteread *Untitled (Grey)* 1996/2003, Mixed media. 79 x 206 x 109 cm.

Rachel Whiteread *Untitled (Stairs)* 2001, Mixed media. 375 x 220 x 580 cm.

However, it is her most recent work, her more intimate and personal work, which has directly influenced my project. Moving away from the grand, minimalist castings that made her famous in the 1990s, Whiteread worked with more humble and fundamental materials. She responded to the fifty-odd old, dejected, handmade doll's houses, which she had collected over a period of about 20 years, to create a work just as poignant, if not more so than her large scale sculptures. While vastly different in style and material from her previous work, Whiteread is quick to point out the similarities: "look inside them, they are just like the interiors of Ghost or House; it's exactly the same thing but on a miniature scale" (Whiteread, in Luke 2008 p. 85). On collecting the houses, Whiteread states: "I presumed I was going to cast them, but it became clearer as time went on that that wasn't their destiny. I was collecting more and more, and making a community of them" (ibid. p. 84). *Place (Village)* (2006), a miniature landscape in a dark corner of the gallery, populated by these doll's houses, each illuminated from the inside by a single tiny light globe, creates a somber and eerie mood. Unlike in her earlier work, where she fixed the memories of space in solid form, here she fills the space of the tiny houses with imagination and evokes the invention of possible memories.

Rachel Whiteread *Place (Village)* 2006/8,

Doll houses, crates, boxes, wood, electrical fixtures, and fittings, and electricity. Dimensions variable.

Wrapped-up doll's houses in Whiteread's studio.

J. Corcoran *Box house experiment* 2008. Cardboard box, acetate, packing tape. 30 x 50 x 50 cm.

A particular image in *Art World* of her dollhouses packed in cardboard boxes, secured with packing tape and plastered with 'fragile' stickers, was evidence of further digression into her new, intimate way of working. Continuing with her oeuvre of reclaiming disused and forgotten material, Whiteread began casting the humble cardboard box, and represented the form in drawings and collages.

Inspired by Whiteread's use of and response to such seemingly ordinary everyday items, I began to construct model houses using a variety of refuse material I had at hand in my studio. I re-used and reshaped cardboard boxes, reinforcing them using strong packing tape to create a house-like form. The first was a minimal rectangular structure with a pitched roof, and 'windows' running the length of the three walls. The rectangular windows were cut from the walls and replaced with clear PVC. This idea came from the two-way mirrored glass that runs the parameter of the *BB* house, allowing unfettered visual access from the outside. Visual access was the only form of penetration of the construction, as I didn't create doors or a removable wall. In fact the house had a neat little stature about it that now reminds me of the game pieces from Monopoly, and the petite size is also reminiscent of a child's dollhouse.

Using the design of this house as a template, I then modelled a house out of clear PVC. Unfortunately, this was the flimsy, curtain like plastic and not the hardened material one would think would be much more useful for a building model house. It flopped, seemingly melted. Significantly the entire house was transparent and, again, the only access into this house was by an unfettered gaze.

At this point in time series 8 of *BB* was back on our television screens and again garnering cultural interest, retrospectively for the last time; ironic or symbolic? With houses, construction, *BB*, games and promotion of watching on my mind I was compelled to construct a three-dimensional floor plan of the 2008 *BB* house, to make it tangible and to aid in my understanding of the space. Reusing cardboard boxes in a shanty-esque vigour, the model was rough, aided only by my memory of the layout of the house, and a handful of interior photographs taken from the *BB* website. But what ensued was the faculty of the internal structure of the house informing how the house is experienced and viewed from the inside and out.

J Corcoran Floor plan and surveillance camera experiment (documentation) 2008.

This experiment was similar, in a sense, to Jonas Dahlberg's artistic practice. Reminiscent of Jeff in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954), Dahlberg took to photographing his neighbour's apartment with a long lens, a neighbour who he thought may have been a crazed murderer. From the photographs he drew a plan and built a model of his neighbour's apartment, concentrating on the areas he couldn't see from the safety of his own apartment, relying on instinct and imagination to fill in the gaps. He also built a model of his own apartment vis-à-vis his neighbour's, and subsequently rearranged the living space in the real thing to make it appear empty to his suspect neighbour.

However, it was Dahlberg's video work *Untitled (Horizontal Sliding)* (2000) shown in the *CTRL [SPACE]* surveillance art exhibition, held at the ZKM Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany (2001/2) which was influential for the next experiment. Dahlberg's work depicted the miniature interior of two panoptic models from a central rotating camera. The viewer's relationship to the work is somewhat undetermined because of the precise

scaling and projection of the models and imagery. With my experiment, I placed the surveillance camera on the floor inside the cardboard model of the *BB* house. The images visible on the TV screen subverted the perception of scale, exacerbated by the low definition black and white image, not giving away too much detail but at the same time proclaiming 'authenticity.'

In *Safe zones, no 7 (The toilets at ZKM)* (2001), also shown as a part of that exhibition, Dahlberg placed two monitors outside of the gallery's toilet. The monitors depicted, in real-time, footage from inside the toilets. It was only upon stepping inside the toilet that the audience realised that the cameras were actually filming a detailed scaled model of the toilet within the space itself.

J Corcoran Floor plan (documentation) 2008, cardboard, packing tape.

Jonas Dahlberg *Safe zones, no 7 (The toilets at ZKM)* 2001, Installation, monitor, camera, dimensions variable.

In talking about these works, Mats Stjernstedt (2002) describes Dahlberg's rationale:

Building a model is a classic strategy for visualizing a situation, creating an overview so one can later arrive at a better understanding of an issue. The model is typified by a peculiar physical and psychological elasticity, since it is able both to be and to represent, and thus, to function as an intermediary between space, object and image. It enables further shifts into unknown worlds where scales can be freely displaced.

Dahlberg's works influenced mine conceptually and aesthetically, in particular his manipulation of scale to the point of it being indistinguishable from the real thing.

Jonas Dahlberg *Safe zones, no 7 (The toilets at ZKM)* 2001, Installation, monitor, camera, dimensions variable.

Jonas Dahlberg *Safe zones, no 7 (The toilets at ZKM)* 2001, Installation, monitor, camera, dimensions variable.
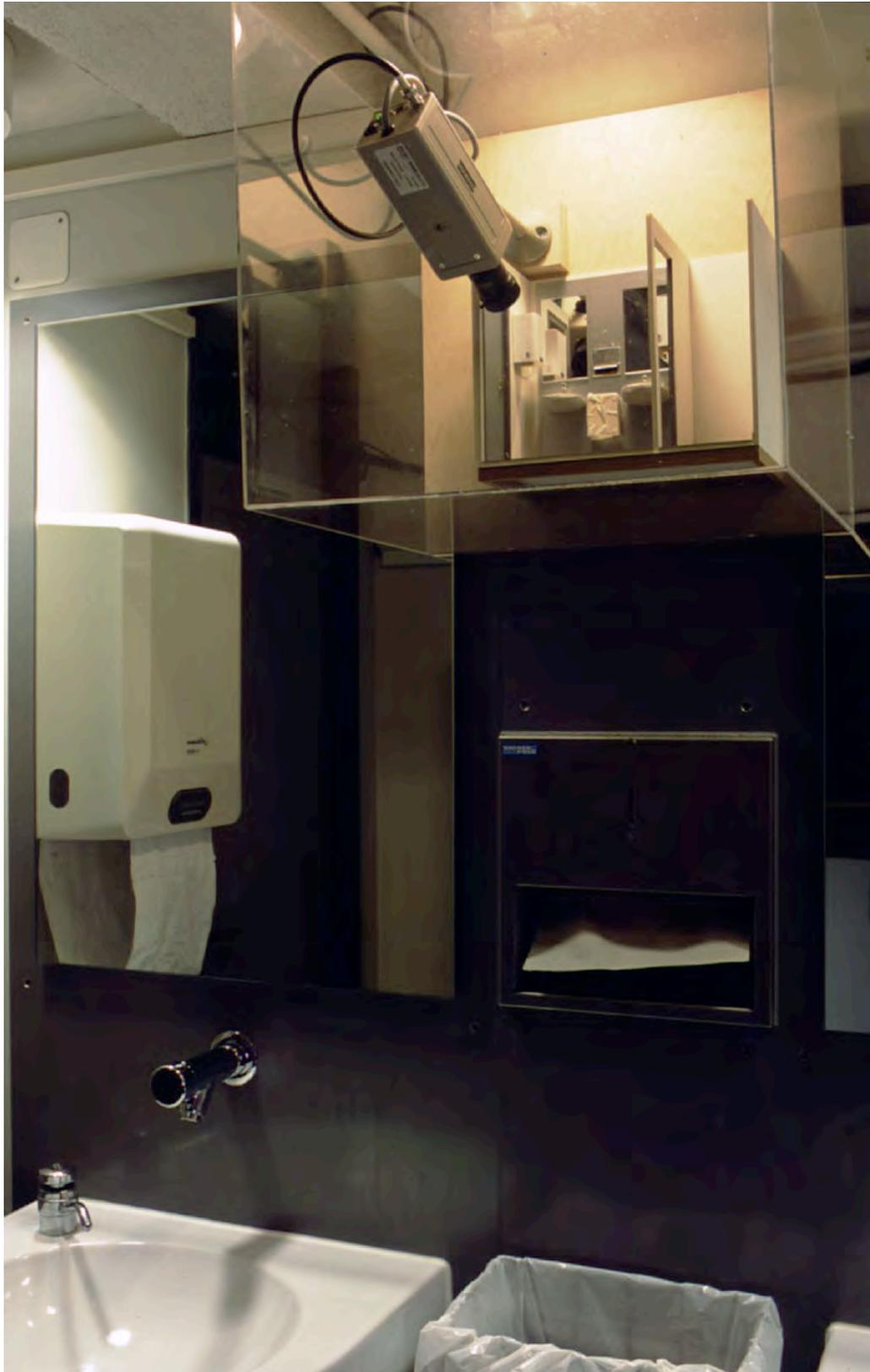
Jonas Dahlberg *Safe zones, no 7 (The toilets at ZKM)* 2001, Installation, monitor, camera, dimensions variable.
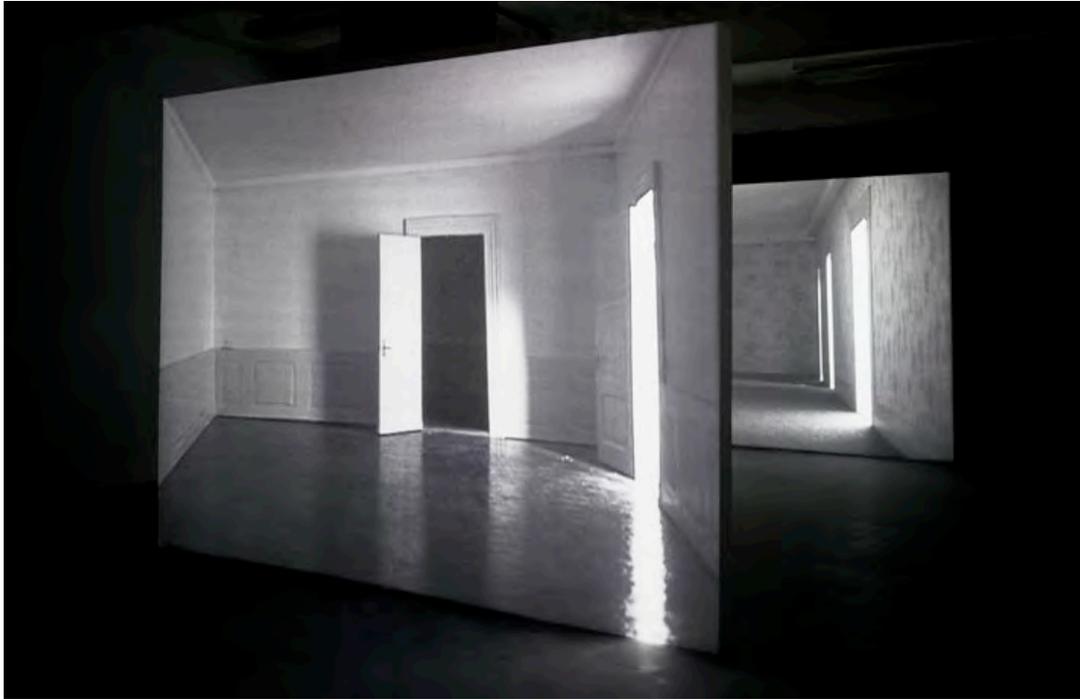
Jonas Dahlberg *Untitled (Horizontal Sliding)* 2000, Video Installation, Installation view.

Jonas Dahlberg *Untitled (Horizontal Sliding)* 2000, Video Installation, dimensions variable.
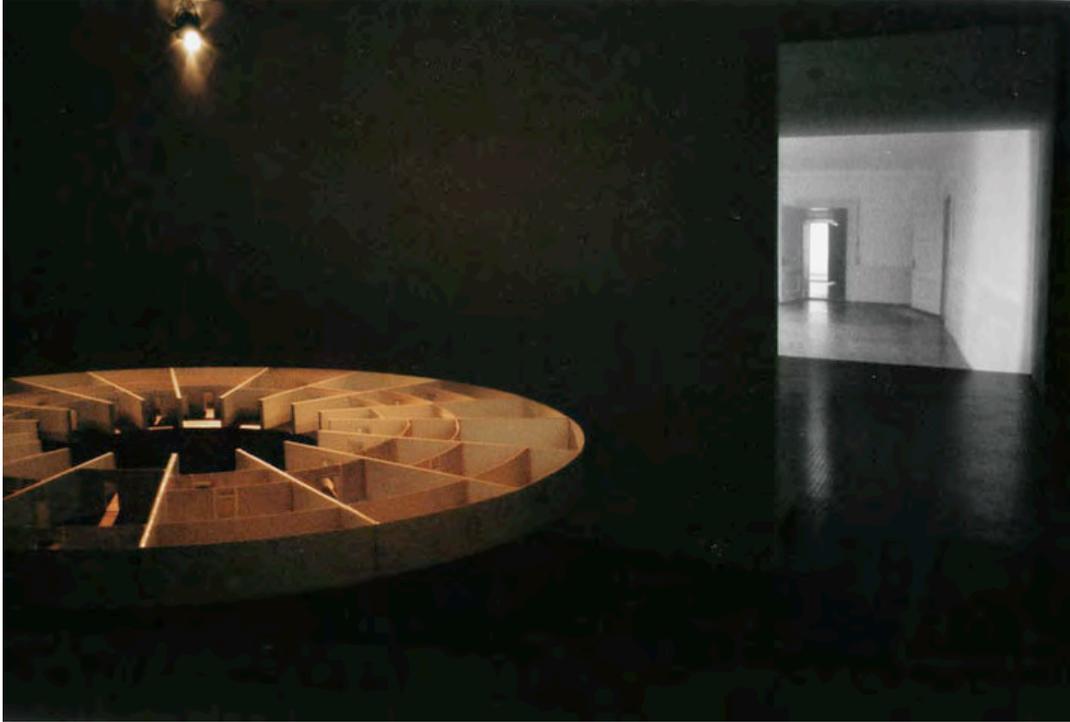
Jonas Dahlberg *Untitled (Horizontal Sliding)* 2000, Installation view with architecture model, dimensions variable.
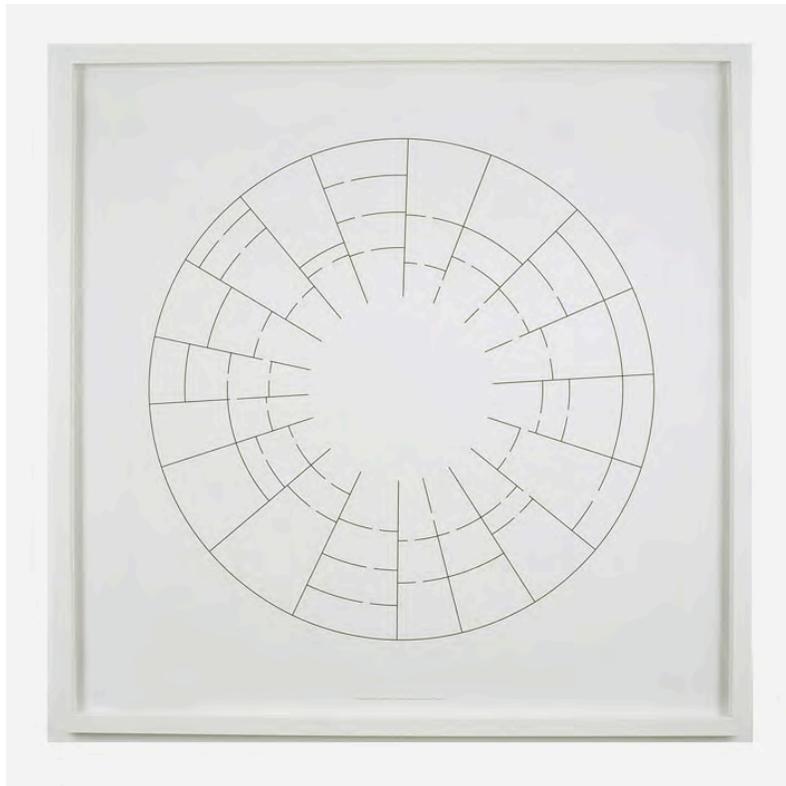
Jonas Dahlberg *Untitled (Horizontal Sliding)* 2000, model plan drawing.

The most intriguing thing about the layout of my cardboard model of the *BB* house, which was intrinsically obvious, but never quite so explicit, was that the *BB* house was designed and constructed purely for the function of sight: cocooned by a corridor housing television cameras, odd shaped rooms with few perpendicular corners, limited internal walls, open communal bathroom and bedroom. The actual *BB* house used in the filming of the series was conceived purely with the visual in mind, an overt example of Lefebvre's *representation of space*. Lefebvre's concepts relate to a conceived space occupied with subjectification and homogenisation[1] through "the primacy of the gaze in a kind of 'logic of visualisation'" (Lefebvre 1991, p. 41). Representations of space are "conceptualised space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (ibid. p. 38). The space is conceived, planned and developed before it is perceived and lived.

The nightly presence of *BB* on my television screen – the thumping pumping music, repetitive images of the benevolent, watchful eye, the 2008 logo of surveillance cameras pointing and focusing in all directions – manifested a desire to emulate the show's iconic imagery[2]. Referencing one of those images, I constructed a sculpture using fourteen real and dummy surveillance cameras I had used in a previous installation. Surveillance cameras will usually[3] point downwards, exuding authority over all those beneath it. But they also seemingly have the ability to see all, to see all around, to be omniscient - signified in the camera lenses pointing in all directions. The compact composition of the sculpture referred to the ubiquity and omnipresence of these objects in our everyday.

This sculptural experiment made it explicit that three-dimensional form was going to be an important element in my art. The strongest motif in my work so far was the house – symbolic of the home, domestic life, the everyday. Featured in miniature form, like a dollhouse or an architectural model, a representation of a house like the *BB* house, would be

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[1] However, "the space that homogenises thus has nothing homogeneous about it" (Lefebvre 1991: 308).
[2] My response to eye icon will be discussed in Part 2.
[3] Usually, but not always. On a trip to Sydney in August 2008 to attend the Biennale of Sydney, I stayed in a hotel, which from my window I spotted several surveillance cameras focussing upwards towards the roof of the hotel.

conceived of and constructed purely for fantastical-everyday happenings to take place within it.

Further to this, the 'everyday happenings' required more consideration. In the next chapter I describe the video recording process whereby I installed surveillance cameras in my own home.

J. Corcoran *Surveillance camera sculpture,* 2008, approx. 500mm x 500mm x 500mm, Real and artificial surveillance cameras, (documentation).

Chapter 3

Being my own Big Brother

My video art experiments moved from the studio to the home, it went from recording interventions in space to become the intervention of domestic space.

Five video cameras, ready to record, set up around my house; one in the lounge room surveilling the dining area, one in the dining area mirroring the gaze on the lounge room, another in the family room with views of the kitchen and entrance way, and the other two in the bedroom and bathroom, all with a privileged position. For one hour the cameras simultaneously recorded an average, mundane afternoon in my home. I tidied, my (then) partner Jarrod snoozed, our cat Fergus Fang meandered.

Being an 'average' day, representative of the everyday, this sort of behaviour could be repeated on any day in a similar way. The camera in the bedroom sees my image double collecting clothes to be washed, a routine not unique to that day, something oft performed before and repeated since; but of course will never take place exactly the same again. The time has passed. That moment was of the moment, despite the fact that it was recorded by the camera, exists digitally as contained within the tape, has been played back, has been imported into my computer to be edited. Despite all this, the very moment when it occurred had passed, and all that remains is a recording of it, mere images and sounds. So what actually happens to the *representational space* (Lefebvre 1991) in which I originally performed the tasks? It still exists, but not in the same form, as it will never exist in that exact space-time again. So, had there not been a video recording of the event, could it be forgotten, invalid, deemed never to have even existed?

The reliable digital memory of the happenings and the continuous loop that is the everyday is reflected in the video installation art piece that ensued, titled *Reality Replay*. A male figure enters the bedroom, walks around the bed, his reflection appears momentarily in the ornate mirror on the other side of the room, he's out of sight for a few moments before he walks back around the bed and exits the room. A female enters the bedroom, carrying a clothes hamper, dumps it just to the right of screen, walks back into the hall, bends over and picks

up what appears to be a bed sheet, re-enters the room and discards the sheet in the direction of the clothes hamper, and leaves. She enters again, carrying that same clothes hamper, but this time she's slightly transparent, as if it's an apparition of what's happened before. He re-enters, walks around the bed and back again; just like before. This is repeated as layered imagery, like a ghostly memory. She walks through the bedroom door, and passes herself on her way out. The image doubles don't overtly acknowledge one another, each is occupied with the present moment. However, in some instances, she looks like she shifts her body so to not run into her image double (or triple).

She enters, this time without the clothes hamper or sheet, walks straight over to the bed and appears to begin folding clothes. She then moves over to the wardrobe, opens the door and puts the clothes away inside. But still, hers and his body (doubles/triples/quadruples) enter and leave the room unobstructed by the open cupboard door, simply passing through it. One by one they repeatedly enter and exit the bedroom. In a final display of domesticity, he enters, picks up the cat and they all share a cuddle. They eventually all leave the room.

Since the original video took place in my bedroom, an intimate and familiar setting, I contemplated the effect of projecting that video back into that space. I set up a projector in the same position that the surveillance camera was in originally; however, the distance was not great enough and the throw of light was not long enough which meant that the projected image was slightly smaller than the space it was overlaying. The effect was no less dramatic, and the light in the space, on the floor, walls and doors was captivating.

J Corcoran *Reality Replay* 2008, 10 mins, Video Installation projected into bedroom (documentation).

It was this experiment that fuelled the idea of projecting videos into a space, as opposed to just playing them on a monitor or projecting them onto a flat surface. The way the projected space was able to overlay and thus become one with the physical space was theoretically and creatively significant. Projecting the videos into a reconstructed scaled version of the original representational space would emphasise the theoretical underpinning of the abstracted imagery. Instead of just being flat and contained inside a monitor, it would have life and respond to the surfaces it would be projected on to; considering the form, structure and function of the surveilled space, where "form and formal analysis correspond to 'composition', function to 'construction', and structure to proportion, scale, rhythm and the various 'orders'" (Lefebvre 1991, p.159).

Form, the "aesthetic, plastic" (ibid. p.148) elements that evoke "the description of contours and the demarcation of boundaries, external limits, areas and volumes" (ibid.) of a given space, in this case the home, promotes transparency and readability, a key element of overall surveillance and visibility. Contemporary design of open plan living, internal glass walls and minimalist aesthetics are some elements incorporated into the design of the *BB* house and are an important formal quality for a functional surveillance space; just as important as the actual presence of the video cameras. The form allowed this to happen, not the other way around.

Careful, not to abstract his analysis, Lefebvre adds, "form is now merely the sign of function" (ibid.). The *function* of a space such as the *BB* house, a space under surveillance, is designed for readability and visibility. And it is the relationship between the form and the function that "gives rise to *structure*" (ibid. emphasis added).

Structural analysis, the consideration of "scale, proportion, dimension and level" (ibid. p. 158) played an important role in the development of a scale model of the home in *Life in the Box*. The anticipated relationship between the giant audience and the miniature subjects would dictate the dynamics of the experience. The small scale of the house, and the represented protagonists within, positioned the viewer as having both the imagination of a child and the controlling gaze of a Big Brother.

Life in the Box

Covering the house with surveillance cameras created a total surveillance space, however just one hour out of one day could not accurately represent the happenings of the everyday within that space. The key to this project was time, and increasing the duration of the surveillance was integral. Initially, the aim was to record 24 hours of a typical day from four positions around my house (so it should have taken only 4 days to film). A typical day filled with everyday activities that form the rudimentary existence of domestic 'bliss', such as showering, eating, cooking, cleaning, chores and mundane conversations about the activities of one's day.

Recorded conversations added an extra dimension to the work. Initially the pieces were going to be silent, emphasising the importance of the visual. However, as the concept developed it became apparent that sound was integral to add interest to the work. This was evident when viewing the first lot of experimental video, as the silent work just didn't hold the audience's interest for the duration of the piece. When it was played with its audio, however, it was much more dynamic, because of the layering of sound and the obvious edits coinciding with the images. However, it was interesting to note that filming from that point on, I was not only hyperaware that the surveillance cameras were watching me, but also that they were picking up on everything that I was saying. So, the interactions and conversations between my partner and I were not the sort of typical candid conversations we would normally have everyday. We were aware of the cameras, we were aware of the microphones, we acted and spoke politely to one another. There were no arguments or raised voices, and even when I did have something that I wanted to 'say' to Jarrod, I said it in a hushed tender tone, or mumbled it so it was barely audible, especially to the microphones.

I had been recording my partner and myself for sometime, which turned into a number of months, and not once did he nor I forget that the cameras were trained on us. Instead, the whole episode became to feel somewhat like a performance. It was not us living our lives, but performing our lives. Subtle glances at the cameras, staid body movements and lack of physical and intimate touching between myself and my partner are just a few examples which highlighted that this was a contrived representation of what should have been quite candid. This became apparent during the early stages of editing and from my multifaceted

perspective as the subject, director and editor of the video work, I came to question my performance of the everyday, or as de Certeau describes it, the 'tactics' of everyday life (1988, p. xix).

There was undoubtedly an element of performance presenting itself in my artwork. I was well aware of the implications of performance in surveillance, Reality TV, television (in general) and the spectacle; however I falsely believed I could distance myself from this aspect, of which I had little knowledge or skills, theoretically, practically or artistically.

Like a moth to a flame, or like a Reality TV starlet to a semi-nude photo shoot for a men's magazine, I was inveigled. Not only did I find myself performing for the now ubiquitous cameras in my home, I wanted to perform for others. This was not a matter of narcissism, Ms Krauss, but exhibitionism. I had no desire to see myself perform, I wanted others to watch me perform.

I wanted to create a performance art piece. My initial idea was to perform inside the confines of my own home, and project a live feed from inside my house onto an external wall, so that my neighbours could witness the performance taking place inside. I would have liked it to have been an impromptu art happening of sorts, a one-off special *event*, not stuck inside the white cube of a gallery but at a home, out in suburbia. I intended it to be an accessible work of art, not avant-garde or pretentious, to be comprehended by everybody. I intended the work to be a mediated representation of the universal performance of everyday life, a comment on the everyday, everyone's everyday, being a *spectacle*, and the making public and seen what was once private and hidden.

With the home becoming more visible with the introduction of webcams, home security systems and domestically set Reality TV, it has, inevitably, become more of a performance space. This was something I was inclined to investigate more. To understand the implications of performance in my art practice, I applied for a six-week performance mentorship through Western Edge Youth Arts, called 'Explosion'. The initial purpose of this exercise was to identify performative aspects of my life, and learn how to portray them realistically and naturally in front of omnipresent cameras; then develop a performance [re]presenting the everyday for an audience.

'Explosion' involved a one-on-one mentorship with WEYA's artistic director and a specialist artist chosen specifically for the project (in my case, Alex Martinis Roe), rehearsal space and time and an in-progress showing of the performance. By workshopping with the artistic director my ideas developed, and I planned to take the performance outside of the urban theatre and into the suburban neighbourhood. My initial idea of projecting a performance from inside a house onto the external wall for an audience to watch seemed like a possibility.


HBO Voyeur 2007, advertisement still, various media.

'HBO Voyeur', the 2007 advert for US pay TV station HBO, was a series of short episodes depicting the internal goings-on in five New York City abodes. The advertisement entices you to "see what people do when they think no one is watching": murder, betrayal, lust (Big Spaceship, 2007). This experimental multimedia project was broadcast and available online, as well as projected at large on to the side of the buildings where the series of stories were set. Set to a musical score, the action happens in silence, as if the voyeur were watching through binoculars, or a telephoto lens like Hitchcock's Jeff in *Rear Window* (1954). The scenes of 'Voyeur' are presented as a cross section of the buildings, like the front external wall has been removed which resonates with Heather Benning's 2007 *Dollhouse*. Benning substituted the front of a two-story farmhouse with plexiglass, creating a (human) life-sized dollhouse, which may have been inspired by Gordon Matta-Clark's 'building cuts' series.

Heather Benning *Dollhouse* 2007, Installation, abandoned farmhouse, Plexiglass, period furniture.
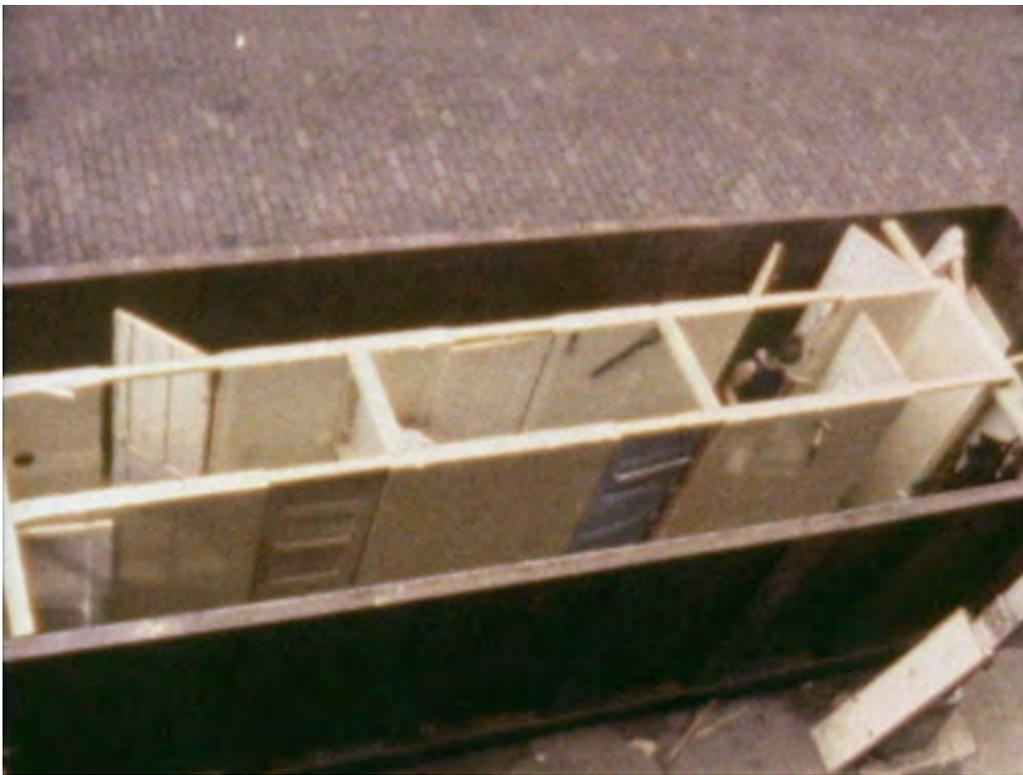
Gordon Matta-Clark *Program Two: Open House* 1972, 41 min, colour, silent, Super 8 film transferred to video.

Matta-Clark's large-scale architectural interventions from the 1970s, which he titled 'Anarchitecture', involved cutting away and removing parts of buildings, for example the roof, as in *Program Two: Open House* (1972). The pieces cut from the building were often exhibited with film and photographic documentation. *Splitting* (1974) demonstrates the splitting in half of an old house by vertical cuts through the centre, from roof to foundation. The photographic collage documentation of this project provides an aspect of a house seemingly devoid of privacy boundaries, and life and purpose.

Gordon Matta-Clark *Splitting* 1974, Collage of gelatin silver prints, 101.6 x 76.2 cm

This was the imagery I had in mind using an almost empty display home in an outer suburb, seemingly untouched, but fitting the interior with a number of surveillance cameras. The performance would take place for the cameras as opposed to a present audience, however the live footage would be projected in real-time onto an external wall or walls of the house to be viewed by the audience outside. However it was not possible to get permission to use a display house as a site of cultural and creative production.

Display homes are examples of the dwellings available in new estates, which are generally located in the very outer suburbs, on the metropolitan-rural fringe. These types of houses are frequently referred to as 'McMansions' for their mass-produced, poor quality and unsustainable nature. 'McMansions' are the ultimate representation of a *simulacra* home. A pastiche of architectural styles, built and located not for functionality or longevity, but as an image, 'McMansions' are a mere representation of what a 'real' house might look like.

Of simulacra, Baudrillard states:

> When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is no proliferation of myths or origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared. And there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production. This is how simulation appears in the phase that concerns us: a strategy of the real, neo-real and hyperreal, whose universal double is a strategy of deterrence (Baudrillard 1983, p. 171).

I don't live in a McMansion, I never have. At the time of the filming and performing I lived in a small two-bedroom unit in the North-Western suburbs of Melbourne, but all around new suburbs were propagating and those noxious houses were sprouting. I measured all of the internal walls of my house, the height and length of them, the size of the doorways and I noted the position and size and shape of the furniture. With this I fashioned recycled cardboard boxes into a shanty representation of the floor plan of my home. This prototype was utterly violated in my experimental attempts at projecting video footage into the house; huge holes in the walls, ceiling and roof constructed and mutilated, and not to mention the cat making himself comfortable at the expense of the flimsy structure. However, this yielded two problems. The first was that the unstable nature of the cardboard as a construction material became apparent – I decided to construct the real model out of wood. The second

was that the footage taken in the kitchen would be unusable. The required position of the projector meant that it would have imposed on the projector displaying the bathroom footage.

J. Corcoran Projection and box experiment (documentation) 2008.

I needed to refilm the kitchen scenes so that the images could be projected effectively inside the house. Upon editing this footage, the low fidelity that endeared me to the surveillance medium in the first instance had let me down in some respects; the audio recording was temperamental, with some audio missing from some footage. Not only that, but I felt important conceptual elements were also missing, notably, intimacy between my partner and I. I felt that we were so conscious of the cameras that we were too careful with our performance and it was incredibly unnatural. I instructed my partner, and made a conscious effort myself, to outwardly show more affection towards each other in the refilming of the kitchen scenes. Our interaction was contrived to appear more intimate, and therefore more natural.

The amassed footage from the months of filming was to be edited down into 4 shorter video art pieces, the time of each reflecting the proportionate level of activity and amount of time spent in that room. The result, from the many, many hours of filming, was *Kitchen* running for 1hour, 15minutes and 29 seconds; *Bathroom* 27 minutes and 29 seconds; *Bedroom* 29 minutes and 7 seconds; and *Lounge* 45 minutes and 16 seconds.

The grainy, black and white footage, the context, the subjects, the editing style, the titles of the individual works, all inadvertently yet importantly inspired by French New Wave Cinema, resonates a sense of the real. Like a black and white documentary photograph,

video footage of this nature is to be believed, it proclaims authenticity (Clarke 1997, p. 23; Moran 2005, p. 86). It is to be believed, it is to be taken as a true representation of life, despite the level of performance, artistic intervention and the amount of footage 'left on the cutting room floor,' so to speak.

The editing process was synchronised with the [re]construction process of the model house. The boxy form with a pitched roof had the potential to [re]present all possible domestic performances. Yet for this to be possible, and for the performances to be verified, the house needed to become accessible to the viewer. Oddly shaped and positioned windows were cut meticulously into the sides of the structure, allowing and inviting both the mediated projections of my performed everyday and the viewer's gaze to flood the house with their presence.

This culminated in two separate artworks, *Life in the Box* and *Real TV*, which I decided to exhibit mid-way through my candidature as an in-progress showing. Details of the exhibition will be discussed further in chapter four.

J. Corcoran *Life in the Box* 2008, reused timber model, construction in progress, 80 x 160 x 28 cm.

Chapter 4

The First Look

> *All of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles.*
>
> Debord *Society of the Spectacle.*

An in-progress exhibition took place at Trocadero Artspace, Footscray in December 2008. Showing the works midway through the project significantly informed the creative and practical approach I would take for producing work for the final outcome.

The projectors and TV set illuminated the gallery space with the presence of mediated life, and the house structure had a strong formal presence in the space. I decided to continue with this way of creating. The performative aspect of the work also struck me as something I would like to continue on with. At the same time I held a work in-progress performance at Footscray Community Art Centre.

Movement, presence, the 'journey' were developed, explored and analysed. And ultimately ignored when it came to performance time. The night before the performance I stupidly, but not regrettably, altered my piece dramatically.

The original piece I had developed utilised both the stage area and the female toilets located next to the theatre as the performance space. I was to set up a surveillance camera in each of those spaces, and the real-time footage projected onto a screen at the back of the stage and displayed on a TV screen on stage, respectively. My performance itself was to be an abstract piece based on my daily routine of putting in and taking out my contact lenses. It referred to the eye as an important organ and instrumental in the surveillance process; it also referred to private domestic activities that take place in the home which are not usually visible to an external audience, but is increasingly so. The 'choreography' of the piece was to be a series of frozen movements, mimed on stage, then repeated for real in the theatre's restroom. Repetition, frozen time, space and place were integral elements of this piece; a piece I'm sure would have been much more interesting for the theatre savvy audience to watch, but ill-

aligned to the 'type' of performance I wanted to create, which I intended as an extension of my visual art practice.

J. Corcoran *My Life in the Box* Installation View, Trocadero Artspace 2008.

It was important for me to create a *[per]form[ance]*[4] art piece that was an extension of my visual art practice and incorporated the already established and formal aspects of my installation practice. I was less occupied with 'telling a story' or 'taking my audience on a journey' than I was creating an ephemeral environment of technological and sensorial overload, immersing my audience in the world of surveillance, Reality TV and technology, not alienate them and attempt to keep them separate from something that is inevitably inescapable.

According to Debord (1977), we are living in the society of the spectacle, where the "spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images" (§ 4). The omnipresent cameras and ubiquitous images occupying our social space, in addition to an ever increasing need for personal validation by being caught by such devices and trapped by such images, is futile if they are not seen. As Weibel insists "Debord denounced the advancing reification of culture as having reached its final point in the so-called reality shows" (Weibel P, 2002 p. 215).

This is Reality TV, Baby! And you're the star was a 9 minute performance which explored the technological implications of surveillance on pseudo-public (theatre) and a pseudo-private (toilet) space. The performance began before the audience had even entered the theatre. I sat centre stage facing the audience, watching a television intently, as the audience entered and waited, to the rhythmic yet unnerving sounds of an electronic hum and white noise. After a few minutes of mutual watching, I got up from my seat and proceeded to turn the TV around to face the audience. Now they could see that I was in fact watching them as they were watching me, via a surveillance camera I had installed in front of the stage.

From here I walked to the side of the stage and changed a few wires around that were connected to the surveillance camera and to a handycam located on stage, which were both focussed on the audience. The real-time footage projected onto a screen at the back of the stage changed from the handycam to real-time surveillance camera footage from inside the female restrooms, while the TV continued to mirror the audience. I walked over to the handycam, disconnected it from the attached AV cable and tripod, held it up to my eye,

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[4] I have the framed the word performance in this way so as to make explicit the presence of 'form' in the work, and highlight it as an integral element in the creation of my artwork, and within the performances.

walked through the audience and out of the theatre. Moments later, my image appeared to the audience on screen as I walked into the toilets and approached the mirror, eyeing the surveillance camera via the mirror's reflection. Handycam still in hand, I flipped the viewfinder so that it is visible to the mirror, and hence visible to the surveillance camera and the watching audience.

The extended and abstracted watching continued as I turned to leave the toilets, halting momentarily to turn the handycam on myself, zoom into my focussing eye, and display the view finder to the surveillance camera. My 'glistening' eye loomed large over my audience, seemingly absorbing all, yet only mirroring the 'disconnected' act of watching.

Upon re-entering the theatre, I disconnected the AV cable connecting the bathroom surveillance camera to the projector and reattached it to the handycam; my gaze compounded that of the audience. I picked up the chair I was sitting on at the start of the performance, and move it to be in front of the TV; I sat with my back to the audience. I turned the camera on myself, and once again zoomed into my eye as it benevolently watchesdover everyone. The eye continued to linger over the audience as I turned off the TV and left the stage.

Extending my visual practice and the space and time specific to performance, this performance was an experiment and an example in being *telepresent*. Paul Virilio (1997) describes being telepresent as being "here and elsewhere, *at the same time*, in this so-called 'real time'" (p. 10). This is the state that we are all put in when captured by surveillance and image technology, we are present and not at the site and destination of the images. Real-time kills the present (ibid.) and, as Baudrillard suggests "vision in 'real-time' only adds to the unreality of the thing" (Baudrillard 2001, p. 483). When I left the theatre, and was physically present in the female toilets, I was still present in the theatre. In fact I was telepresent as my image appeared to the audience mediated via the surveillance technology.

Reviewing the performance with hindsight, it would have been more successful had it taken place outside of the theatre. The majority of the audience were expecting a theatrical performance, and were surprised and indeed challenged by my first attempt at performance

art. This was indicated in the written feedback from the audience[5]. Had it been at an art gallery, or a site-specific setting, the audience may have grappled with the concept better[6].

Getting Specific – Site Specific

A rejection of the institutionalisation of art and an embracing of art in the everyday contributed to the invention of site-specific art around the mid-20th Century. Artists sought alternative spaces to exhibit, as well as those artists who wanted to reach a wider audience or wanted to respond to and be challenged by space and its history (McIver 2003, p. 1).

I decided to exhibit beyond the confines of the sterile 'white cube' and the coded space of the institutionalised gallery space (O'Doherty 1986). I decided the opportunity to experiment with and incorporate the space of the exhibition into the artwork would add an extra dimension to the work; the meaning behind the work would be amplified according to the situation and space, the position and place. Site-specific work identifies the "*performance* of 'place'" (Kaye 2000, p. 3), where 'place', according to de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), is where a set system is realised in 'spatial practice' (Kaye 2000, p. 4). And "*space is a practiced place*" (ibid. p. 117), which is ambiguous, unstable and to some degree unpredictable; enabling incidental and unexpected occurrences.

Extending my idea of having a performance in a house or display home, I re-considered this as a possibility for the exhibition. Initially I thought about having it in my house or renting a house specifically for the exhibition for a month. I considered including living inside the space as part of the artwork. I could perform 24/7 and make live art. The show and work could evolve over the period of the exhibition. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, this was over ambitious and not logistically feasible. My housemates wouldn't want to be a part of a 24/7 living artwork, and I couldn't ask them to do so. And renting a house specifically for interventionist and artistic experiments was not practical. However, there was one space that seemed absolutely perfect for my project.

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[5] "The play as a whole was completely ineffective"(response from audience member).
[6] But then again, maybe I shouldn't have changed my piece less than 24 hours before the scheduled performance.

I was introduced to the Smart House by colleagues when I was undertaking a furniture-making short course to learn the skills necessary to work finely with timber[7]. The Smart House was a concept house, situated on the University campus. It was a display home of sorts, demonstrating current technologies making living more sustainable, streamlined and secure. The Smart House was fitted, inside and out, with a complete surveillance system. Most of the house was covered by CCTV cameras, which then recorded and displayed images, in real-time, on a screen inside the house. This very example of current 'everyday' surveillance technology in the home struck me as one of the reasons I was undertaking this project in the first place.

A pertinent thing about the space was that it was not a real home, but a representation of a home. Nobody lived there, and nobody was ever likely to live there, however it had the appearance of an actual house. Just as Virilio suggests "the image prevails over the thing it is an image of" (Virilio 1997, p. 19). It was a simulacra house, a hyperreal house, a mere model of a home, where "the model is more real than real" (Baudrillard 1988, p. 186).

This space was absolutely perfect to house my artwork, to encourage creativity within its walls. The very nature of the space simply allowed for more conceptual artwork to develop, and contextually defined the work more thoroughly had it been shown in a conventional gallery environment.

In the following chapter, I look more closely at the exhibition space and how the artwork responds to the space. In part two in general, I detail the artwork as exhibited and submitted for examination.

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[7] During this time I constructed three identical model houses, with three walls and a pitched roof, big enough to accommodate a small TV and DVD player. The front wall was to be replaced with two-way mirrored glass, to allow simultaneous viewing of the TV inside and the reflection of the audience/subject outside. Two of these models were used in the final exhibition, to be discussed later.

PART TWO – THE EXHIBITION

Chapter 5

Following on from the discussion in the previous chapter, we look at the Smart House as a site for exhibition, and the individual rooms within and how the artwork relates and works with the space.

Howard Arkley *Triple Fronted* 1988, Acrylic on canvas, 166 x 240 cm

The House

To knock or not to knock? It is a house. Not a home *per se*, but it is semblant of one. It is an icon already loaded with meaning, it is a representation of privacy, intimacy, security and comfort. It has walls, windows, doors and a roof. Inside it has a bedroom, a study, a kitchen and bathrooms. Running water, electricity and heating. It could quite possibly be someone's home. A family may well be sitting down to a meal, or watching *Masterchef* on the TV. "A house must therefore not only provide shelter for people; we also expect it will look like a house, and thus tell our visitors how to behave" (Lawson 2001, p. 29). The coded space

dictates how the visitors to the space and viewers of the artwork, are to approach the space. But this is an exhibition space, not a private home. And it's in University (public) grounds, not in a suburban street surrounded by other private homes.

The 'burbs is oft the subject for many visual artists, as in Howard Arkley's iconic brick veneers and Brendan Lee's bogan pride, but recently has also become the location for site-specific creative production. *Home Loan*, a group exhibition curated by Kate Shaw and Larissa Hjorth in 2003, was shown in a 'converted warehouse'[8] in a new outer suburb of Melbourne. *Home Loan* artists, including Natasha Johns-Messenger, Kate Just and Darren Wardle, referenced and acknowledged their personal histories of growing up and living in the suburbs in the subject matter and their creative *modus operandi*. Wardle's *Enter Sandman* installation, by referencing the iconic Australian panel van, the Metallica song and teenage boys' fantasies, turned the very feminine internal confines of the domestic setting into a masculine space facilitating the adolescent male's rite of passage via representations of masculine paraphernalia occupying the space.

Brendan Lee *True Blue* 2006, Pegasus print 50 x 80cm.

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[8] Converted warehouse is in this sense is an oxymoron. Being a new suburb, the warehouses were built from new, and were therefore not converted into homes, but initially conceived of and built as simulacra of inner city industrial warehouse converted into residential spaces.

House Proud, a series of site-specific artworks exhibited as apart of the Next Wave Festival 2008, were installed in actual suburban and urban dwellings. Unlike the brand new 'converted' warehouse in Caroline Springs, these houses were lived in, they already had a history and a reality, but for a few hours became an exhibition space open to the public to view the works of art they housed. The artists who took part in *House Proud* responded to the space, the occupants and their personal belonging in the creation of the artwork, which inturn made the ordinary quite spectacular.

Rowan McNaught *House Proud Installation* 2008, Mixed media installation.

Similarly, *Holes in the Wall*, curated by Theresa Harrison, the one night only, site-specific installation exhibition held at a home in North Carlton, in March of 2010, required the audience to gawk through the windows of the occupied residence. Inside the obviously inhabited bedrooms, which ran parallel to an adjacent laneway, and in the backyard, were installations created by 12 local Melbourne artists. The installations included displaced objects such as a flailing, inflatable man, usually seen in front of discount mega-stores, confined by the 12 foot ceilings of the period townhouse. Objects from the everyday were turned into artworks, such as a flickering analogue television providing the strobed lighting in one room, and the wooden frame of an overturned couch framing the scene for the viewer. The usually private sanctum of the private residence was transformed, just for a night, into a place of public enjoyment, cultural consumption and creative critique. It is apparent now that the humble[9] [sub]urban home is not just the stereotypical subject of urban artists, but has become appropriate as a site for exhibition.

Shay Minster *Room 4: Slow dance* 2009, Air compressor and figure.

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[9] Or not so humble in the case of the 'McMansions' now ubiquitous in the outer suburban landscape.

Following on from this new development in contemporary visual arts, the Smart House was chosen to house my artwork for the project instead of the traditional art gallery, as an open house for creative production and consumption. In this case the house is a mere representation of a home, a simulacrum, much like the houses featured in programs like *BB*. It exemplifies the authentic-fake contemporary home as a stage for the 'real' life performance.

Richard Glover *Kellyville* 2003, Archival Giclée monochrome print, 100 x 80 cm.

The site was chosen to house the artwork because of its very raison d'etre – an unreal house in an unusual setting. The western suburbs of Melbourne provided an appropriate setting, with the ultimate simulacrum house, the McMansion, multiplying and devouring the landscape quicker than the rise and fall of a Reality TV contestant's fame. Contextually, it also coincides with my [re]view of *BB*, which was also set in a hyperreal house, not nestled in the suburbs, but contained within a theme park; perhaps the ultimate in hyperreal real estate. "Dreamworld, the home of *Big Brother*", is located on the Gold Coast, which in my opinion

is somewhat of a hyperreal city; an example of one of the "artificial cities devoted to entertainment" described by Umberto Eco (1975, p. 26), like Las Vegas with its casinos and Los Angeles' Disneyland.

Eco and Jean Baudrillard posit that by paying the admission fee into a theme park and going through the elaborate gates we are knowingly entering the imaginary world, and leaving the real world locked outside of the huge steel fences. When inside everything is a simulation or representation, everything is technologically determined, nature is presented in unobtainable perfection. It "tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can" (Eco. p. 44). "The 'completely real' becomes identified with the 'completely fake'" (ibid. p. 7). While being well aware of the true nature of what's on the inside, it is upon returning to the outside where reality just doesn't cut it anymore as "the pleasure of imitation [is that] afterwards reality will always be inferior to it" (ibid. p. 46). Eco states that the "philosophy is not, 'We are giving you the reproduction so that you will want the original' but rather, 'We are giving you the reproduction so you will no longer feel any need for the original'" (ibid. p. 19).

The theme park is just an extreme example of the hyperreal present in the 'real' world. The real world is similarly punctuated with technology, images, simulation and reproduction, it is still "one that is fabricated, produced" (Hegarty 2004 p. 7) and where "everywhere reality is enhanced, multiplied, brought to us, we to it […] we live in a total simulation" (ibid. p. 9).

The Bedroom

The bedroom of this never-been-lived-in house that is the site of my exhibition, is surprisingly alive with movement and activity. This activity is produced by a projection into the space. On the bed a woman rolls over, her head nestled on the pillow that gives shape and three-dimensionality to the projections, much like Tony Ousler's effigies. She yawns and stretches, before reaching to pat her napping cat, in a 'good morning' manner. After getting up, opening the blinds to let the light of day in, she proceeds to undertake the tasks of the day. She showers and dresses invisibly in the adjoining en suite, walks in and out of the room and she readies herself for the day ahead. As she leaves she pats goodbye to the cat.

J. Corcoran *Untitled (Smart House Bedroom)* 2010, Video on DVD projected into bedroom, 10 mins

Later, when she returns, the light is darker, it is evening, she greets the cat, closes the blinds, invisibly changes back into her pyjamas, un-makes the bed and climbs in. The day ends just as it started, only in reverse. The day is split into two halves and is a mirror image of itself: playing forwards and backwards, and repeating all over again.

Time is paradoxical. The everyday perpetually moves forwards and backwards through it. It is linear, yet cyclical. It is only ever present, but always advancing, and also always repeating. And with recorded time we have the power to stop, fast forward, rewind, pause and edit to our liking. Thus time is an integral factor in experiencing the happenings within space.

This space and the happenings inside are so familiar, yet oddly fascinating. And the female protagonist's presence in the space is uncanny, ritualistic, banal, repetitive. "Under the shimmering diversions of the spectacle, *banalisation* dominates modern society" (Debord 1977, § 59, emphasis in the original) and as in *BB* "it is the banality that is interesting for the public" (Hegarty 2004, p. 114). As she silently moves through the space, repeating or undoing certain everyday activities, the sound of running water and the faint movement of blue light is emanating from the adjoining en suite; someone is repeatedly taking a shower. The sound piece was a recording of myself in my own shower at home. This innately private experience confounded the viewer's unusual presence in the supposedly private space.

Living spaces

Henri Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space* (1991), sets about defining space and how we, as inhabitants, use and live in it. Lefebvre synthesises his *production of space* theory with a triad of *spatial practice*, *representations of space* and *representational space*. This model is also referred to as the *perceived-conceived-lived* triad.

The triads are by no means absolute or concrete, none of the three factors exist in isolation, for example a subject can move from one space to another, they are not free from subjective interpretation or misinterpretation and are historically/socially flux.

> It is reasonable to assume that spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces contribute in different ways to the production of space according to their qualities and attributes, according to the society or mode of production in question, and according to the historical period. Relations between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived are never either simple or stable, nor are they 'positive' in the sense in which this term might be opposed to 'negative', to the indecipherable, the unsaid, the prohibited, or the unconscious. (Lefebvre 1991, p. 46)

The triad is interrelated and inseparable. However, each is experienced in the perceived realm (or in spatial terms, spatial practice). Spatial practice is reality; it is experienced empirically and is lived before it is understood. Spatial practice regulates life (ibid. p. 358), ensures continuity, and has a certain amount of cohesion, while not necessarily being coherent, which "implies a guaranteed level of *competence*" (ibid. p. 33, emphasis in original). It infiltrates all of society, producing social relations and implanting codes intrinsic to positive social practice, such as a commonality in discourse, laws and knowledge of time. It supports and nurtures spaces such as those of the domestic, leisure and work social structures. Spatial practice "consists in a projection onto a (spatial) field of all aspects, elements and moments of social practice" (ibid. p. 8). Our experiences are not merely social, but are spatial.

In relation to *BB*, the space dictates who the housemates 'are' and how they live in the space of the secluded, enclosed house, and the relation to and perceptions of that space. The spatial practice of *BB* nurtures and is nurtured by the domestic setting. It encourages domestic duties as routine and establishes domestic roles and hierarchy in the house. The

spatial practice of *BB* is then reliant on the hierarchy it establishes to maintain itself; it is a self-propagating practice.

The domestic spatial practice of *BB* nurtures domestic relations. Domestic spaces are traditionally private spaces, where familial bonds and romantic relations establish and grow. It is also historically seen as a feminine space. However, according to Creed (2003, pp. 4-5), the media have infiltrated this space, made it open, and destroyed the distinguishing boundaries between private and public space. The domestic spatial setting of *BB* is an overt example of this, where the traditionally private space is made very public, with the aid of cameras, broadcast television, perpetual watching by Big Brother and an abundance of housemates. It is evident that the spatial practice of *BB* is unique to that space.

The reality television show's namesake, Orwell's totalitarian dictator in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), is an obvious indication as to the overall premise of the show, and the utility of the space. The *BB* house is synonymous with Lefebvre's description of spatial practice being of a "repressive and oppressive space" (ibid. p. 408). The space of the *BB* house is clearly repressive and oppressive; strict rules, limited amounts of food and sleep, scheduled and limited times for daily tasks such as showering, and the omnipresent watching by Big Brother, fellow housemates, television cameras and the wider audience.

The game's rules, the majority established and expressed prior to the commencement of the show, were imposed and maintained by spatial practice[10]. This ensures continuity, a certain degree of cohesion and commonalities in discourse. The insistent watching of the space by Big Brother was just one way the rules, and therefore the spatial practice, were upheld. The other, and a more potent motive, was the space itself. For example it was against the rules to discuss events occurring in the 'outside' world, and while this was a rule imposed by Big Brother, it was imposed more so by the isolation of the space to the 'outside' world. Discussions of the 'outside' world were discouraged simply because the housemates were 'inside' the *BB* house, and were not exposed to anything other than the practice of the house. The spatial practice of *BB* made the rules inherently known and relentlessly reminded the

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[10] However, in 2008 it was made explicit that Big Brother can change the rules at anytime. This would have been for several reasons, the first to ensure the show's producers had complete creative control, and to create an air of both intrigue and uncertainty regarding Big Brother's authority.

housemates of the relations expected of them in that space. Again, this was a self-propagating practice.

The housemates' spatial practice within the *representation of space* that was the *BB* house was determined by that space. Representations of space are a conceived space; "conceptualised space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (ibid. p. 38). The space was conceived, planned and developed before it is perceived and lived.

> They are made with the visual in mind: the visibility of people and things, of spaces and of whatever is contained by them. The predominance of visualisation (more important than 'spectacularisation', which is in any case subsumed by it) serves to conceal repetitiveness. People *look*, and take sight, take seeing, for life itself (ibid. p. 75, emphasis in original).

Representations of space are made hyperreal, abstract and dominant by technology.

> Dominant/dominated space, as imposed by the state upon its 'subjects', be they faithful or not, is simply the space, seemingly devoid of violence. Though seemingly secured against violence, abstract space is in fact inherently violent. The same goes for all spaces promising a similar security: residential suburbs, holiday homes, fake countrysides and imitations of nature (ibid. p. 187).

Representational space is that which is highly active, it is the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', of some artists, writers and philosophers. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau describes users as "commonly to be assumed as passive and guided by established rules" (1988, p. xi). "The user's space is *lived* – not represented (or conceived). When compared with the abstract space of the experts (architects, urbanists, planners), the space of the everyday activities of users is a concrete one, which is to say, subjective. […] It is in this space that the 'private' realm asserts itself" (op. cit. p. 362, emphasis in original).

The Smart House is an example of a technologically determined space, it was already fitted with surveillance. It is not a house of the future, but is an example of the technologically determined house of the now. Contemporary homes can be fitted with their own CCTV system. Occupants can choose to put themselves under surveillance. And the Smart House demonstrates this utterly. Cameras located inside and out record the comings and goings,

and display them in real-time on a small flat-screen, dividing it into a grid, attached to a wall in the living area. This pre-existing installation is profound in that it signifies the acceptable presence of surveillance in a private space.

Below the Smart House's surveillance monitor was another TV set, on which four black and white surveillance video images grid the screen; the top left image is footage of a bathroom, next to it a bedroom, below that is the lounge room, and then the kitchen. The home featured in *Real TV* was that which I shared with my ex-partner and our cat, the footage taken from a 1-hour recording of an ordinary day, captured by four video cameras in opportune positions in the four main rooms of the house. Jarrod watched TV, I did house work, we chatted about our day and played with the cat. We moved through the space, from one room to the next, in and out of the cameras' gaze, going about our everyday, domestic activities. I walked from the kitchen and appeared briefly just outside the bathroom as I enter the bedroom to collect dirty clothes for washing. Sorting through Jarrod's pile of clothes on the floor, I asked if he wants me to wash a pair of his shorts, yelling at him from the bedroom. We continue our conversation shouting at each other from one end of the house to the other. The microphones of the recording devices also pick up the calls of birds and the neighbour's children as they played in the yard outside. These sounds overlap and reverberate and the elevated conversation seems to resonate as the sound travels from one room to the next, indicative of the breadth of space unseen by the cameras themselves.

The expanse of the house is condensed to fit inside the parameters of the television. In the two dimensional, televisual representation of the house, the bedroom is not at the end of a hallway, a distance from the lounge room, but sits directly above it. Moving between rooms means moving from one image to another; moving from one *representation of space* to that of another space. The users movement in space directs the sporadic transmission of the moving images, which appear on screen only when a user appears to the cameras. I walked through the kitchen to the lounge room via the front entrance way. My image double is shown leaving one room in one image and passing into the next in another. The kitchen disappears from the bottom right of the TV.

Real-time surveillance digital video, Smart House

J. Corcoran *Real TV* 2008, Single channel video on DVD, black and white, sound, 13 mins

The image double's movement between 'rooms' implied that real-time scenarios were taking place – the movements and conversations happening in the spaces seemingly occurred simultaneously. As Dan Graham explains "video (both visual and audio tracks) is assumed to correspond/be congruent to the real, present time-space continuum from an earlier time, shared by both the producers and receivers of the video. In video, unlike film, the sound and visual tracks are presumed to be different perceptual aspects of this space's physical presence" (1999, p. 42-43). It is ostensible that what is witnessed is to be believed, supporting this is the matter-of-factness implicit in the black and white, lo-fi aesthetic, and the clandestine nature of the surveillance style imagery. But it is not immediately apparent that the footage has been edited and time tampered with. It only became evident that the represented happenings didn't occur in real-time and didn't necessarily occur in the chronological or original narrative order when conversations didn't make sense and image-doubles were simultaneously present in more than one image. And the jump edits, borrowed from French New Wave Cinema, offer no illusions to the editing methodology. The *liveness* of the footage becomes questionable, the authenticity dubious, reality is reneged.

"Tonight on *Big Brother…*" The suggestion of the candid-contrived nature of the footage is amplified by the voice over and theme music from the Reality TV show heard over the top of all other sounds. This could be coming from the TV in the lounge room, or it could in affect be narrating this video piece; either way it is ostensible that the everyday has become a spectacle. The intervening audio joins the end of the video loop to the beginning, and thus the cleaning, sleeping, chatting and playing are repeated *ad infinitum*, synonymous to the cycle of our everyday life. This is the real Reality TV.

Real TV 2008 (stills in sequence), Digital image, black and white

On the dining table sat *Life in a Box*, a one-ten scale model of that very same house I once lived in with my ex-partner and our cat. Constructed from recycled timber, the outside of the house has been left raw and unpainted. The white internal walls act simultaneously as a screen, filter and finitude to light and space. Cut from the sides are four odd shaped 'windows' which allow projectors surrounding the house to fill it with the light and movement of video art. These 'windows' also allow and encourage viewers to peer inside and thus enter this miniaturised world with their penetrative gaze.

From one side of the house, the bathroom and the kitchen are visible, and from the other, the bedroom and lounge room. The *visual* representation of space overlays the *constructed* representation of space of the model house as surveillance style imagery fill the space with a colourful white-light and a luminous black; the black and white imagery seems to have 'life' to it and is not quite bound within the space, as some of the light leaks onto the outside of the house. This is a dual representation of the one space; the model represents the physical space of the house and the video, representing the fourth dimension of time, depicts the everyday happenings inside the house. The walls of the projected image line-up with those of the constructed space, the doorways align and selected pieces of furniture materialise and emerge from the vastness of space.

The three dimensional 'projection screen' gives the illusion that the *users* of the space, being Jarrod, myself and Fergus Fang our cat, are actually moving in and out of the represented space. As the moving image skims the surface it falls on, we are seen walking down the hallway, through the doorway and into the bedroom. However, the impeding physicality of the space distorts the reflecting projection. The moving images are projected into the house from an angle almost equivalent to the angle of the surveillance camera whilst filming. The viewer's perception of the scene and happenings is dictated by how the projection falls *onto* the surface, how it falls *into* the space of the model house.

I appear in front of the basin in the bathroom, my image reflected in the mirror. I begin my day by undressing and having a shower. Later I return to the bathroom to brush my teeth, do my hair and put on make-up. After several visits to the bathroom during the day to wash my hands, put on deodorant or put my contact lenses in, the day seemingly ends with Jarrod brushing his teeth and turning the lights out on his way to bed; only to enable the cycle to

repeat again. The same happens for each of the other three rooms; the day starts, the usual happens, the day ends, repeat. Four videos continuously looping, representing one day, 24 hours, inside four rooms of one house. I might be in the bathroom, but also be in the bedroom making the bed. I could be in the kitchen preparing dinner and in the lounge room eating breakfast simultaneously. The range of running times of the videos is a deliberate attempt to expose the editing methodology and therefore the tampered reality of recorded and mediated life.

Our everyday experiences, those that take place in the cohesive and reproductive, yet oppressive and repressive (Lefebvre 1991, p. 408), environment of the home, provide vehement examples of the spatial practice of our everyday lives. We perform roles dictated by our relationship to the space of the home, and I evidently had an established role in the home I shared with my partner. Even though it was only the two of us living in this space the hierarchy was firmly established in a patriarchal structure, as documented in the video art I created from months of surveillance style filming in my home. The daily cycle of banal, functional happenings perpetuated by the spatial practice reproduced the social relations and behaviour responsible for that spatial practice in the first instance. Jarrod's role had him leave the house for work in the morning only to return each evening – public, masculine – whereas my role had me in the home more, where I studied, cooked and cleaned – private, feminine[11] (Creed 2003, p. 4). Just as time itself is a continuous cycle, our functions performed during time, in space, is a never-ending, self-sustaining and self-propagating spatial practice.

As well as the energy of the space (i.e. the everyday activities), spatial practice also implicates time as it is apprehended by the space (and in my case, also by the video camera), inscribed in the space and experienced in the space. The daily routine and the repetition of that routine is apparent simply because it seems chronological, as seen in *Life in the Box*. Time also features as an important element in *Real TV*, where at first it seems to play in real-time, only to rebut that notion when multiple image doubles appear on screen at the same time, and ultimately when the video piece loops and replays. But there is another layer of abstraction in this experience of time (and space and energy), and that is the experience of the audience.

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[11] Traditional thought. However, Creed continues on by stating that mass media, by eroding the boundaries between the public and private, has gradually "feminised the public realm" (2003, p. 5).
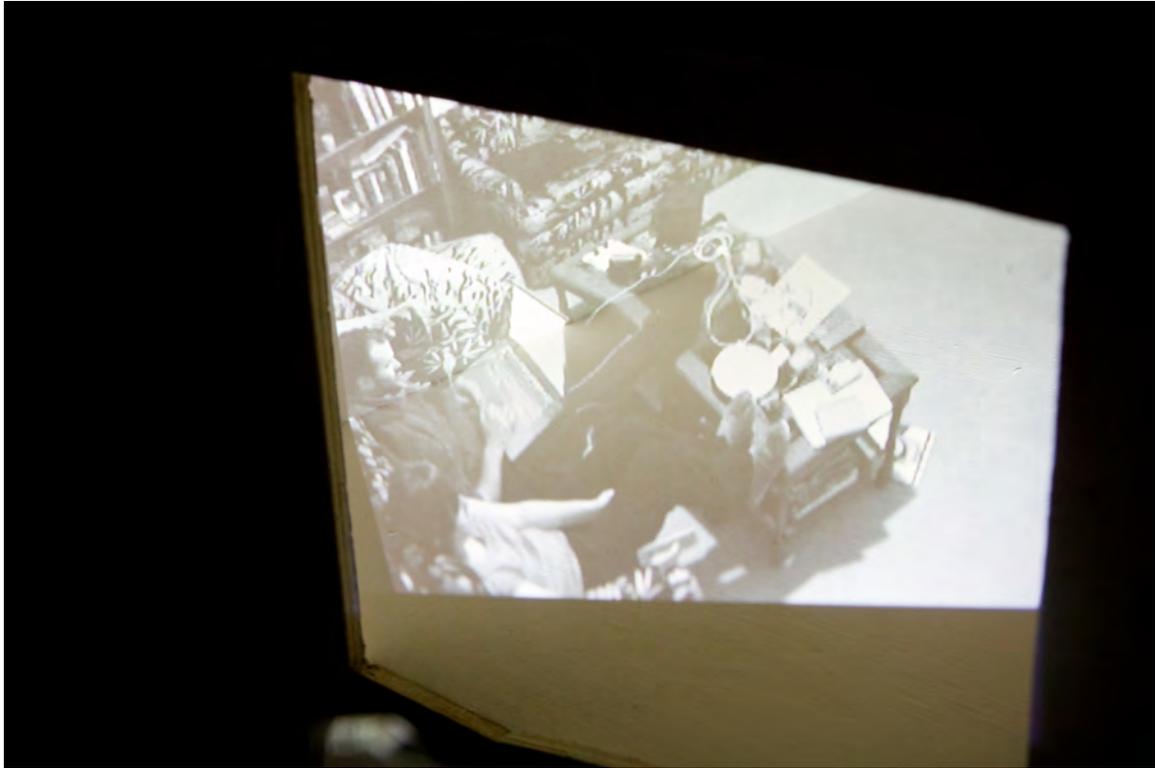
J. Corcoran *Life in the Box (Lounge)* 2008, 45 mins, Digital video on DVD projected into timber model.
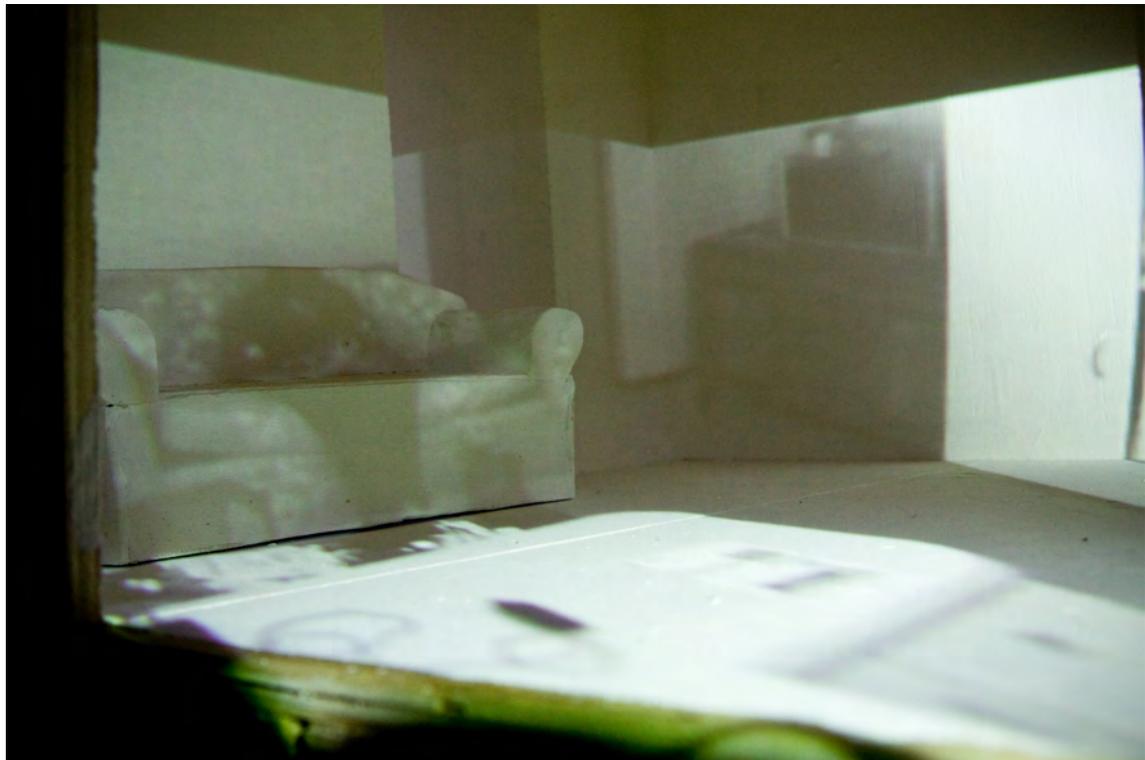
J. Corcoran *Life in the Box (Kitchen)* 2008, 75 mins, Digital video on DVD projected into timber model, balsa

J. Corcoran *Life in the Box (Bathroom)* 2008, 27 mins, Digital video on DVD projected into timber model

J. Corcoran *Life in the Box (Bedroom)* 2008, 29 mins, Digital video on DVD projected into timber model, balsa

The audience doesn't experience the space, time and energy directly; their experience is of the r*epresentations of space*. This is a conceived space occupied with homogenising[12] spatial practice through "the primacy of the gaze" (Lefebvre 1991, p. 41). The audience of my work and Reality TV, to which Andrejevic attributes the viewers as co-creators (2004, p. 50), are remarkably in the same position as those who conceptualised such a space, such as the producers of Reality TV shows. The model house of *Life in the Box*, reminiscent of both an architectural model and a child's dollhouse, promotes and reinforces the viewer's active gaze over the, usually passive, subject.

Paradoxically, the active viewer is synonymous with the passive subject. A key function, and therefore appeal, of all forms of watching, whether it be Reality TV, cinema or surreptitious surveillance, is the projection or identification of the self in the subject (Mulvey 1989; Biressi & Nunn 2005; Creed 2003) or in other words, real people watching real people (Andrejevic 2004, Biressi & Nunn 2005,). This identification occurs because of our own experience with *representational spaces*; the space in which we inhabit, use and live our own everyday life (Lefebvre 1991, p. 39). This space is a private space and therefore it is coded as feminine. An example of such is the house, which is, however, dominated by technology, spatial practice and the [Big Br]Other's gaze. Nonetheless, this space is unifying and familiar, and those represented are too; we see ourselves as present in this space. Lacan identifies the moment an infant recognises its own image in a mirror as utterly important in establishing the ego and for the identification of its ego in others (Mulvey 1989, p. 17). This is synonymous with the viewer's identification with their subjects as seen through the electronic mirror, the television. "The spectacle, in its entirety, is his 'mirror image'" (Debord 1977, § 218).

The television: a ubiquitous presence in the homes of many is paradoxically present and not in *Life in the Box* and *Real TV*. This object, not merely a visual vehicle but a tactile medium (McLuhan 1964), is that through which we experience ourselves and our reality. Back in the Smart House, in front of the couch, where the television should be, was a timber sculpture of a typical house motif – four walls and a pitched roof. The front wall was made of mirrored glass, simultaneously allowing vision in and out of the hollow space. Inside, a surveillance camera and a television capture and display the subject-audience as they lounge.

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[12] However, "the space that homogenises thus has nothing homogeneous about it" (Lefebvre. p. 308).

J. Corcoran *Untitled* 2009/10, pine model house, TV, surveillance camera 2-way mirror glass, Installation view. 40 x 60 x 90 cm.

J. Corcoran *Untitled* 2009/10, pine model house, TV, surveillance camera 2-way mirror glass, Installation detail.

The double, reversed image created by the television and the reflection in the mirrored glass referred to Dan Graham's small-scale video works played on televisions and to his more monumental reflection and transparent sculptures. The TV viewer, as explained by de Certeau, "loses his author's rights and becomes, or so it seems, as pure receiver, the mirror of a multiform and narcissistic actor" (1988 p. 31), which as we know from McLuhan's Narcissus-narcosis notion (1964), and the premise of Reality TV in general, 'actor' and the audience are one and the same.

On the kitchen bench sat an identical sculpture. However the image on the TV was that of my eye[13]. Filmed in night vision mode and with a similar aesthetic as the real-time video playing in the other identical model house, the image makes reference to the *BB* icon. It was influenced by video artist Tony Oursler's oeuvre (*Eye in the Sky* 1997, *Eyes* and *Crying Eye* 1996, *Mirror Maze (through dead eyes)* 2004, *Number 7, plus or minus 2* 2010), in particular *Switch* 1996, the multiple video and mixed media installation shown in ACMI's Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965-2005 exhibition in 2007. Walking down the stairs to ACMI's screen gallery, you are confronted with *Eye in the Sky*, a massive, spherical, disembodied eye suspended in space. Blinking and glancing side to side, the pupil dilates and contracts as a TV set is reflected in the iris, flickering with the moving and random images as the TV's channel changes. My eye doesn't reflect a television, but it does catch the small amount of light emanating from the video camera, and as my eye scans from left to right, the pupil's reaction is like a focusing camera lens.

Tony Oursler *Eye in the Sky* 1997, projector, videotape, VCR, white acrylic paint on fiberglass sphere 18 inches diameter, 20 minutes.

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[13] Feedback from the work in progress performance of *This is Reality TV, Baby! And you're the star* indicated that the most "effective element" was the close-up image of my eye caught by the camera.

The site-specific nature of the artwork broke down the boundaries of the private and public realms and exacerbated the hypereality of a mediated existence. The next chapter explores the distortion and faking of the domestic space via scale, repetition and reflection.
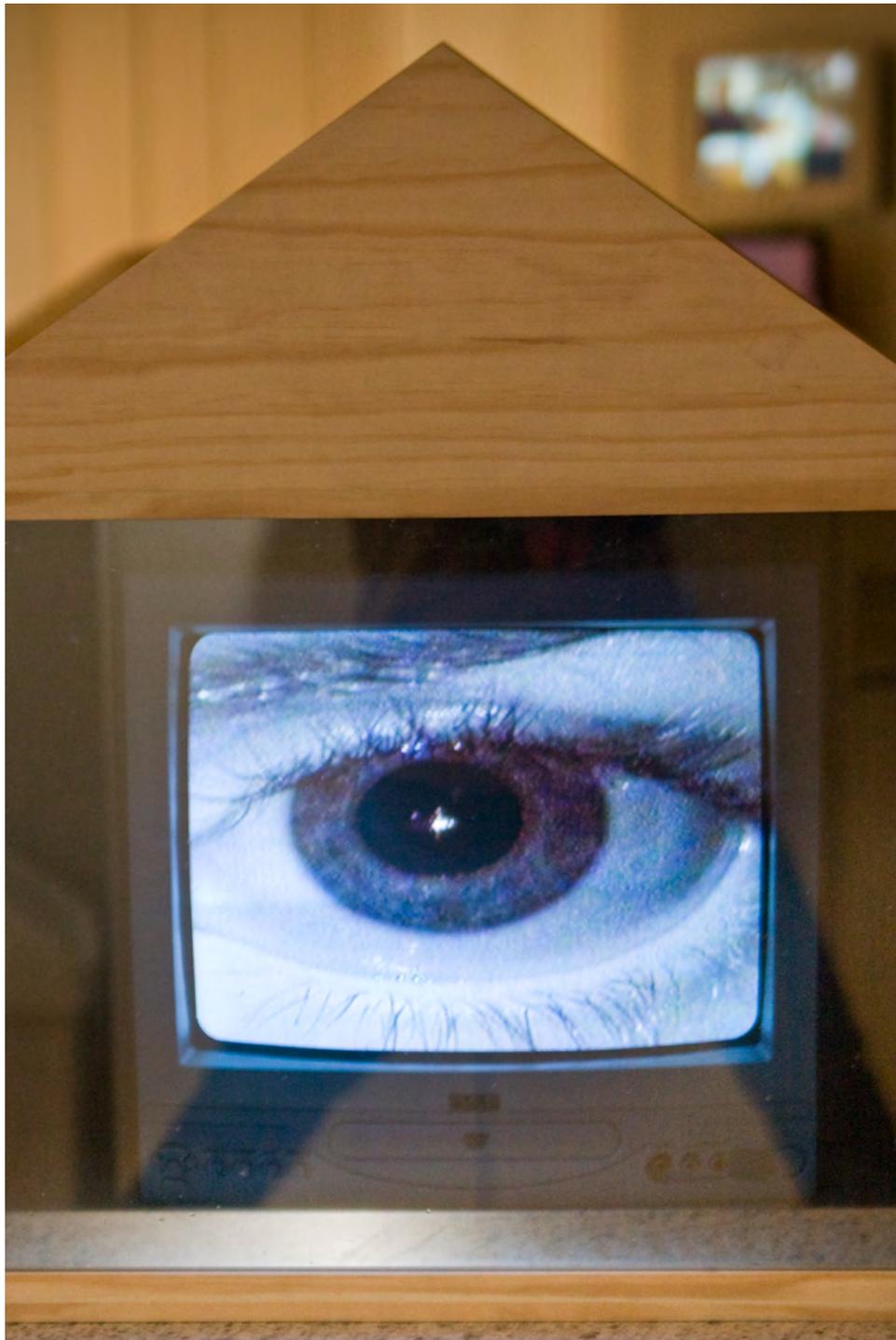
J. Corcoran *Untitled* 2009/10, pine, glass, mirror film, TV, digital video on DVD, 60 x 40 x 90cm, 3 mins.

Chapter 6

The Miniaturisation and the Faking of Space

The Smart House was fake. Just like the *BB* house. Just like all those McMansions in the nearby suburbs. A representation. A simulation. A model.

Callum Morton's 2007 Venice Biennale piece, *Valhalla* (2007), was a three-quarter scaled model of his childhood home. Designed and built by his architect father, the original was located in Toorak and was destroyed by developers. Conceived and built by the artist, the replica located in Venice, and then again between the National Gallery of Victoria and the Melbourne Arts Centre for the Melbourne International Arts Festival 2009, was partially destroyed by Morton, taking on the appearance of a ruin in a war zone, vandalised and violated by violence (Anderson 2009). Inside provided a sense of surreal and sterile pseudo safety; that of a non-place, like an airport (Morton, cited Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2007). A lobby or foyer, tiled with marble and occupied by a lowly cleaner, gives way to "three elevators that all go down to hell" (ibid.).


Callum Morton *Valhalla*, 2007 steel, polystyrene, epoxy resin, silicon, marble, glass, wood, acrylic paint, lights, sound, motor 465 x 1475 x 850cm (Detail)

Callum Morton *Valhalla*, 2007 steel, polystyrene, epoxy resin, silicon, marble, glass, wood, acrylic paint, lights, sound, motor 465 x 1475 x 850cm (Detail)

Exhibited in *Dwelling* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, also apart of the Melbourne International Arts Festival 2009, was *International Style (time lapse sequence)* (1999), Morton's scaled version of architect Mies van der Rohe's Modernist house. Morton dramatises the Farnsworth house's history. A party is taking place inside – flashing lights, music and laughter emanate from the architectural model – which ends abruptly with the sound of gunshots and horrified screams (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art 2005).
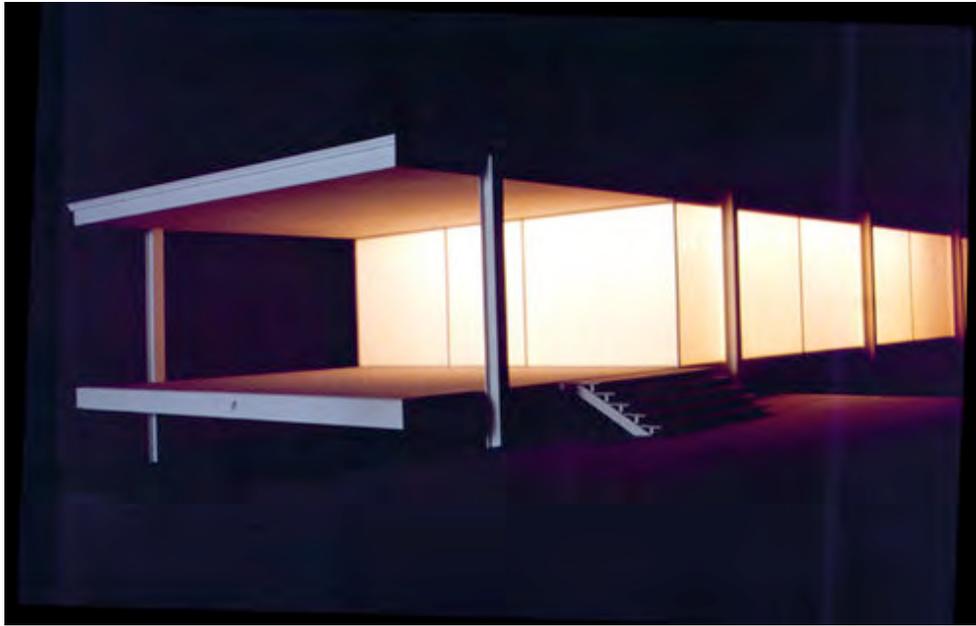

Callum Morton *International Style (time lapse sequence)*, 1999 Acrylic, automotive paint, vinyl, lights, sound 240 × 80 × 50cm (Installation)

In the Smart House study, upon a desk, sat a timber and glass casing. Inside the casing was an approximated scale model of the 2008 *BB* house. Built from balsa wood, carpeted with felt, tiled and painted the bright nauseating hypercolour reminiscent of the 'original'[14], it was furnished with some miniature pieces of furniture and fixtures.

The only two ways of 'entering' the house was via the peepholes placed in the sides or through the glass top, looking down onto the floor plan of the space. Experiencing it from these perspectives it was evident that the house, this model and the one it is a representation of, was built primarily for visibility into the space.

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[14] For want of a better word. The actual BB house located at Dreamworld was already hyperreal, a reproduction where the original/s it was copied from cease to exist.
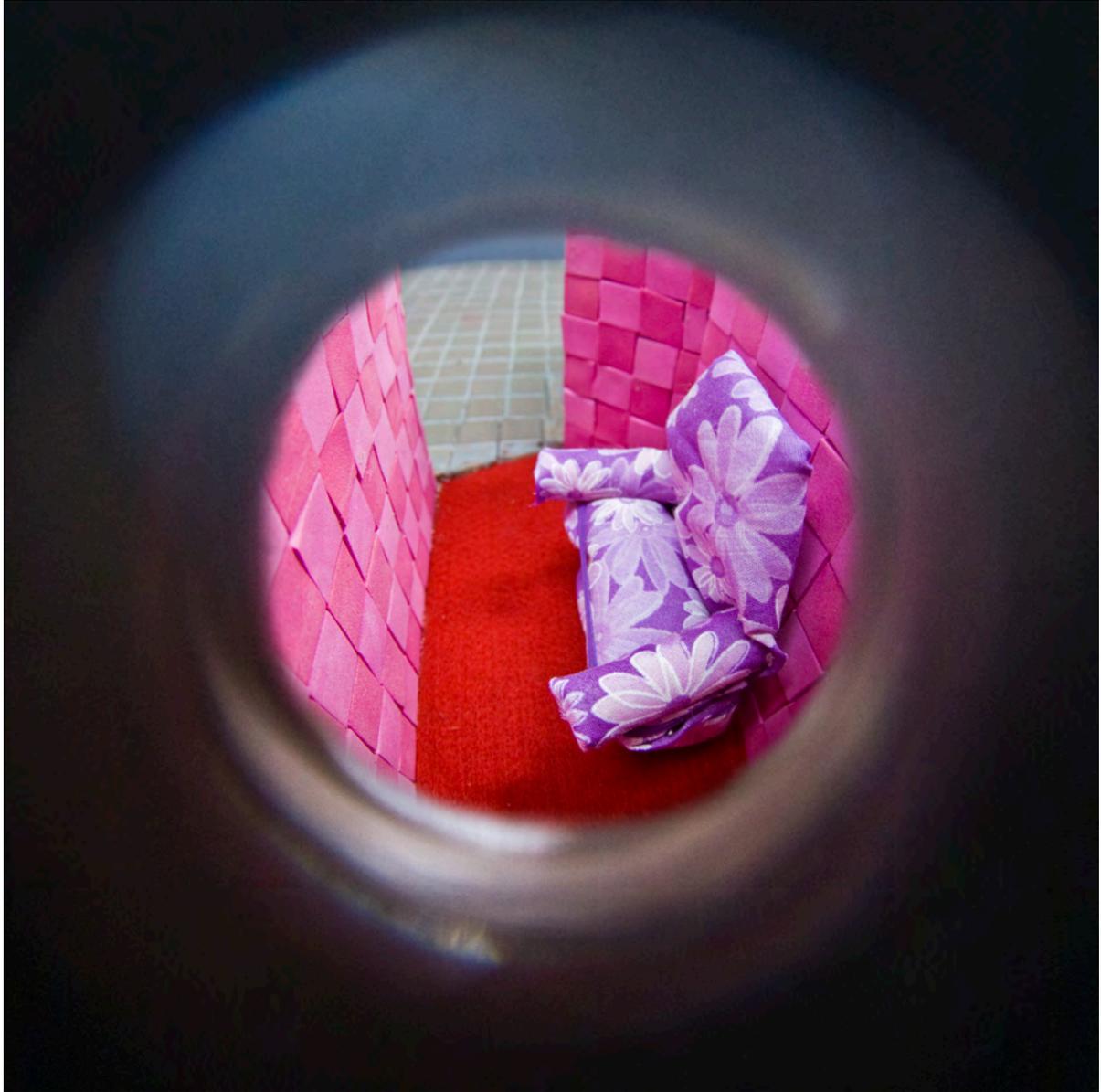
J. Corcoran *Big Brother's Peephole* 2010, digital image

But the gaze, in this case, is technologically determined. The inside of the model house is only visible when the lights are on, when they are off it is only the viewer visible to themselves as their image is reflected back at them via the mirrored glass. The lights were on a timed loop, and would flicker on like a fluorescent tube warming up, before illuminating the house for only a few seconds. The sequence of the lights reflected the audio mash-up looping in the space.

Tonight on Big Brother,

What is the house like?

It's a fake animal farm.

This is Big Brother's house,

Housemates will be filmed 24 hours a day.

Who is being fake in Big Brother's house?

Fake whatever,

I'm being fake.

Too hard to maintain for two months

Like fake boobs whatever.

There's no way, ever, I'd call anything in this place realistic.

Yeah I have fake blonde hair, fake fake boobs whatever

Fake, fake, fake…

I'm being fake.

Coming up,

Doom and gloom in the Big Brother House.

Ya know, we've got no control in this place,

You can pretty much do whatever you like to us.

Who does this?

Big Brother.

I'm just sick of Big Brother in general.

I hate Big Brother!

I hate Big Brother!

I'm over this crap Big Brother!

Wooo! That was nice.

This is Big Brother…

If you were entertained

You can check the replay.

Housemates cannot call Big Brother a performance.

Did you find the performance entertaining?

It was very amusing, Big Brother,

It was very well thought out.

The audio draws attention to the 'fakeness' of the house. The environment was fake, the grass and trees were fake, the animals were fake and the people were being fake. *BB* was an entirely simulated experience. Even the interior design had an inauthenticity about it. The oversized bed in the Japanese themed bedroom, the question mark shaped couch, the conveyer belt dining table, locker room style bathroom with communal shower, looked like a showroom for the ultimate in hyperreal home design, IKEA.
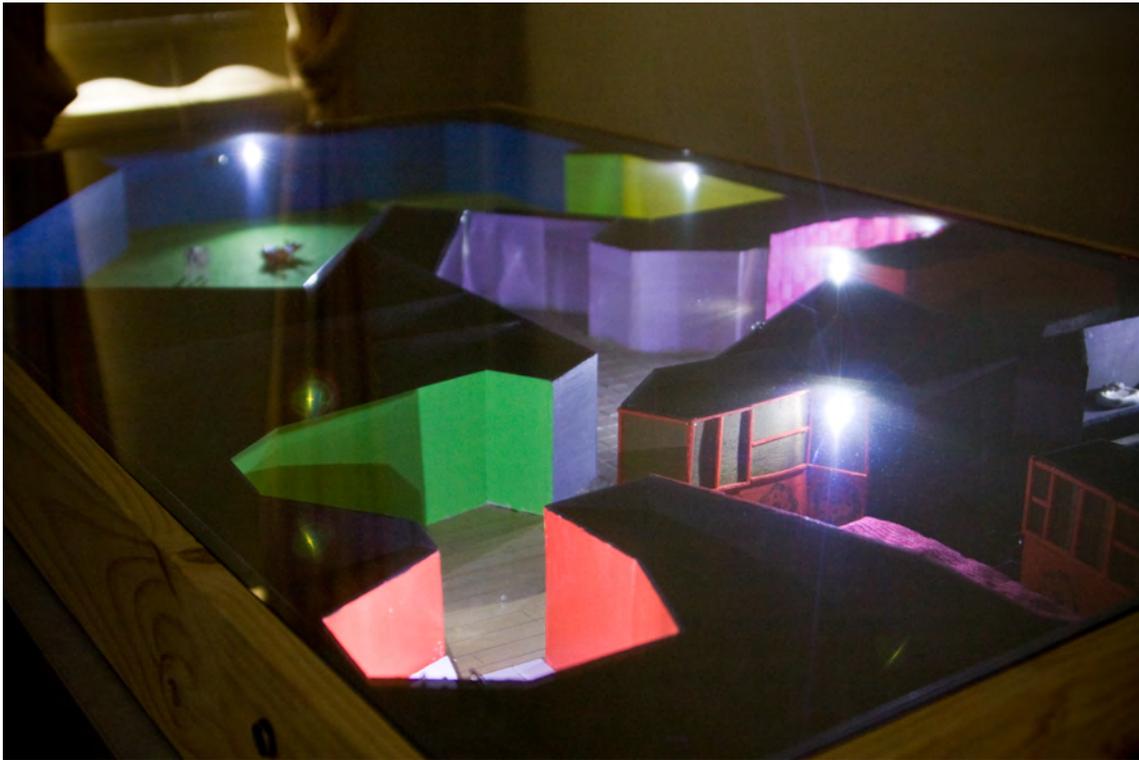
J. Corcoran *Model: Big Brother House 2008* 2009/10, balsa wood, timber, glass, mirror film, acrylic paint, felt, tiles, modelling clay, reused fabric, cushion stuffing, toy farm animals, led lights on timed sequence, 5 peepholes.

J. Corcoran *Model: Big Brother House 2008* 2009/10. View through peephole.

My visit to the *BB* house at Dreamworld in 2008, after the taping of the final series, was a very similar experience to a visit to IKEA. It feels like you, and a few hundred other people, have just walked into someone else's house, but conversely it's not like any house that actually really exists. The décor is pastiche and it looks and feels unlived in and contrived. These hyperreal 'homes' are *unheimlich* (unhomely) (Freud 2003, originally published 1919). My actions and intentions in the spaces also dictated my experience. I approached these spaces as a tourist, with an inquisitive gaze, or as a detective searching for truth. I photographed the spaces with the intention of using them as a part of and as a visual reference for my artwork, investigating hyperreal spaces.

These hyperreal spaces – the *BB* house, the Smart House, McMansions, IKEA – are examples of falsity and overwhelming visuality. They are to be examined, objectified, just as the mini-McMansions on display in the Smart House as *objet d'art* are to be examined, visually and physically. They are objects that are intended to be picked up and peered inside by the viewer, via the windows. Inside is a three dimensional space occupied by IKEA design, mirrors and labyrinths.

Deliberately poorly made, indicative of McMansion style constructions, they are unfinished or held together by masking tape and their stature and tactility amplify the actual-cum-model nature of the hyperreal. Small mirrors reflect the viewer as s/he peeps through the windows, or create another world of infinity, continually replicating itself visually. Through other windows are representations of IKEA or *BB* bedrooms, kitchens, lounge-rooms, bathrooms and toilets. The images were distorted and stretched around the internal the space to create the illusion of three dimensions; this was also modelled on the shapes of the rooms in the *BB* house, where they were not square or rectangular, but oddly shaped to maximise visibility.

Behind the mini-McMansion display was a representation of another lounge room, this one even more hyperreal than the one it is alongside inside the Smart House. Bright green walls enclose the space furnished with a lounge suite of equally confronting aesthetic. On the wall hangs a reproduction of a Victor Vasarely image, mimicking the green and purple checkerboard floor.

J. Corcoran *Mini McMansions* 2009/10. Balsa wood, mirrors, digitally manipulated images.

J. Corcoran *Mini McMansions* 2009/10. Installation view. Balsa wood, mirrors, digitally manipulated images.

The room is just a reproduction of a hyperreal living space, where "the image prevails over the thing it is an image of" (Virilio 1997, p. 19). It is an image projected at large onto a fake wall, the depth and perspective of the photo creating the illusion of space where it does not exist. The image is that of the interior of a model house. I constructed the lounge suite out of balsa, cushion filling and reused material, in the most unattractive yet brightest pattern I could find. This represented the hyperreal living space is reminiscent of that of *BB*, where the aesthetic is unlike a 'real' home, but is bright and 'playful', perpetuates Lefebvre's notion of spatial practice. It is *unheimlich* but dynamic.

The hyperreal spaces inside the hyperreal house is like a babushka doll, where each representation of space contains a representation of space, containing a representation of space. Or an infinity mirror, where the representations just keep perpetuating representations of hyperreal space.

J. Corcoran *Hyperreal Lounge Room* 2010. Pine, contact, reused fabric, balsa wood, cushion stuffing, Victor Vasarely print reproduction, Digital Image.

Through and In and Behind and In Front of the Looking Glass

The infinity-mirrored space of the bathroom was almost a pre-existing installation artwork. The mirrors running the entire length of the walls, surrounding those in the space, were reminiscent of the two-way mirrored glass besieging the *BB* house. To magnify the effect, two-way mirror film was applied to the glass shower screen, thus creating a mirror room of infinite size in the small, contained space.

To complete the illusion, I installed a CCTV camera in the space, which was not visible to the viewers/subjects, and relayed the real-time footage to a small TV also in the bathroom. Via the repeating reflection and representation of images it was difficult to deduce where the camera was, and thus required the subject to contemplate the space, the workings of the space, and their physical, telepresent and reflected presence in the hyperreal space.

Dan Graham's sculptural and time-based works, and his theoretical rationale supporting them, have been a major influence on all of my artwork, in particular this piece. Graham's earlier video and performance-based installations addressed perception and recognition, by transposing time and space via delayed video presentations and mirrored surfaces. Since then his site specific 'pavilions', constructed from transparent and reflective two-way mirror glass, interrogates public/private, inside/outside space and is concerned with architecture, urban and suburban spaces and mass media.

Graham likens his work to fun houses and playgrounds (Graham 2007), emphasising their playfulness of manipulating vision and perception via curved glass, mirrored surfaces, water and perforated stainless steel. The curved mirrored shower in the Smart House's bathroom references the space of *Heart Pavilion* (1991), and visually reflects the audience to themselves, and back again. Graham plays on the reflection and refraction of light to denote the transparency of private life and the repetitive image of public life. *Infinity Mirror Bathroom* also engaged with this idea, but magnified it, as the distorted and disorientating space was that of an innately private bathroom.

The artwork discussed in this chapter used the audience's position outside and within it to emphasise the fake, the position, repetition and identification of the self in hyperreal spaces.

The following chapter will focus on the utter exposure of one's self within a mediated existence.

J. Corcoran *Infinity Mirror Bathroom* 2010, Surveillance camera image (documentation).

J. Corcoran *Infinity Mirror Bathroom* 2010, mirror film, surveillance camera, TV in existing bathroom with mirrors (documentation)

Dan Graham *Heart Pavilion* 1991, two-way mirror glass, aluminium.

Chapter 7

Airing Dirty Laundry

Just how much should we expose ourselves in public, and how much of it can we control? The break down of the public/private divide means that what was once considered suitable only for private realm, is now, by default, open and out there for public consumption and consideration. This chapter looks at the artwork which exposes one's private self.

The white bright laundry in the darkened house beckons to be seen. It is quiet with no moving images or repetitive sound-works. A seemingly clean, sterile space, nothing much is going on in there, just the white washing machine, and a white basket of white washing, on the tiled floor. The basket is that which appeared in the video works, a part of the everyday, domestic, feminine nesting ritual; a signification of the spatial practice performed in the home. Contained in the basket are personal and everyday items, a set of dirty bed sheets, in amongst dirty underwear, t-shirts and other garments.

This installation is not too dissimilar to Tracey Emin's *My Bed* (1998), in its unashamed and unapologetic use of embarrassingly real everyday objects. Emin's 1999 Turner Prize entry was her unmade bed and personal paraphernalia littered around the space. Bloodied underwear, cigarette butts, empty alcohol bottles, dirty sheets; Emin was exposing herself and her inner and outer anguish that is her everyday.

This project, for me, has always been about exposure. And in the end, I was able to control to what degree I exposed myself, by censoring my performance and being selective about the amount of detail of my life I revealed. However, earlier on in the process it was not as easy.

At the end of 2007, Channel 10 put a call out for *BB* contestants, to which I obliged. I advanced to the second round, which involved a lengthy and personal questionnaire. From the intimate details of my childhood to my bust size, from my relationship with my family to the amount of money I had in my bank account; I was irate about revealing those details about my life to a faceless Big Brother. I also felt completely out of control of how I was going to be perceived based on my answers.

In hindsight, I should have constructed a character, a hyperpersonality to perform. But being so early in my research I was yet to realise that my practice was heading in that direction and that evidently, that was the exact type of personality chosen to appear on *BB*, only to be manipulated via the editing process to accentuate the 'hyper'.

J. Corcoran *My Dirty Laundry* 2010. Laundry basket, sheets, clothes, underwear. 70 x 50 x 50cm.

Tracey Emin *My Bed* 1998. Mattress, linen, pillows, objects. 79 x 211 x 234 cm.

For a Reality TV show, *BB's* narrative arc is, not surprisingly, scripted (Chung 2007, p. 33) and, as Ben Elton humorously explored in his novel *Dead Famous*, is "built in the edit" (2001, p. 43). The editor "orders [footage] into plot points that do not always match the sequence in which they actually happened" (Overington, in Creed 2003, p. 35). Storylines are built around even the most minute event or inane conflict, or constructed out of non-sequential conversations, known in the industry as 'Frankenbiting' (Murphy 2006), where words and sentences are cut and pasted together to support the evolving narrative.

Perhaps the most contentious aspect of the Australian *BB* broadcast was the various versions of the adults' only shows, over the years with titles such as *Big Brother: Up Late* and *Uncut*. These shows claimed to broadcast uncensored and uncut footage, appealing to viewer's voyeuristic tendencies, those who hope to catch a glimpse of naked skin or sexual activity. The term 'dancing doona' was coined after the first Australian series, where the night vision cameras in the bedroom captured the rhythmic movements of two housemates in bed together[15]. However, due to public outrage and debate, even the footage claiming to be 'uncut' became, in fact, very cut, edited and censored[16].

This had interesting repercussions for my video art work that ensued. *Cut-Uncut* was intended to be a visual mash-up of all the juicy, fleshy and soft porn uncut footage; but ended up a victim in the cutting room. Due to so much outcry over the previous years, including in response to the infamous 'turkey slapping' incident of 2006, the 'Adults Only' version of *BB* had become about as titillating as Kyle Sandilands as the *BB* host. From the hours and hours of footage the most exciting and salacious image and sounds bites were of heavy breathing, sloppy kissing, bouncing boobs and whirling willies. To give it an air of voyeurism, and to encourage and provoke the sexualised gaze, I manipulated the footage giving it an all over night-vision effect, exuding a green hue in the dark secluded space of the home theatrette.

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[15] Many other terms of phrase broadcast on *BB* have also been adopted as widely used colloquialisms, such as "Game on, moles," turkey-slap, and "it's time to leave the Big Brother house."

[16] Even the paid-for Internet stream was censored. On many occasions the live audio and/or footage was absent, and not because the technology was unreliable, but because something was happening in the house that the producers could not control and henceforth needed to block the footage. Things that were proscribed were names of friends or family, the contestants surname and continual swearing.

J Corcoran *Cut-Uncut* 2010 (still) 2:49 mins, sound.

This experience of watching was more like that of the cinema than the intimate watching of television. "In contrast to the television viewing situation, in which viewers sit together, lights on, in a familiar domestic context, film spectators sit in the dark, surrounded by strangers. The conditions of viewing and the nature of the technology produce a voyeuristic gaze and a voyeuristic subject" (Creed 2003, p. 23). The setting challenged the viewer to examine their personal reactions to what was happening on screen. Intrigue? Discomfort? Arousal?

> It could be argued that watching movies *per se* is a far more 'voyeuristic' act, in that the cinema spectator is sitting with strangers in a darkened auditorium watching intimate events unfold in a context which hides its mode of production and pretends that the spectator is viewing unmediated reality. *Big Brother*, on the other hand, makes no such pretence. All the contestants have agreed to put themselves on display in a live context – that is an essential part of the program's structure and appeal (ibid. p. 37).

J Corcoran *Cut-Uncut* 2010 (still) 2:49 mins, sound.

J Corcoran *Cut-Uncut* 2010 (still) 2:49 mins, sound.

The actual appeal of *BB* is not voyeurism. As much as it has been touted as voyeuristic, it is in fact the opposite. "Voyeurism is an extreme or perverse form of looking, in which the voyeur is able to derive sexual pleasure only by looking at others who are usually unaware that they are the object of a hidden gaze" (ibid. 38). *BB* housemates are fully aware they are being watched all of the time, that is, after-all, the premise of the show. It may not be voyeuristic, but it is *scopophilic* (Freud 1905, Mulvey 1989).

Scopophilia, the pleasure in looking, more accurately describes the appeal of Reality TV than voyeurism. Mulvey explains this phenomenon in relation to the cinematic experience, however I believe it too applies to Reality TV, and specifically to *BB*. Mulvey states that sexual pleasure is gained from seeing another person as an object for stimulation. Pleasure is also gained from being that object of the sexualised gaze, and the viewer takes narcissistic pleasure in watching their likeness on screen (ibid, p. 16, 18; Creed 2003, p. 38; Baudrillard 2001, p. 481).

For the viewer of *Cut-Uncut*, the experience was meant to appear voyeuristic and feel perverse. The close-ups of exposed body parts and intimate moments shared in the bed, with the night-vision aesthetic, gave it a hidden camera feel, while directing the audience's attention to the sexualisation of the televised image of the body.

Evidently, we willingly expose ourselves, and therefore accept that we are open to be watched, interpreted, perceived and sometimes edited according to an outsider's discretion. In the chapter to follow, I readdress the space of the exhibition, where much of this exposure has occurred.

J Corcoran *Cut-Uncut* 2010 (still) 2:49 mins, sound.

Chapter 8

A [Re]View

With consideration to the artworks just discussed in this section it's imperative to take a look at the exhibition overall. The exhibition *[Re]Viewing Big Brother and [Per]forming the Real*, whilst consisting of over a dozen individual artworks, was in a sense one comprehensive creative piece. The artworks needed to be experienced in that exact environment, in that exact arrangement to be fully understood and appreciated. True to site-specific artworks in general, they were made in accordance to the space, and to [re]move them from that space is to contextually abstract them, "to move the site-specific work is to *re-place* it, to make it *something else*" (Kaye 2000, p. 2, emphasis in original). To just experience one artwork and not the rest is to destroy the meaning of the overall project. So it is important that the entire installation be reviewed as one grand statement.

As previously mentioned, the house, as the site for the exhibition – like all other aspects of this project – was serendipitous and intuitive. Yet the overall exhibition was also put together with consideration to the theoretical, philosophical and the creative and visual influences and informants.

The space was alive with energy and light, it was in itself a wonderment. The ambience of the space was informed by Pipilotti Rist's *Himalaya's Sister's Living Room* (2000), where she conceived of a dreamlike, installation space as a place to acknowledge and explore the hidden elements of the female self, and make the private public. An arrangement of household furnishings, lamps, knick-knacks, books and magazines, cluttered the dimly lit space. Spattered with videos from concealed projectors the found objects were brought to life. A female's open mouth, the artist's squashed face, an athlete and a landscape provided an intimate insight into the female psyche. Rist literally projected hidden thoughts, memories and anxieties onto the objects of the domestic space (Mann 2004).

Pipilotti Rist *Himalaya's Sister's Living Room* 2000. Video installation, ten projectors, ten players, furniture and various objects, wallpaper mounted on wood, with sound. Dimensions variable.

The projections, sounds, movement and bits and pieces of everyday life, whether they were real or fake (such as the presence of the artificial cat) which occupied the space of the Smart House gave the never before lived in house a false history and purpose. Although coded signifying a domestic dwelling, the house was unequivocally devoid of actual real life, of authenticity. But it was verified by the inclusion of the artworks. And the space was only made more hyperreal because of that.

The sound components, although specific to certain artworks, were not isolated or bound by them. The sound works filled the space just as much as the physical works. The repetitive reminder of the 'fake performance' meshed with the sounds of the performance of the everyday in *Life in a Box*. The acoustics in the bathroom and laundry amplify what little sound occurs when the viewer enters the space, and mixed it with the resonating sounds from nearby artworks. The heavy breathing and the sloppy kissing of *Cut-Uncut* are audible from behind the closed door, enticing the curious into the restricted space. The space sounds as though it is occupied, lived in, used. It sounds as though some sort of real life is happening.

The lighting was kept to a minimum, to maximise the effect of the projections, televisions and lights within and emanating from individual artworks. This, to some degree, altered the meaning of the house, in that it wasn't warm and welcoming, but was *unheimlich*, contrived and simulated.

The space was a paradox – a house, but not a home. It housed artworks, yet it was not a gallery. Artworks were made in and for the house, yet they were contrived performances of the everyday and real life, even though real life could not and would not ever happen inside that house.

J. Corcoran *[Re]Viewing Big Brother and [Per]Forming the Real*, Installation view.

CONCLUSION

There has never been a world realer than ours: everywhere reality is enhanced, multiplied, brought to us, we to it […] All of this means we live in a total simulation.

<div align="right">Hegarty 2004, p. 9</div>

The outcomes of the practical research undertaken in this project supports the current theoretical discussions in the field. Evidently, hyperreality is our reality. It is now innate and intrinsic, and it is so simply because of the highly mediatised "world we inhabit as the real world, […] one that is fabricated, produced" (Hegarty 2004, p. 7), determined by visual technology. Surveillance, television, live Internet streams, all contribute to the hyperreality of everyday life. The disappearance of real life. The imposing of a highly conceived and constructed space and practices over that which it simulates and surpasses. The space and those within only exist because of the mediatisation, and only exist for it. That existence is also hyperreal. Life has become a performance.

> As John Miller states, the stage is "already inside the heads of the audience (…) The panopticon and the classical spectacle in Debord's sense have given way to an all-encompassing medial infrastructure in which the camera no longer records everyday life but produces it itself as a kind of play or ritual." With the increasing consumption of 'authentic' image material from private scenes and intimate moments in the lives of unknown individuals the new techniques of effective 'self-presentation' and 'spectacularisation' gain an almost obligatory social power (Frohne 2001, p. 260).

It is evident that we are our own Big Brother. We have not only been primed for self-surveillance, for the sake of social control in the Foucauldian sense, but more importantly for our own entertainment and social validation, predicated on Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* "in order for me to be what I am, it suffices merely that the Other look at me" (1968, cited in Melville 1996, p. 104). I shall end on the same note Orwell did in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949, p. 239), but in the context of our hyperreal mediated society it takes on an utterly different meaning:

<div align="center">

He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.

THE END

</div>

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P. 7   Jeremy Bentham *Panopticon Penitentiary* 1785
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FB267C405F34FB864F255EA2C7AB834E2F7C8319B01E70F2B3269972>

P. 9   Piranesi *Carceri d'Invenzione (Plate 14)*
<http://gravures.ru/photo/dzhovanni_piranezi/tjurmy/gothic_arch/10-0-386>

P. 10   John A Douglas *Ask Noeline… Not the Ogre* 2009, Video installation
http://www.realtimearts.net/article/93/9620

P. 14   Hard-Fi *Stars of CCTV* 2005
<http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3314/3311930711_ac250cd89f_o.jpg>

P. 14   Hard-Fi *CCTVersions* 2006
<http://en.academic.ru/pictures/enwiki/72/Hard-Fi_-_CCTVersions.jpg>

P. 17   Still from *Red Road* 2006
<http://www.moviepro.net/download-red-road-movie.html>

P. 18   Full body x-ray scan
<http://cache.gawker.com/assets/images/io9/2009/10/91848059.jpg>

P. 19   *Big Brother 8* Australia 2008
<http://www.moxreport.com/big-brother-logo-2008.jpg>

P. 22   Bruce Nauman *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* 1967-8
<http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/059/w500h420/CRI_136059.jpg>

P. 26   Vito Acconci *Centers* 1971
<http://www.shanelavalette.com/journal/00/vitoacconci_centers.jpg>

P. 30   Yayoi Kusama *Infinity Mirror Room: Phalli's Field* 1965
<http://bodytracks.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Kusama1.jpg>

P. 31   Rachel Whiteread *Untitled (Grey)* 1996/2003
<http://www.tate.org.uk/adventcalendar/2007/artworks/T07939_rachelwhiteread.jpg>

P. 32   Rachel Whiteread *Untitled (Stairs)* 2001
<http://www.theconveniencestore.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/whiteread-tub.jpg>

P. 33   Rachel Whiteread *Place (Village)* 2006/8
<http://img202.imageshack.us/f/1224931643rachel20white.jpg/>

P. 34   Rachel Whiteread's dolls houses packed in boxes
<http://www.emotionadvertising.com.au/artworldmagazine.com/index.php?option=com_
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P. 38, 39, 40, 41   Jonas Dahlberg *Untitled (Horizontal Sliding)* 2000
<http://www.jonasdahlberg.com/02_works/04_Horizontal_Sliding/01_Horizontal_sliding.
htm>

P. 42,43   Jonas Dahlberg *Untitled (Horizontal Sliding)* 2000, model plan drawing
<http://www.jonasdahlberg.com/02_works/04_Horizontal_Sliding/02_Horizontal_sliding
_Model.htm>

P. 51   HBO Voyeur 2007
<http://blog.hslu.ch/outofhomedisplays/wp-content/blogs.dir/183/files/branding-
screens-ii/hbo-voyeur-outdoor_2.jpg>

P. 52   Heather Benning *Dollhouse* 2007
<http://blog.thepresentgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/heather-benning-life-
size-doll-house.jpg>

P. 52   Gordon Matta-Clark *Program Two: Open House* 1972
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P. 53   Gordon Matta-Clark *Splitting* 1974
<http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/656/w500h420/CRI_64656.jpg>

P. 64   Howard Arkley *Triple Fronted* 1988
<http://www.monash.edu.au/news/monashmemo/assets/images/20061115/arkley-
Family-home.jpg>

P. 65   Brendan Lee *True Blue* 2006
<http://www.brendanlee.com/photographs/index.html>

P. 66   Rowan McNaught *House Proud Installation* 2008
<http://www.artfair.com.au/img/650x600/Untitled_Image_1260231070.jpg>

P. 67   Shay Minster *Room 4: Slow dance* 2009
<http://www.holesinthewall276.com/p/shay-minster.html>

P. 68   Richard Glover *Kellyville* 2003
<http://www.ipswichartgallery.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/2010/05/29/suburban-frontier-
richard-glover>

P. 83   Tony Oursler *Eye in the Sky* 1997
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P. 85   Callum Morton *Valhalla* 2007
<http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/artists/27/Callum_Morton/552/40198/>

P. 86   Callum Morton *Valhalla* 2007
<http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/artists/27/Callum_Morton/552/40205/>

P. 87 Callum Morton *International Style (time lapse sequence)* 1999
<http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/artists/27/Callum_Morton/254/37195/>

P. 97   Dan Graham *Heart Pavilion* 1991
<http://www.c4gallery.com/artist/database/dan-graham/dan-graham-heart-pavilion-1991.jpg>

P. 99   Tracey Emin *My Bed* 1998
<http://www.artfacts.net/artworkpics/3099b.jpg>

P. 1063 Pipilotti Rist *Himalaya's Sister's Living Room* 2000
<http://emuseum2.guggenheim.org/media/full/2004.113_ph_web.jpg#TB_inline?height=657&width=525&inlineId=full-image>