

As You Cannot  
Hear The Sound  
of Losing:  
Researching  
The Gambling  
Environment  
Through  
Performance

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# Abstract

### **As you cannot hear the sound of losing: Researching the gambling environment through performance**

This project is an investigation of various gambling environments. I wish to consider how these strategically designed, immersive and seductive sites seem to have an effect on the visitor. Typically the gaming environment offers an adult utopia and an other-worldly experience that is far removed from the everyday.

I was attracted to researching the extreme, hyperreal gambling environments analysed by Jean Baudrillard as well as the common, suburban sites examined by Charles Livingstone. Although at first glance the styles of these two environments seem vastly different, what they have in common is they provide a simulacrum of reality where people can engage in the act of gambling. Whether the site is extraordinary or less extreme in style, the misery caused by gambling is a common experience. The performance *As you cannot hear the sound of losing* grew from this research, into an exploration of the melancholy that can be felt by the individual as a result of engaging with gambling environments.

You cannot hear the sound of losing in these places; the reality of losing does not exist there. Within these sites we are likely to hear the cheers of a winner celebrating but, never the misery that can be caused by gambling. By exploring the gambling environment through performance, I intend to present how it works to affect those who visit it.

# Student Declaration

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**Master by Research Declaration (by performance/exhibition)**

I, Jade Butler, declare that the Master by Research exegesis entitled *As you cannot hear the sound of losing: Researching the gambling environment through performance* is no more than 60,000 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.

Signature

Date

# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

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This document is being submitted in addition to the performance *As you cannot hear the sound of losing*, that was conducted on December 2, 2007 at apartment 4708 Eureka Tower, Melbourne. Its purpose is to contextualise and further expand upon material investigated in the performance. It serves to identify, discuss and make explicit the techniques used in the research, composition and presentation of the performance.

In Part One I discuss the ideas that informed the decision to conduct the performance in the apartment. I draw comparisons between the characteristics of this site and the gambling environment. I discuss the form and style of the performance under the headings: *Site, Objects, Journey, Scenes, Performer* and *Audience*.

In Part Two I connect my interests to a wider theoretical framework discussing the critical analyses of the gambling site conducted by Jean Baudrillard, Robert Venturi and Charles Livingstone. I explain how the theme of the performance emerged from this research. I explore the notion of the researcher as flaneur and my personal experience of being the spectator/participant in the gambling environment. I define my performance practice as site-oriented art engaged in a process of 're-siting' and unhinging traditional site-specific art. I highlight the work of Ed and Nancy Kienholz, IRAA Theatre and Lynn Hershman as other artists who also examine site, discussing the relevance of their work to the form and content of my performance.

Part Three is the performance transcript and accompanying notes that serve to document the performance and clarify the background, intent and execution of each scene.



# Form (Part One)

FORM

# Introduction

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*As you cannot hear the sound of losing* was presented in apartment 4708 of Eureka Tower, Melbourne on December 2, 2007. The performance was staged in a predetermined, clockwise journey around the apartment and the small audience was led around the space visiting each significant area. Various props, objects and soundscapes were planted around the apartment that I hoped would create a matrix of effective elements. The performance material was presented as a collection of scenes: some monologue-based, some movement-based and some an amalgamation. The performance was devoid of clear narrative and was a montage of stories, moments and images. It was intended for a small audience, to make it an intimate and focused experience. As the performer I did not want the audience to become detached from the performance, nor wholly involved either; shifting between including and excluding them.

FORM

*Introduction*

FORM

# Site

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I had seen somewhat distorted photos of the apartment but hadn't been able to inspect it before the week of the performance. As soon as I gained access, I had six hours to familiarise myself with the space and rehearse. Bringing the various props in from the dark basement car park and traveling up forty-seven floors in the nine meter per second lift, was a nauseating start. When I entered the space I remember feeling blinded and overwhelmed by the combination of the light, height and view from the apartment. The space was unnerving; white and sterile. The furniture and décor was modern, but minimal. The apartment was aurally dead (except for the hum of the air-conditioner) but visually overpowering and I became fixated by the view. I sat by the window and wanted to watch everything; concurrently mesmerized with it, but also strangely sickened by it. Ignoring the feelings of inertia, caused by the apartment, I looked down on Crown Casino and its surrounding areas. This view offered a very different perspective on the site where most of my research was conducted.

In the course of my research I had considered both performing in a gambling environment as well as within a theatre or studio space. I rejected the idea of the gambling environment because the nature of these environments are too immersive and often demand the spectator to wholly participate in what the site is offering. For different reasons I rejected the idea of the theatre or studio, as the audience are often too physically removed from the performance. I needed to find a third site that would offer effects *similar* to what the visitor may experience within the gambling environment — immersion and participation — but which would still allow a degree of dislocation. I wanted the audience in the same physical space as the performance — not safe behind the fourth wall — yet also to experience the positive, dislocating effect of theatre; preventing them from complete immersion and allowing a critical distance. The apartment in Eureka Tower seemed the ideal location to achieve what I desired.

Eureka Tower is on the Melbourne CBD's fringe and to the outsider this slick, luxurious, 'vertical city' has immense appeal. It's a self-sufficient place, overtly independent, with a private gym, pool and cinema. Yet at the same time, the Tower relies on the city of Melbourne; it would be futile having floor-to-ceiling windows if the spectacle of the vast and infinitely detailed view of outside did not exist. Viewing the city from within this building, I feel as if I am excluded from it and seem reduced to an outside spectator. Realising that I am confined and compressed by the apartment's four walls and removed from the ordinary world causes a feeling of dislocation.

Performance theorist Michael Peterson writes about the gambling spaces of Las Vegas' casinos as 'flattened rather than soaring' (Peterson 2006, 117). Flattened space is spatially enclosed, compressed and isolated — not open and vast. Peterson observes that 'we speak of casino "floors" and gambling "pits"' (Peterson 2006, 117). The Friedman model of casino design offers practical examples of the characteristics of flat space; varied ceiling heights (primarily low), segmenting the space into smaller areas and no long sight lines within the casino (The Friedman Management Group N.D). The qualities of soaring space are open, large areas where we are able to see far beyond and around us. In spite of the soaring views, apartment 4708 had similarities to the gambling room's sense of enclosure. The apartment and casino both offer a labyrinth-like experience on a physical and psychic level. The enclosure of

open space in a maze of subspaces offers a concentrated experience where I believe the visitor feels protected within and removed from the outside world. Our location in apartment 4708 was an elevated one and the view from the living room defines what Peterson refers to as 'soaring'. The effect of the view is significant; I longed to stay by the window and simply gaze and was curious as to whether others would similarly experience this desire. Safe behind the window, I felt I could not look away from the spectacle for fear of missing something of its detail. In contrast the apartment's interior is 'flattened' and could be considered to be experienced spatially in the same way as the casino. We often cannot see the entire gambling venue or apartment's interior from one particular spot; it is segmented into subspaces and the environments are designed to enter and be explored. Once we turn our backs on the view and move away from the living room, the roof gets lower and walls seem to close in. We explore the apartment from a set of short passages that allow us to appreciate its nooks and crannies, connecting us with the various rooms.

I was attracted to the apartment for the site of the performance because I wanted to juxtapose the experience of soaring space with flat. By highlighting the view at the beginning of the performance and then journeying away from it and into the apartment's subspaces, I intended to heighten the feelings of enclosure and 'privacy, protection, concentration and control' (Venturi 1977, 49) that Venturi claims the interior of the gambling room intends for the visitor to experience.

Disregarding the Tower's extravagant and luxurious stigma, the apartment also represents somebody's home. It is a functioning, domestic interior: a private place to eat and sleep. The audience first gathered in the communal environment of the living room but were then led into the more private and intimate areas of the apartment that are generally out of bounds for visitors: the bathroom and bedrooms. I wanted my performance to take place in a site that incorporated elements of the domestic, pointing to the way that gambling affects the individual on a private and domestic level.

Conducting the performance in this context I intended to suggest that the apartment was also a place of transition, and I hoped the performance would capture a sense that what was taking place was somewhat impermanent. There were clues within the apartment that suggested I was an outsider and only here temporarily: Eureka Tower business cards and a 'no smoking' sign for example. The apartment felt more like a hotel room than a place for living permanently. By intentionally not littering personal belongings around the space, I intended for it to feel sparse and unhomely. Roberta Bosetti and Renato Cuocolo of IRAA theatre used the hotel room as a performance site in their 2005 work *Private Eye* and in writing about that work have stated that it is a place that offers an opportunity to 'escape our habits of mind' (Bosetti & Cuocolo 2005). They say that if we are drawn to these environments 'it is perhaps because, in spite of their architectural compromises and discomforts, in spite of their garish colours and harsh lighting, we implicitly feel that these places offer us a material setting for an alternative to the selfish ease, the habits and confinement of the ordinary, rooted world' (Bosetti & Cuocolo 2005). Whilst apartment 4708 was neither garish nor harshly lit, I hoped that it would offer a place far removed from the everyday world for the audience.

The apartment environment is not what it initially appears to be. I think

of it as both luxurious and domestic yet discovered a sparse, unhomely and isolating place. It is more like a hotel room, where what is occurring is impermanent. I wanted to embrace the contradictions at work within the apartment. I intended to explore the unstable tensions between the flat and soaring space, the luxury environment and domestic interior, the domestic interior and the unhomely environment.

FORM  
*Site*

Presenting the apartment in this way, as a site of contradictory 'realities' established the perspective from which I wished to explore gambling, as a site of similar unstable perceptions. The casino promises that gambling in its glittering rooms will be a glamorous and exhilarating experience. The mystique created can quickly dissolve as I find that it is not like this at all. Once I inhabited it and experienced all that it claims to offer, I realised that the casino is also an artificial, disorienting and isolating place. I can begin to understand that gambling there can be a destructive act with negative consequences.

Through the cumulative effects of the highly designed, seductive and artificial apartment I hoped to produce for the audience an experience similar to visiting the casino environment without the spectators having to come into direct contact with gambling or be entirely immersed in the environment.

FORM

# Objects

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*As you cannot hear the sound of losing* was composed as a matrix of effective elements including sound, lighting, images and objects. In this performance it was intended that the dramatic material was not independent of the objects or the objects independent of the performance; it was a matrix of all effective elements. For example the scene *Not a Bank* which was performed in the bathroom, was developed and realised using: the battery operated lights, sound of a horse race call, the action of trimming an artificial fern and the monologue.

FORM  
*Objects*

Engaging with surrealist techniques, by placing these objects where they are not normally seen, the matrix of effective elements that normally goes unnoticed in the casino was re-presented in the apartment. I intended to produce an experience of otherworldliness and create a feeling of dislocation and removal from the everyday (Pickering 2005, 193). I believe this is similar to the way the casino itself operates; producing an environment from objects, lighting effects and sound to create a place vastly different from the everyday that allows the visitor to it feel as if they are escaping ordinary life.

FORM

# Journey

As the audience made their clockwise journey, visiting each area/room of the apartment, the presence of object and sound became less subtle, increasing in intensity. Turning away from the soaring space, the pace of the performance gained momentum as the audience became further entrenched in the apartment's flattened spaces. As we ventured into the subspaces of the apartment I felt that they began to take on a cave-like quality. I wished to seize, from the audience, more 'privacy, protection, concentration and control' (Venturi 1977, 49); much as the casino does within its gambling spaces. I intended to mimic the way that the casino progressively immerses its visitors in its subspaces so the audience could become further focused and connected to the stories I was presenting.

FORM  
*Journey*

FORM

# Scenes

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The performance was structured as a series of independent scenes. This fragmented and disparate 'scene-style' of the performance resulted from a desire to present my material in *opposition* to the way I experience the casino.

FORM  
*Scenes*

It is a place that does not close and there is no recognised mechanism that forces us to leave. The absence of windows and clocks skews our sense of time and unless we exit by our own will, we could possibly remain within the casino forever. The overwhelming and never-ending casino experience wishes to keep us from re-entering the outside world. Whilst I wished to create a sense of enclosure and removal from the everyday, I did not want for the performance to form one overwhelming and extreme casino-like experience.

The audience was positioned within the performance space, yet they were not participants. I intended to utilise the positive, dislocating effects of theatre so that they could maintain a critical distance. Each scene was intentionally structured, stylised and independent of the other, so that the results of my site-oriented research could be seen.

The broad and diverse range of research conducted for this project ranged from visiting gambling sites, reading tips to improve our craps game, to collecting gambling related paraphernalia. The research was not limited to one facet of gambling. This scene-style of performance allowed me to gather and present many smaller pieces of information that interested me throughout my research.

FORM

# Performer

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As the performer I employed various performance techniques to generate and execute the piece. Mostly these were a continuation of stylistic methods explored and developed within my previous works.

FORM

*Performer*

When generating the show I was working with surrealist techniques and intended to mix 'spheres of meaning, bringing together objects from the "real" world with those taken from dreams, fantasy, the unconscious' (Pickering 2005, 193). In the majority of the monologues I used Stanislavsky's technique of method acting, desiring to produce and portray authentic emotion. I worked with a super-objective, a conscious or unconscious goal that sustained the character throughout the events of the monologue (Pickering 2005, 67). At other times I broke the imaginary fourth wall using the Brechtian technique of speaking to the audience directly, intending to provoke an 'active and critical rather than comfortable and passive consumption' of the performance (Pickering 2005, 240).

There was deliberate ambiguity during the performance as to who *I* was and what *I* represented. This style of performing without a stable identity or character, stemmed from the desire to not be limited to one persona, but be able to present a vast collection of stories, images and moments.

I also wanted to appear as an element in the matrix of effects operating within the apartment: sometimes a dominant element, at other times dissolving into the matrix. At times I spoke directly to the audience, making eye contact. Other times I intentionally distanced myself from them and it may have appeared their presence was unimportant. The use of this technique grew from the conclusion that whilst at the casino I am not acknowledged as an individual, but am merely another body in the sea of gamblers. For instance, when I came into contact with the security guards at the entrance, the cashiers or people behind the bar, it is mostly serious and robotic interaction that they offer, and I experienced feelings of invisibility and insignificance. On the other hand, occasionally a fellow gambler will make eye contact and attempt to make conversation; I found this experience to be unsettling and my discomfort was heightened by this style of environment. I had to decide whether I would reciprocate or continue to shelter in my anonymous status. I intended to include something of this interesting phenomenological experience I had encountered, within the performance. Feeling both condemned to anonymity and protected by it. As the performer, I hoped to unsettle the audience in the same way I had been at the casino; mostly invisible, but at times fleetingly acknowledged.

FORM

# Audience

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In this performance my intention was not for the audience to become detached from the performance, nor wholly involved either. I was aware of shifting between an inclusive/exclusive dynamic; a mix of both affirming the spectator and disregarding them. Often at the theatre when watching a play, I feel frustrated being merely a passive spectator; far removed from the performance, seated in darkness and insignificant. Yet at the performance art event I frequently experience the opposite; I am initially confronted by being in the same space as the performer. I feel uncomfortable that my presence is often depended upon to become a participant in the event. The intention of my performance was to be positioned somewhere in the middle of these two extremes.

The five audience members met in the foyer of the Eureka Tower and traveled up in the elevator to the apartment. There was no introduction or direction given except a statement on the program informing them that they were free to move around the space throughout the performance. When they entered, the DVD playing in the living room served the purpose of pulling their attention towards this area. Once they had done so and appeared settled, I entered the space and found that most were looking at the city view from the window. I then walked over and took my place at the apex of the room, beginning the first monologue, interrupting their gazing into the soaring space.

My two assistants did not enter with the other five invited audience members; but were already seated at a table in the living room. They were not instructed to do anything particular during the performance. In retrospect I misjudged the effect of their presence, as there was confusion in the audience about who they were and whether they were a part of the performance or not.

The audience was free to do as they pleased. They were not confined to a seat or particular area. However, without clear spectator/performer boundaries, I intended for them to follow my lead through the apartment. I thought of the audience as a silent small crowd being led around the apartment by a tour guide, being shown each subspace and what it had to offer. They were led to where the action was: politely negotiating each other's individual desires concerning where they wanted to be positioned. The audience, although part of a group, were isolated in their experience until the conclusion of the performance. I felt a sense of politeness on their behalf as they never invaded my personal space or got in the way of my movements. Throughout the performance they stayed with me and moved fluidly around the space. Considering the way it was staged and the construction of the apartment, the number of spectators present was ideal. The intended feeling of intimacy of the performance was heightened by this silent, small crowd.



# Context

## (Part Two)

# Introduction

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As I wander through the non-gambling areas of the Crown Complex, I notice one area that stands out in particular. Before I enter the west end of level one and am approaching the entry to *Galactic Circus* (an interactive theme park aimed at teenagers). I suddenly stumble, from a dark, enclosed corridor into a bright walkway. This walkway has windows on the right-hand side and floor-to-ceiling mirrors on the left that reflect the natural light. I am no longer part of the intricate casino maze but connected with outside light and outside space. What I see from the window is a transitional space; the road outside to me appears desolate and uninhabited. Up until now I have been immersed in, and seduced by, casino time and space. I rush into this suspended walkway and look onto the street. I compare what I see out of the window to the Crown Casino experience. This view deters me from wanting to go outside. The feelings of privacy, protection, concentration and control (Venturi 1977, 49) that I had become accustomed to, are taken away. The way the unappealing outside world is framed and presented, forces me to question why I would ever want to leave, to be greeted with that. Is this experience of the window intentionally designed to repel me from the everyday? Does it generate a desire to reenter the controlled and ideal casino environment? I believe this intrusion of the everyday into my senses is a mechanism that intends to push me back into the 'crazed activity' (Baudrillard 1989, 128) of the casino floor. I became concerned with the construction of the gambling environment and its forceful denial of the everyday world. These environments are appealing because they are not desolate, uninhabited or dull. Reality often disappoints: these places are better than the everyday. Immersed in them, I begin to lose the desire to return to the outside, to leave a place where everything is attractive, shiny and new.

# The Hyperreal

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At the beginning of this project I found myself researching not only the gaming environment but also the effects of visiting other highly designed places, where people engage in leisure activities: Disneyland and amusement parks being two prominent examples. Similar to the casino environment, Disneyland creates a reality that we prefer, something everyday life cannot always produce. Umberto Eco has stated that Disneyland is presented as ‘absolutely realistic and absolutely fantastic’ (Eco 1993, 202). It is a place where everything is bigger, brighter and more entertaining. There is always something to see and this place doesn’t disappoint the visitor, as the everyday can. ‘Disneyland not only produces illusion, but — in confessing it — stimulates the desire for it: A real crocodile can be found in the zoo, and as a rule it is dozing or hiding... you risk feeling homesick for Disneyland, where the wild animals don’t have to be coaxed’ (Eco 1993, 203). The crocodile is illusory. It produces a false impression of what a real crocodile is really like. Regardless of this, the imitation captures our imagination. Disneyland is ‘not spoiled by the intrusion of real-world practicalities’ (Baggott 2005, 27) and it offers an ideal experience where the visitor can experience a dislocation from the everyday.

These initial interests then led me to Jean Baudrillard’s discussion on the effects that environments like Disneyland and Las Vegas can have on the visitor. Baudrillard describes these as places of the *hyperreal* (Baudrillard 1994, 12 & 92). The hyperreal can be defined as ‘a virtual reality without reference to reality... an abstraction... a hyperreality, with no basis in anything we can discern to be real’ (Baggott 2005, 26). One only needs to look at photos of Las Vegas to appreciate its hyperreality. This city is a place of simulation, a concoction of elaborate reproductions of dissimilar places and periods.

The Eiffel Tower, Pyramids of Egypt and gladiators of Rome are enhanced versions of the originals which have perhaps become more original or familiar than the actual places they simulate. Las Vegas is saturated with sound, lighting, imagery and advertising. Money, space and time lose all meaning as each themed casino (*Caesars Palace*, *Circus Circus* and *The Luxor* for example) promises to offer us an ‘other-worldly’ experience and it pulls our ‘full attention away from the world of reality’ (Boje 2001, 16). Baudrillard describes Las Vegas as a place ‘that plunges us into this stupefied, hyperreal euphoria that we would not exchange for anything else...’ (Baudrillard 1994, 92). He also states that in Las Vegas the intensity of gambling is reinforced by the presence of the surrounding desert (Baudrillard 1989, 127). He contrasts the radiant heat of the desert and the ‘air-conditioned freshness of the gambling rooms’ (Baudrillard 1989, 128). ‘Gambling itself is a desert form, inhuman, uncultured, initiatory, a challenge to the natural economy of value, a crazed activity on the fringes of exchange’ (Baudrillard 1989, 128).

The exterior and interior environments of Las Vegas are impermanent and forever changing; casinos that are no longer considered modern are simply destroyed. ‘Las Vegas, perhaps more than any other city in the world, promotes a culture of reinvention. It’s a place where people come to start over, but it’s also a place where buildings never get old — they simply get demolished’ (Benston 2007, 1). Robert Venturi in a discussion of the scenography of the city has stated that few cities are as ‘explicitly theatrical’ as Las Vegas (Urcan, 2006). He has noted that *The Strip* in Las Vegas offers an immersive experience and is ‘a kind of Disneyland where you’re walking

through a *scenographic*, a kind of stage scenery where you're on the stage' (Weatherford 1998).

I found traces of hyperreality at Melbourne's Crown Casino too, but less extreme and not as palpable as in these descriptions. Nonetheless I experienced Crown Casino as a regulated, self sufficient, adult utopia, free from the crime of the streets. It is characteristically marketed through promotional material as a 'World of Entertainment' with its shopping, dining, gaming and luxurious accommodation. At no initial cost, one can visit this place, temporarily escaping one's own life. It creates an ideal reality like Disneyland or Las Vegas and presents itself as an amalgamation of all the places of pleasure in our society; a shopping mall, food court, pub/club, games arcade, etc. This place offers an 'other-worldly' experience, and has the potential to plunge the visitor into Baudrillard's 'stupefied hyperreal euphoria' or 'crazed activity on the fringes of exchange'.

After researching these glamorous and extreme gambling environments, I decided to then investigate more common, everyday sites to compare the ways they work to affect the visitor.



CONTEXT

# The Suburban Simulacrum

The research of Charles Livingstone came to interest me during my research of suburban gambling environments. Livingstone explains the appeal of gambling in these places. He states that the hotel venue with Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) presents a simulacrum (Livingstone 2005b, 201).

‘Clean paint, clean carpet, friendly staff, dining room with standard or sometimes a little up market pub food, handy automated teller machine in the foyer, ample parking, convenient location, free cappuccino, and sometimes snacks brought around as you play. Arguably, this is an improvement on the smoky, dim, suburban pubs with sticky carpet that previously inhabited the same location, now largely gone forever’ (Livingstone 2005b, 201).

It interested me that these gambling sites despite their relatively standard interiors are also sites of reinvention. They too present a simulacrum: what the hotel venue’s interior once was, no longer exists. They approximate a new space of cleanliness and convenience. These sites are modest and banal in comparison to Las Vegas or Crown. They are not as explicitly illusory or theatrical, but are appealing because they are clean, convenient and welcoming. I was attracted to researching the extreme, hyperreal gambling environments proposed by Baudrillard as well as the common, suburban sites discussed by Livingstone. Although at first glance the styles of these two environments seem vastly different, what they have in common is they provide a simulacrum of reality where people can engage in the act of gambling.

The work of Eco, Baudrillard, Venturi and Livingstone and their analyses of these environments influenced my researching of the gambling environment. This initial curiosity progressively developed into a more specific interest in the effects felt by the individual engaging with gambling at the casino, hotel or TAB. After researching these sites for a significant amount of time, my interest shifted to uncovering the underlying sense of despair that can be felt by the gambler. The performance grew from this: an exploration of the melancholy that can be felt by the individual as a result of engaging with gambling environments. I could not ignore the gambler who is living a life of misery and whose family is consigned to misery in consequence (Livingstone 2002). Whether the site is extraordinary or less extreme in style, the misery caused by gambling is a common experience. I discovered that the style of environment in which the individual chooses to engage with the act is almost irrelevant. After witnessing, reading and hearing about the negative effects of these sites, this became a significant theme of the performance. You cannot hear the sound of losing in these places; the reality of losing does not exist there. We are likely to hear the cheers of a winner celebrating but, never the opposite. Only when we leave the gambling site and reenter the ordinary, everyday world does the concept of losing and all we associate with it begin to have meaning.

CONTEXT

# Flanerie & Observation

In an article entitled *Walking in Sin City* Michael Peterson seeks to understand the spatial practices of the Las Vegas tourist. He explains that because Vegas is mostly pedestrianised space and so structured around sightseeing, the tourist is a wandering *flaneur*, engaged with ‘purposeless movement’ (Peterson 2006, 119 — 120). In my research I adopted the role of the flaneur to explore the Crown Complex. However, I soon began to realise that the Crown Complex did not agree with my intentions of ‘aimless but critical wandering’ (Peterson 2006, 120). Instead, I seemed constantly reminded of the gaming floor or to find myself at one of its entrances without realising. I was taunted and beckoned by the frequent and strategically positioned casino entrances. Eventually, I concluded that I cannot simply be the flaneur within this environment. I experienced that the casino controls how I navigate my way around the complex and to an extent, what I do.

After failing as the purposeless flaneur and submitting to the lure of the casino, I would observe what was happening there. On these visits I instinctively broke down my experience of observation into what I referred to as ‘scenes’. For example, when I was observing at the EGMs I would think ‘this is the *sad man at the EGM scene*’ or if I was at the bar I would think ‘this is the *me sitting alone at the bar scene*’. This created a sense that I was observing parts of a larger whole, which could only be absorbed and comprehended in fragments. My method of reducing the experience in order to navigate the place was in reaction to feeling as if visiting the casino could be infinite and never ending. Using this mechanism (breaking the experience into scenes) allowed me to focus and give structure to these visits by putting me in the position of spectator.

At other times I would enter the casino with intentions of being a participant in all that it had to offer. At times I did experience Baudrillard’s ‘stupefied, hyperreal euphoria’ when engaging with the ‘crazed activity’ of gambling. After being a participant at the casino I was able to recognise I was not immune to its immersive and seductive qualities. After one particular occasion having wasted a lot of time and money mindlessly playing on various EGMs convinced if I continued to play I would win, I was able to understand why some people become addicted to the casino experience. When observing as spectator, I was able to resume a critical position and consider/witness the negative consequence of engaging with this place. To differing degrees most visitors to the casino are also aware of these consequences and the misery that it can cause. However, when I have visited, the effective powers of the casino have come into play and taken hold. When this has happened I have disregarded the consequences and submitted to the experience.

CONTEXT

# Site Specificity

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This process of creating my material through both observing and being effected by a site, is grounded in methodologies associated with site-specific performance-making. Performance practitioners true to this practice such as Orlan and Brith Gof have produced and performed their work within operating theatres and dilapidated factories, provoking the audience to consider the meaning and significance of these sites (Allain & Harvie 2006, 149). Where my process differs from Orlan and Brith Gof is that while the research was undertaken within gambling environments, the performance material was developed in the studio and was ultimately performed within an apartment in the Eureka Tower. This involves a kind of 're-siting' of the work, different from traditional site-specific performance, since the final product is physically detached from the place under investigation.

Unlike Orlan and Brith Gof who produce and perform their work in the site under examination, Mark Dion's installation *On Tropical Nature* (1991) is more aligned to the process and form of my site-oriented practice. For this work Dion initially collected various plant and insect specimens from a rainforest near the base of the Orinoco River, Venezuela. These were transported and then displayed like works of art themselves in a gallery space in Sala Mendoza (Kwon 1997, 93). This kind of re-siting of found objects from the rainforest to the site of the gallery, is similar to my process of re-siting elements/objects of the gaming environment in the apartment. Miwon Kwon states that site-specific art 'is becoming more and more "unhinged" from the actuality of the site... both in a literal sense of physical separation of the art work from the location of its initial installation, and in a metaphorical sense as performed in the discursive mobilization of the site in emergent forms of site-oriented art' (Kwon 1997, 96). I would define myself as an artist who is part of this tendency to unhinge traditional site-specific art because the ideas I eventually presented in performance were initially conceived (although not installed) within the gaming environment.

Unlike site-specific practice there were no opportunities for 'repeated visits to or extended stays' (Kwon 1997, 100) at the apartment before the actual performance. Similarly, I never intended to engender a sense that there was an 'indivisible relationship between the work and its site' (Kwon 1997, 86).

Through this singular performance I wished to create a sense that the performance in the apartment had an 'unfixed impermanence, to be experienced as an unrepeatable and fleeting situation' (Kwon 1997, 91). I also intend to re-site this work again in the future, perhaps in a gambling environment or other location that is vastly dissimilar. A re-creation of this work would not be necessarily inauthentic, as it would for most traditional site-specific work. Rather, I am interested in a process of evolution of the performance 'where a project created under one set of circumstances might be redeployed in another without losing its impact — or, better, finding new meaning and gaining critical sharpness through re-contextualizations' (Kwon 1997, 104).

# Artistic Influences

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In the 2005 Melbourne International Festival of the Arts, Renato Cuocolo and Roberta Bosetti of IRAA theatre staged *Private Eye*. It was presented in various rooms in the hotel Grand Hyatt for one spectator at a time and the form of this performance was a strong influence on my work.

They state that they chose the hotel as performance site as it 'is felt as a place of passage, a place where one stops precariously during a trip. Hotels convey the idea of precariousness, of moving existence, and so the theme and central point of *Private Eye* is about the mobility of identity, about the journey through the variety of people that we are or that we could be' (Bosetti & Cuocolo 2005). My performance also explored this by presenting various people: some who we may know, some we don't, and others who could be ourselves.

Cuocolo and Bosetti explain that in the hotel room 'the lack of domesticity, the bright lights and anonymous furniture may come as a relief from what are often the false comforts of home. It may be easier to give way to sadness here than in a living room with wallpaper and framed photos...' (Bosetti & Cuocolo 2005). The apartment or hotel room is not a homely environment. In it we are not surrounded with personal items that provide a sense of comfort. It offers an escape to unfamiliar turf where we are surrounded by foreign objects and dislocated from the everyday. No longer grounded by what home provides, our emotions are heightened and skewed; we can give way to sadness, anger or whatever the emotion may be.

They state that one of the tasks 'of theatre is providing us with a stronger and more intense perception of reality itself' (Bosetti & Cuocolo 2005) which was the aim of my performance also. We can see countless anti-gambling campaigns, read about the moral implications or consequences of gambling and even witness the deflated or beaten gambler leaving the casino or TAB. I believe that we are however no longer alarmed by these things, but desensitized to them. My performance aimed to present an intensified world in which the effects of gambling could be directly explored and not dismissed.

As with my performance, in *Private Eye* the audience maintained a close relationship with the performer and the sense of privacy produced by the environment made for an intimate and immediate experience. We cannot achieve this same effect in the place 'built of bricks and mortar with a red curtain and graduated seats' (Bosetti & Cuocolo 2005). When staging a performance in an apartment or hotel we are allowing real life space to overlap with theatre space (Bosetti & Cuocolo 2005). The real life domestic interior of the apartment connected with the content and subjects of the performance, in a way that could not have been achieved elsewhere.

Visual artists Ed and Nancy Kienholz produced two mixed media tableaux that had an effect on the form and methodology of my performance. *The Merry-Go-World or Begat By Chance and the Wonder Horse Trigger* (1991 — 1994) is a room size carousel, decorated with horses, elephants and bright flashing lights. There is fairground music playing in the studio that transports us to the place of the carnival. The second tableau *The Hoerengracht* (1984 — 1988) is a life size recreation of a street brothel in Amsterdam. As we wander through the walkways of the environment we peer voyeuristically at the prostitutes framed by the windows.

The Kienholz's recreated and re-sited a merry-go-round and a red-light district in the gallery. Both of these life size environments are visually and

aurally enticing. The use of colour, lighting and sound initially captures our attention and we want to investigate them more closely. These two environments require active participation by the spectator to explore and become immersed in these places. We experience an other-worldly quality in the studio, a dislocation from the everyday. The playful and fun feelings that we associate with the place of the carnival are quickly deconstructed as we discover grotesque and confronting imagery in the merry-go-round's interior. When we look closely at the mannequin sex-workers in *The Hoerengracht*, we see the lifeless and haunted faces isolated in dirty and dingy rooms.

In the everyday world, these places evoke inquisitiveness in the spectator. In the gallery, we are curiously attracted to these constructed environments and then repelled, because they are not what we imagine them to be. The Kienholz attempt to change our perceptions of what the carnival and red-light district represent. In the gallery we do not experience the place under examination in the same way as we would in the everyday. When it is removed from its context it allows the site and what occurs there to be seen in a different way.

Unlike the Kienholz's, I did not physically recreate the casino but chose to use objects and sounds gathered from the gambling environment to allude to it. It was this process of experiencing a particular place, dislocated from its actual site that I was interested in, which the Kienholz achieve successfully.

By re-siting elements of the gambling environment I endeavored to create an effect where the site and practices that occur there could be experienced in a different way.

Artist Lynn Hershman describes Las Vegas as a place where 'air sticks to your throat like a web of wire net. Tinsel catches in your teeth. Neon signs advance and retreat against the night, pulsating in a disturbing after image like an electronic vibrator plunged in your brain. Las Vegas beats you, pounds you, like a never ending drum roll. Wacky and insulting, Las Vegas invades your soul' (Hershman 1975). I was drawn to this extreme description of Las Vegas being a place that 'beats you, pounds you' and 'invades you soul' because it implies a physical and psychic effect on the visitor. This notion of the gambling environment taking you over, affecting and controlling what you do was something that informed my own research project.

Hershman's *Double Portrait of Lady Luck* is a significant performance to mention as it too examined the gambling site. It was performed at *Circus Circus Casino*, Las Vegas on March 2, 1975 and ran for twelve hours. Lynn Hershman searched Las Vegas for someone who she believed embodied the concept of 'Lady Luck' and found her working in a bicycle act at *Circus Circus* (Hershman 1975). Her name was Lisa Charles and she was made the key actress in Hershman's performance. A replica of Lisa was cast in wax and the two were dressed in matching aqua angora costumes. The wax double and the actress were given one \$1,500 worth of chips with which to play roulette. Lisa was outdone by the mannequin: the mindless and emotionless double of herself. 'The actress bet on intuition and lost all but \$40; the sculpture bet via random pre recorded numbers and accrued \$1,640' (Hershman 1975). Hershman states that the performance was an investigation into the American mythology of chance and luck (Hershman 1975). She believes that 'Lady Luck' is the American myth and that she intended to 'exploit the physical image of the twentieth century deity' (Hershman 1975).

Whilst my performance did not occur within a casino site, or explicitly

explore themes of chance and luck, the results of Hershman's performance demonstrated what the characters in my performance were frustrated by; that the gambler cannot control whether they win or lose. Hershman selected Lisa Charles because she believed she embodied the concept of 'Lady Luck'; she looked like a winner. This however, was not the case. My performance explored the next chapter in the story: when the gambler leaves with little or no money, beaten by the casino, how are they affected? *Double Portrait of Lady Luck* teaches us that in the casino environment, the odds are against us, even if we appear to be a winner. My performance explored what occurs to the gambler once they have realised or become victim to that.

These diverse sources — theoretical writings, my own research method, performance/art works made by other artists — form the context from which this work emanates and which, I hope, it contributes by extending existing research on the construction of the gambling environment, the effects of visiting it, and performance theory and practice concerned with site specificity.

CONTEXT  
*Artistic  
Influences*



# Content

## (Part Three)

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**As you cannot hear the sound of losing**

Devised & performed by Jade Butler

Eureka Tower Melbourne, Apartment 4708

December 2, 2007

8.30pm

A performance consisting of text, image, sound and movement.

CONTENT

# Performance Transcript

# Performance

CONTENT

## Notes

## #1

### Happy People

CONTENT  
Performance  
Transcript

*In the living room a DVD is playing on the television. A diverse range of still images of people appear. A voice over makes extensive comment on the people in the pictures.*

#### (Image #1)

V/O: This is Chris, Chris is Indian and clean shaven.

He looks a little bit like a vampire, I think it's his haircut. His nails are clean and well shaped. He owns and manages the local Chinese takeaway restaurant. It looks like he raced home from work and had a really quick shower to get here on time.

Hang on... where's his wife? She's most likely looking after the kids!

His yellow t-shirt is fun, it's not too casual. He seems uncomfortable with that glass of Guinness in his hand; but he wants to appear to be drinking it, or at least enjoying it.

This is Sharni. Sharni is wearing a racy red halter. She dyes her hair blonde but, the colour is more like piss-yellow. It doesn't look good because her eyebrows are very dark. She loves having her nails done and wearing large glittery rings that she only ever buys on sale. Sharni chews a lot of gum and tries really hard to keep in shape.

Town babe? No... town bike!

Sharni wishes that she was American. She drinks a lot of OJ because it's the healthy option and introduces herself as

'Sharn: aspiring model/actor. Lovely to meet you!'

#### (Image #2)

V/O: This is Dean. Dean has a problem with lying.

He's an anxious kind of guy.

He's been going through some financial hardship.

He's trying to make a change in his life. He has two young children to a woman who he believes is impossible to live with. He disappears a lot, he disappoints people. He shaves his head because it's cheaper than getting regular haircuts. He never has any money in his bank account: he regularly fails to pay child support.

He thinks that the lady next to him is the definition of exotic.

He thinks that she will bring him luck, but she thinks that there's no such thing!

#### (Image #3)

V/O: This is Shane. Shane is an A grade, Aussie good bloke!

Shane is married and he has very thick dry hair. He has it trimmed very often at *Just Cuts*. He enjoys water sports and always appears to be sunburnt. The light blue patterned shirt he is wearing is from one of his favourite shops.

Shane likes shopping there because he believes that they offer excellent service and fitting clothing for the mature man! ...

## #1

### Happy People

CONTENT  
*Performance*  
*Notes*

When visiting Merimbula on the southeast coast of New South Wales I visited the local RSL Club to conduct site research. I was surprised to find that the place was buzzing with people and there were myriad entertainment options: TAB sports lounge, a restaurant/café, bingo in the function room, indoor bowls and a room of pokies machines. I had actively chosen to resist engaging with the frenzy of activity (primarily gambling related) and to sit quietly at a table near the bar. When I did so, I realised that this is apparently discouraged in these kinds of places; they wish to make it impossible to resist the lure of participating. The table I was sitting at had a plastic display unit filled with keno game guide brochures. I briefly looked at the content on how to play, but what really interested me was the photo on the front of the brochure.

The image is of a group of four friends in casual clothes with smiles on their faces. They have colourful drinks in their hands and the copy line printed below them states '*There's more fun in numbers!*' There isn't anything particularly objectionable about the photo; it isn't visually appealing or unappealing. The picture is an attempt at portraying ordinary people playing keno, having a fun and exciting time. However, for me the photo fails to capture a moment of anticipation and exhilaration. The image is far detached from the actual act of gambling and potential negative consequences of engaging with this activity.

I can't help but think that the people this advertisement is targeting are ones just like in the photo. Looking at the image I get the sense that keno is an average game for average people. It was far from the seductive gaming advertisement produced by more significant gambling establishments; such as the beautiful people and glamorous imagery that Crown Casino portrays. Regardless of how it is realised, gambling advertising's primary purpose is to promote gambling. It preys on people like me who choose to take some time out from the action, yet can't help but pick up the brochure that is begging to be looked at.

*Happy People* is a result of my curiosity with gambling advertising in general. Obviously the image of the 'happy gambler' is favoured in gambling advertising, yet in reality the individual engaged in an act of gambling is not always happy, excited or winning. I wanted to present a diverse collection of images of people gambling in order to emphasise that the gambler is not always content and engaged.

The images represented some happy people, some sad, some real images of people gambling and some fictional. When I walk through the casino observing particular individuals I always wonder are they: rich, poor, happy, sad, fighting with their mother, been waterskiing the day before etc. I extracted factual details that were evident in the image (e.g. — she's wearing a blue top) and combined these with fictional anecdotes about the individual.

When developing the text for this piece I was working with the assumption that each one of these people had a problem with gambling and that they weren't actually 'happy people' at all. Through the content of the text and tone

This is Lyn Scully. Lyn is obviously a brunette. Some would argue that she needs a new haircut and a nose job. She is wearing a bright blue top. Her beverage of choice is red lemonade. She is dependable because she doesn't mind being the designated driver. Lyn and Shane have two kids, but they've grown up now and moved away.

**(Image #4)**

V/O: This is Eric. Eric mostly wears slacks and parkers. He's not the kind of guy who is concerned with his appearance. He's an emotionally reserved person, yet still very popular! He's ambitious and mysterious. He's athletic and he loves a challenge. He places very high expectations upon himself, he feels as if he's got something to prove. He wants to show that he can be a man, that he is the man! Women throw themselves at him, but Eric has some commitment issues. He doesn't drink but he smokes a lot, which may explain his lack of appetite. He's American and he enjoys long baths before he retires for the evening. He's really good with kids but he couldn't handle the responsibility of his own.

**(Image #5)**

V/O: Lyn is Korean and a lady of leisure. Her husband is a high earning businessman, he travels the world and she just follows him around. She doesn't mind, she is never bored, in fact she loves the lifestyle! As long as she's got a lot of money to entertain herself with. She prefers clean ironed shirts, she matches them with a-line skirts. That's the extent of her wardrobe. Except for a *Sfida* matching tracksuit set for exercise time. The man sitting next to her name is Maurice, that's all she knows of him. She's a character: people love to be in her company. Yet she does have a competitive streak. Her favourite meal is honey chicken but not done in the traditional way, just the stuff you buy from shopping centre food courts. Some say... her life lacks meaning and purpose.

of the voiceover, I intended to represent the sense of melancholy or misery that can be felt by the individual when they have lost and been beaten by the casino or gambling environment.

CONTENT  
*Performance*  
*Notes*

#2

**Hot Air**

CONTENT

Performance

Transcript

*Jade stands at the apex of the living room. The windows are floor-to-ceiling and look out onto Flinders street station and beyond. Interrupting the panoramic view a colourful helium balloon with 'jackpot' printed on it that she is grasping.*

Jade: To think of the true stories that make up my life, sometimes makes me sad. Every Wednesday night Dipper and his lady friend come to play to slots. He has a 'Carlton'. She sips on a champagne. Mid-conversation she pulls me over and says:

'Darlin', settle a dispute. Which way is it to China?' 'That way? Because you can dig your way there'.

...

So, it's not like a *boo hoo* kind of sad. More like a gnawing, impossible state of suspended melancholy.

...

So I started seeing someone about it.

She tells me to... 'Relax! Take it all in! And then arm yourself with attitude.

You know that attitude of slight arrogance, slight aristocrat'. She believes in synergy, positive talk, happy vibes. She says to toss all of my cash on my bed, to lay on it and roll in it. Then to go and take a bubble bath and plan a delightful dinner & show with my man.

...

Sometimes things cannot be solved like this.

Sometimes things do not simply disappear.

#2

**Hot Air**

This scene begins with the retelling of a true story told to me by a friend who worked the bar in an exclusive gambling room at Crown Casino. She said that every Wednesday evening a prominent ex-AFL player would bring a lady friend in to play on the slot machines. They would come at the same time and order the same drinks every week. I became interested in and saddened by their mundane ritual, that this was how they chose to spend their leisure time.

*Hot Air* was performed at the apex of the living-room, my figure interrupting the view to the soaring space. I intended to contrast the floating 'jackpot' balloon's bright and garish quality, with the heavy and hopeless tone of the text. It was as if the balloon deserved to be free outside in the open, soaring space. It was however enclosed and entrapped in the apartment, like us. The content of this monologue addressed feelings of melancholy caused by the gambling environment. I wanted to convey that something bleak and darker was troubling this character and that not even the colourful shiny balloon that we normally associate with feelings of pleasure, could console them. The final line in the monologue further exemplified this idea; that sometimes feelings of misery cannot be solved by trivial remedies such as taking a bubble bath or planning a dinner date.

CONTENT

*Performance*

*Notes*

### #3

#### Deactivating

##### CONTENT

##### Performance

##### Transcript

*The coffee table is covered with playing cards of different colours and sizes. Tables made from the jumbo-sized cards are partly assembled on and around the coffee table, but have not been finished. Jade kneels at the table and pushes on a few cards one by one to reveal a small hole cut through the centre of each.*

When browsing in an op-shop I found a second-hand deck of Crown Casino cards. The text on the back of the box was as follows:

*'Every deck of cards is a unique part of gaming history. This one played out its life at Crown Casino. If these cards could talk imagine the stories they could tell. Wondrous tales of good fortune or otherwise, Of casual flutters or even monumental punts. But now they're retired and in accordance with government requirements a hole has been drilled through to prevent their future use. This is your memento of what we trust was a very enjoyable visit to Melbourne's Crown Casino'.*

### #3

#### Deactivating

The hole drilled through the deck signifies that the deck is no longer an object of opportunity, of potential riches. Once deactivated the pack becomes dispensable, obsolete to Crown. It retires and then waits for another owner, like myself, with a renewed interest and use for it. It now serves as a memento or souvenir to take home and remind you of your 'enjoyable' visit to Crown Casino. I find it curious that the text speaks of 'wonderful tales of good fortune' but not the opposite of this. This 'World of Entertainment' depicts itself as a place that offers an exhilarating and ideal experience. Hypothetically, if 'these cards could talk', I doubt they would only tell stories of winning gamblers; but also devastating tales of bad fortune and misery. However, the language on this deck does not suggest this. Much like the casino, it does not wish to acknowledge itself as a place where a significant number of people experience bad fortune. The coffee table in the apartment covered in playing cards of different colours and sizes disturbed the clean and ordered environment. The cards that I 'deactivated' were handled with care as I reenacted this strange action of punching a hole from the middle of the card. By re-siting these objects away from the gambling context I intended for the cards to be seen differently. By reenacting this action I intended for the cards to no longer be an object associated with potential riches but disengaged and valueless. I intended to create a sense of otherworldliness and irony, as these jumbo cards are just novelty items and are not actually used in the casino or seen as objects of the everyday.

CONTENT

*Performance*

*Notes*

#### #4

#### Consider Yourself Happy (?)

CONTENT  
Performance  
Transcript

*Jade stands next to a smaller coffee table on the opposite side of the living room. She addresses the audience directly and presents A2 cue cards that exemplify key words and concepts of her speech. Her presentation resembles a motivational seminar. The bold text below signifies the text on each cue card.*

Jade: *(She holds a cue card)* Our dear friend, Francis Bacon, Whose wisdom was certainly bigger than England, Once thought about happiness.

He wisely concluded that people are happy if their occupations are in harmony with their nature and abilities. In other words, if you are lucky to do what you're really good at and even to be paid for it, **consider yourself happy.**

*(She changes cue cards)*

Now, **'Really good' means good results achieved easy and often.** Those results become a source of a constant joy and mental and psychological satisfaction, which give the life a meaning and quality. We are all here today because we all love and enjoy what we do.

It's not very easy to become really good at, it's not very hard either!  
But it can become a source of happiness for anybody willing to give it a chance.

*(She changes cue cards)*

All it wants in return is an **open and inquisitive mind, Regular practice in your free time, patience and common sense.**

*(She changes cue cards)*

**Discipline is a must. Greed, of course, is out of the question.**

So if you aren't happy with what you do in your life, this is an alternative worth considering!

It can instill, at least, a small portion of happiness back into your life.

#### #4

#### Consider Yourself Happy (?)

CONTENT  
Performance  
Notes

The text performed in this piece was taken from *Dice control for Casino Craps – Gambling Disciples of God* by Yuri Kononenko. In this instruction guide for gamblers, Kononenko discusses the notion of happiness and states that if we want to instill happiness in our lives, we should consider playing craps to win (Kononenko, 1998). The style of language Kononenko uses attempts to empower the individual. He discusses techniques to improve our craps skills, but these tips seem to become more urgent and monumental in tone; in his opinion its playing craps to win that can make us happy. What was of interest to me when reading this text is that the language is so disjointed and awkward that it causes confusion about what he’s actually taking about, perhaps because he is Russian and English is his second language. I also question why Kononenko cares so much about our happiness?

By presenting this monologue in the style of a motivational seminar and addressing the audience directly as participants, I wished for the audience to see the humor and absurdity of Kononenko’s construction of language and message. I intended for the style of this scene to create a strange contrast with the domestic interior; it was something you would not expect to see in this style of environment. If Kononenko truly believes that if we can be good at playing craps, we will win and subsequently be happy, then he is also conceding the opposite; that if we can’t play craps well, we will lose, and subsequently be unhappy. I hoped that the trace of this opposite could be gleaned by the audience.

#5

**Something Easy**

CONTENT  
Performance  
Transcript

*Lined up on the breakfast bar in the kitchen are five mystery alcoholic drinks in different glasses. Jade is standing behind them; a sip is taken from each and a memory recollected.*

Jade: *(She takes a sip)* Cask Wine...  
A visit to Mum's pantry.

*(Takes a sip)*  
Mojito... Purple suede lounges and the smell of artificial sea salt being pumped into the air.

*(Takes a sip)*  
Chardonnay... Cardonay, Shardie. Lunching with women & never with men!

*(Takes a sip)*  
Corona...  
With a slice of lemon to Mexico City and without one just to the border.

*(Takes a sip)*  
Ramos Gin Fizz...  
This is certainly one of those moments. I'm on Family Feud, Bert's asked the question and I simply don't answer it. I just don't say anything within the time limit. Just a mute and not a winning one!  
It's not like its hard or anything. Everybody can come up with something.

You just say anything, anything that comes to mind: Tomato, San Francisco.  
But I just say nothing of anything.

This is certainly one of those regretful moments.

## #5

### Something Easy

This performance piece was a result of researching various suburban pubs and RSLs with EGMs. In these suburban gambling environments a vast variety of alcohol is available to patrons. In these clean and welcoming sites I would sit near the bar and observe people emerging from the enclosed subspace where the EGMs were. They would approach the bar to purchase their beverage of choice and then be absorbed back into the maze-like site of machines. I concluded that consuming alcohol in the gambling environment has the potential to contribute to its immersive and seductive qualities. Watching these people I would occupy myself by considering my personal connection to the drink they had chosen. Certain drinks triggered specific memories and for me opened possible pathways to the state of the person. I performed this monologue in the kitchen of the apartment, isolated behind the breakfast bar. The colourful drinks lined up in various different glasses stuck out like foreign objects in the sparse kitchen space. They visually disrupted the clean and ordered space. As the silent audience gathered on the other side I recollected these personal memories and imagined myself back in the gaming environment.

CONTENT

*Performance*

*Notes*

**#6**

**Looming Fear & Inevitability (Walking to Crown) / Part 1**

CONTENT

*Performance*

*Transcript*

*In the entrance hall Jade holds a piece of blue felt against the wall. The felt image is of a worried woman and a thought bubble with a dollar sign in it above her head. She then begins a choreographic sequence which begins small and concentrated. As it progresses it becomes more physically involved and the felt image falls to the floor. The movements include (but are not limited to) falling, reaching, smiling, strangling, snatching and kicking.*

## #6

### Looming Fear & Inevitability (Walking to Crown) / Part 1

CONTENT  
*Performance*  
*Notes*

Moving towards the apartment's subspaces, the choreography performed in the corridor was inspired by photos I found of people engaged in the act of gambling in *The Encyclopedia of Gambling* (Arnold 1977). After examining a selection of these images, what was prevalent was the image of the happy gambler in the act of reaching over the craps or roulette table to pull their winning chips toward them.

This reaching-style action resonated for me and then became the primary movement for the choreography. What frustrated me was the fact that the photos did not represent any person displaying a sense of loss, disappointment or misery; only people winning, experiencing Baudrillard's 'stupefied hyperreal euphoria'. In reaction to this I chose to represent the concept of *losing* in the choreography through the physical actions of falling, snatching, strangling and kicking.

The image of the woman's face used in the choreography was part of a larger body of work of hand-made felt images I had made as part of the research process that unfortunately, were not appropriate for the apartment environment. After reading the stories of compulsive gamblers and the unhappiness which resulted from their addictions, I felt inclined to make felt-collage pictures illustrating their stories. The naivety of the medium of felt was used to offset the tragedy of their stories. I was satisfied that that phase of work was represented, albeit on a small scale, through this single image.

#6

**Looming Fear & Inevitability (Walking to Crown) / Part 2**

CONTENT

Performance

Transcript

*When the choreography comes to an end, Jade begins the following monologue. She walks backwards down the hall, moving away from the audience. She takes small anxious steps along the wall, only when speaking.*

Jade: The river is to the right.

To the left, there is a perimeter of space that is not so easily identified.

'A seedy side of town', maybe? It's uncharted and unruly. I think it's constructed of awkward overpasses and abandoned hotels with boarded up windows!

I do not venture down those parts, so I cannot tell you much about them.

Although I have looked at them, from a distance, through a window.

...

After a long pedestrian crossing, I am now just meters away. I estimate about thirty, which isn't very many.

...

On the left there are now restaurants.

White tablecloths and clean/crisp wine glasses,

Waiting to be dirtied by the most serious of gluttons. I am thankful for these restaurants, They serve as a shield between myself and 'that' side of town. But really, that's the least of my concerns.

...

When inside the complex I make aimless visits to the food court, repeatedly buying \$2.20 samosas. I think that they are 'yummy'. I browse in the empty shops, which are too expensive to buy from. I pretend I could afford it, if I really wanted to. I listen to the stories of the sales staff and leave informing them that 'I'll think about it'.

...

As I near closer to the entry of this destination, I say to myself:

'Here goes nothing!'

#6

**Looming Fear & Inevitability (Walking to Crown) / Part 2**

CONTENT  
*Performance*  
*Notes*

The content of this monologue refers to the area we can see from the apartment windows: part of the soaring space. It is the journey that I take along the Yarra River when walking towards Melbourne's Crown Casino. The person in this monologue is recollecting the experience of walking to Crown, endeavoring to be a flaneur; 'strolling at an overtly leisurely pace, allowing oneself to be drawn by intriguing sights or to dawdle in interesting places...' (Shields 1994, 65). However the monologue reveals that the visitor to this area is not free to go in any direction they please; the river prevents us from turning right and if we are to turn left we would only find ourselves lost within the underdeveloped and uninhabited territory that surrounds the casino. This area to the left, the fringes of South Melbourne, seems to have failed at keeping up with the development that has occurred along the river.

The monologue intends to convey the sense that once past the Southbank food court there is no turning around; I experience a sense of dislocation as I move further away from the city, to enter another city of a very different kind. I have had the experience when walking to Crown, of becoming trapped within the streams of pedestrians and tourists who are also on their way down this path. I walk at the same pace as them, getting caught up in their momentum. I pretend that I am also experiencing the excitement of visiting this area for the first time; the slick restaurants, the playful water-fountains combined with the promise of what is ahead. At the entry of the complex I begin to feel concern for them and I know our pleasant exchange is ending. Once inside Crown I'm left to my own defenses, the faces made familiar on the street have now disappeared. I find I am nothing like a flaneur but controlled by the casino as to where I go and what I do.

As I deliver this monologue, I am walking slowly backwards down the narrow and enclosed entry hall of the apartment. I only speak whilst stepping backwards in an attempt to convey that the act of walking within this area is not something I control; it is automated and mechanical. I intended to convey a sense of frustration in this monologue because this journey always concludes the same way. I intend to begin as the exploring flaneur, but am led to the casino gaming floor without necessarily realising what has happened.

#7

**Not a Bank!**

CONTENT  
Performance  
Transcript

*The sound of a horse race call murmurs from the small bathroom. The mirror is covered with small flickering lights that illuminate the room. Jade stands next to the toilet and aggressively trims an artificial fern in a beige pot.*

Jade: *He gets her to ask me if they can borrow some money. 'What's it for?'*

...

Nappies, Cigarettes, Beer because the football is on and they want to have a drink. That's a lie but, I say yes anyway.

...

I approach the counter and I always get the same man.

...

He says 'What can I do for you?'

I say 'I just wanna put some money into someone's account'.

He says 'What's the account number?'

I say 'It's...' Whatever the account number is

He says 'How much?'

I say \$10 dollars, \$20 dollars, whatever the amount is.

He says 'Pop the pin in there thanks'.

I pop the pin in.

He says 'All done!' And hands me a small white piece of paper...

I text *them*. 'It's in, X'.

The cross is a kiss.

#7

**Not a Bank!**

This monologue was performed in a small dark bathroom in which a horse race call was playing from a radio. The audience was free to enter the subspace or just peer in as I trimmed an artificial fern. I delivered the piece of text next to the toilet and the room was dimly lit by small battery operated lights fixed to the mirror. Specific details of the story were deliberately excluded and it was presented in an ambiguous and disjointed manner. The true story was about a friend who lives interstate asking to borrow money from me on a regular basis. I would usually agree and the exchange would then occur. He would request that I deposit it into his TAB account and not at a bank. This uncomfortable experience would put me into these gambling environments, for purposes other than gambling or research. I found that depositing money into a tab account is not 'simple and convenient' (Tabcorp Holdings LTD N.D) as the website states it to be and the monologue demonstrated why.

I intended for this scene in the bathroom to have a sense of intimacy and confinement between myself and the audience. It was cluttered by the combination of the lighting on the mirror, the sound of the race call and the artificial vegetation. This matrix of effective elements contributed to an other-worldly experience. I came to use these objects in the performance when researching what properties are evident within the casino interior. I found that artificial vegetation, staged lighting and use of sound/music were ubiquitous. Examining these properties I found them appealing and, by re-siting them outside of the casino, I intended to allude to the gaming environment and what is the norm there. I hoped that the juxtaposition of the story and setting would create an other-worldly experience.

CONTENT  
*Performance*  
*Notes*

#8

**Electronic Gaming Machine**

CONTENT  
Performance  
Transcript

*In the guest bedroom two single beds are upturned and propped against the walls. There is a pile of coloured card on the floor with a letter printed on each. Jade begins to recite a poem and as she continues laying each letter out one by one, she spells out the subject of her poem. The sound of a subsonic drone heightens the monologue's monotony.*

Jade: E is for Energetic, you're so lively, you never switch off; I always know when you're around!  
L is for Lovable, when I'm with you, you're the only thing who matters.  
E is for Enchanting, oh how you lure me in, you light up the room. I just cannot resist!  
C is for Courageous.  
T is for Tough, you never let me win easily; you teach me the meaning of persistence.  
R is for Relaxed, I am, so are you?  
O is for Old.  
N is for Naughty, when I walk away sometimes you give the next person what I've been so patiently waiting for and needing!  
I is for Important, important to me at least in a bizarre kind of way.  
C is for Complicated, I can never read you and predict what you will do next.  
G is for Gentle, you take pleasure in the way I rub your belly and speak to you in romantic tones.  
A is for Ambitious, no, ambiguous actually, you aren't really ambitious at all!  
M is for Moral.  
I is for Impassioned, when the time is right, you become so animated and energized and I really enjoy that.  
N is for Neat, compact and clean, exact and reserved.  
G is for Gifted, you have this siren like attraction.  
M is for Mysterious, because you make me live for the moment, like no one else can.  
A is for Adaptable.  
C is for Complicated, when I'm with you, you're the only one who matters and I don't know if it's like that for you!  
H is for Healthy, you're never off beat or having a bad day.  
I is for Intelligent, you're quick and constantly keep me guessing.  
N is for Natural.  
E is for Entertaining, you never fail to keep me around for very long periods of time.

## #8

### Electronic Gaming Machine

CONTENT  
*Performance*  
*Notes*

The idea for this acrostic poem about the Electronic Gaming Machine was inspired by the research of Charles Livingstone. I was particularly fascinated with his discussion of problem gamblers treating EGMs as human subjects; the gambler becoming emotionally engaged with the inanimate object. 'Some would...rub the machine's belly, speak to it in romantic tones, or otherwise convert the object into a virtual subject' (Livingstone 2005a, 528). I question whether this behavior results from desperation, exhilaration or something not so easily defined?

I wished to explore the imagined emotional connection that is developed between the subject (the compulsive EGM player) and the object (the EGM) in this scene. I was perplexed and disturbed with some of Livingstone's findings on the behavior of compulsive gamblers;

'Problem gamblers comment frequently about tricking the machine into paying out by adopting behaviour that the machine will 'recognise' as that of a winner.

This may take the form of counting button pushes and upping the bets every ninth play... inserting particular bank notes or rubbing the machine's belly. Whatever the tactic, it requires the very active use of the player's imagination to construct the machine as an interlocutor who can read and reward these arcane signs, gestures and insertions' (Livingstone 2005b, 207).

The gambler withdraws from the external world within these sites that Livingstone describes as 'colourful places filled with cheeping EGMs, ... often laid out to provide nooks and crannies, producing what regular players often describe as the illusion of sociability without the need to talk to anyone' (Livingstone 2005a, 525). Is it this feeling of detachment from the outside world that drives the compulsive gambler to interact in this way towards the machine? I understand the EGM to be just a machine that essentially takes my money away and inevitably gives me nothing in return. However, for the compulsive EGM gambler it does not appear this way at all.

By this point in the performance, the audience was becoming further entrenched in the apartment's flattened and private spaces. I performed this scene in the guest bedroom; on my knees laying out each letter at a time. The sound of the drone underscored the repetitive style of the poem. The two beds were turned on their sides, leaning up against the wall. This was done to suggest a sense of disturbance within the room; that it was not a comfortable or calm place. The poem reflected my interest in the illogical behavior adopted by the EGM gambler. Its language romanticises the EGM and highlights the irrational state in which these machines can put the individual.

#9

**Switching Off**

CONTENT

Performance

Transcript

*This final monologue takes place in the master bedroom. Bright plastic sheeting is draped over all of the furniture. On what appears to be the bed is a large pile of gambling chips. Jade stands over them. Two bedside lamps light the room.*

Jade: Fleeting because it dissipates so swiftly. Empty because we are left destitute and hollow.

Fleeting and Empty...

This barren environment of barrenness offers us nothing but;  
fleeting & empty,  
swift & hollow,  
momentary & futile fucking pleasures!

*(Jade then throws all of the chips up into the air)*

... A cheer!

We hear the sound of someone winning,  
Someone celebrating victoriously!

... You want to know what the easiest thing in the world to do is?

The easiest thing in the world is to lose. Losing is the easiest thing to do.

Losing is fucking easy!

And it's about time that we all accepted that,

And learnt to co-exist with those who parade their blue ribbons.

*Jade moves over to the bedside tables and taps on the base of the lamps 3 times to dim the lighting level from medium, to high and then out. She exits the apartment.*

## #9

### Switching Off

CONTENT  
*Performance*  
*Notes*

The furniture in the master bedroom is concealed with bright colourful plastic sheeting that has the text 'Casino Nights' repeatedly printed on it. On the bed there is a large pile of gambling chips. Through the presence of the objects, I intended for this subspace to no longer appear like a bedroom and create the strongest experience of otherworldliness.

The character presented in this piece addressed a frustration with the momentary and fleeting experience of gambling. She expressed an aggravation with being unable to control whether we win or lose when gambling. In the middle of the monologue the character aggressively throws all of the chips off the bed up into the air in what would usually be an action induced by a 'stupefied, hyperreal euphoria'. I intended to challenge what this action represents when dislocated from the casino site. The character imagines that she hears people cheering and states that it is the sound of someone winning. In this scene I wanted the audience to hear the sound of someone who has been affected by the gambling environment, the frustration of a person who has experienced losing. The character addresses the audience directly and says to them: 'losing is the easiest thing in the world to do and it's about time we all accepted that!' I then dimmed the bedside lamps, tapping the base three times, reminiscent of the action of the tapping performed when playing on the screen of an EGM. The audience was then directed out onto the balcony by my assistant.

Looking down on the city from 47 floors up, I hoped that they would be reminded of our exclusion from it and the quality of the controlled and regulated apartment environment. No longer enclosed by flat and intimate space, but now physically part of the soaring space. From this position I intended that the view to the outside would no longer be seductive, but monstrous and unruly. I hoped that what the audience was initially attracted to from the window, only forty minutes before, they would now be repelled by.



# Conclusion

# Critical Evaluation

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## Performance

The primary aim of this research project was to establish a definition of the casino within performance/theatre parameters. I initially intended to formulate an analysis of the use of stage craft elements, presence of character-play and define gambling as a performative act. However as I began my research, I found these ideas no longer of interest to me as they felt obvious and derivative of other work that I read. After repeatedly visiting the casino and other sites where gambling occurs, TABs and RSLs for example, for observation, my interests shifted and I moved away from wanting to define the casino within performance/theatre parameters.

What came to interest me were the effects that the gambling site seems to have on the individual. As the theoretical research progressed Baudrillard's notion of 'hyperreal euphoria' seemed to better encapsulate what the effects of the environment were, than the simple theatrical conventions I had begun with.

This led me to reject my original idea of performing in a formal theatrical setting with a distinct spectator/performer division. As the project progressed I decided that I did not want the audience to be physically dislocated from the performance (as in most theatre) but neither fully immersed within the environment, as the visitor to the casino/gambling environment is. I wanted the audience to get a sense of the gambling site in a controlled environment without the extreme immersion that can occur in these places. This led to my choosing the Eureka Tower apartment as a performance site because, for me, it was a place that held similarities to the casino/gambling site. While it did not necessarily induce a 'hyperreal euphoria' for the audience its effect was significant nonetheless. It was a place far removed from the everyday and once the performative material and re-sited objects were introduced, I intended for it to offer a sense of immersion and 'other-worldliness'. The apartment gave the spectator the freedom to be as immersed or removed as they desired.

The objects/images/devices that interested me in the casino were the loss of the value of money, sense of time, lack of natural light, manipulation of space, fake vegetation and aural and visual bombardment. It was the combination of these elements that I felt created a sense of 'other-worldliness' and disconnection from the everyday in the casino. No longer working within a traditional theatre space I removed and re-sited these elements to allude to the gambling environment within the apartment. In the performance I wanted to examine what role these objects play in their site of origin. Because of their abundance in these places I feel that we tend to not notice them, but by framing them in this context and drawing attention to them I hoped the audience would experience their effects in the apartment and also question their presence in the gambling environment.

Whilst performing with these objects I was reminded of where I had found them and why I was so intrigued by them. However, once the objects were removed from the gambling environment and re-sited, I felt that some of their impact was lost; perhaps their presence was too subtle? I feel that more work is needed with these objects and this process of re-siting to further examine how they contribute to the sense of hyperreality of the gambling environment. I'd like to develop this idea further, explicitly recreating a gambling environment within the apartment in an attempt to forcefully induce a

CONCLUSION

*Critical*

*Evaluation*

‘hyperreal euphoria’ and wholly immerse the audience within the site.

I am satisfied that I didn’t present this work within a traditional theatrical setting as initially proposed because it would not have been appropriate for the style of performance I intended. The apartment was a semi-immersive site that allowed me to shift from including to excluding the audience. This shifting in and out of immersion is a phenomenon I had experienced in the casino and, one that I wanted to recreate in the performance. This was risky because I had never experimented with this style of spectator/performer dynamic before. However I believe it was successful and well suited to the work and the environment in which it was presented.

Another important aim of the research, articulated at the outset was to understand how the casino is constructed to transform the individual’s behaviour. To help develop a perspective on this I researched various facets of the history of gambling and different forms of gambling (blackjack, slot machine’s, betting on horse racing for example) and how they have developed and been documented over time. I viewed films that are set in the casino or site of gambling, varying from *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965) to *Casino Royale* (2006). I was able to conclude that these styles of films usually glorify and romanticise gambling and that the site is typically represented as glamorous and exhilarating. I however, was realizing that I did not want to produce a performance that did this. I began to consider the casino or gambling site as a place that has the potential to cause significant misery and despair to those who visit it.

I collected photographs and images of people engaged in the act of gambling. I was curious that the people in the images were typically represented as happy/engaged and I wanted to explore how this is not always the case. My desire to represent the gambler who is experiencing despair as a result of engaging with the gambling environment was growing stronger. The actions and body language of the people in these images inspired and was used as the basis of the choreography in part one of *Looming Fear & Inevitability*.

I researched stories of recovering problem gamblers in Gambler’s Anonymous literature. I was so affected by them that this was when I consciously decided that I wanted the misery of the gambler to be a significant theme of the performance. What resulted from reading these stories was a series of images made from felt that depicted their struggles (featured in *Looming Fear & Inevitability*) and portions of the performance dialogue throughout.

In each scene of the performance a character was presented who was expressing differing degrees of misery resulting from engaging with the act of gambling. It was intended that this melancholic tone of the performance would contrast against the luxurious and slick apartment. The audience was intentionally kept at an emotional distance from the characters as they changed quickly with each scene. They were similarly kept at a physical distance, as I performed behind the kitchen bench or positioned awkwardly in the small bathroom where the audience could not comfortably enter.

The shifts that occurred within my research were significant. I initially began with an analysis of gambling within theatre parameters, this developed into a consideration of the construction and effects of the gambling site. My focus also shifted from a general interest in the experience of the gambler, to

being more specifically concerned with the misery that gambling can cause.

I wanted to present what is typically unrepresented in these sites; how the individual is effected once they are away from the extraordinary and hyperreal environment. The insight that the research generated was that the effects of these sites are significant and I intended for the performance to reflect this. I was struck that the images I had collected of the happy and engaged gambler contradicted the stories I was reading that revealed the reality of the struggles of the compulsive gambler. I still continue to question why the problem gambler does not see how these immersive and hyperreal sites cause such misery and feel that this 'illusion' needs to be explored with further work.

I conclude that although there is a lot of literature that discusses gambling behaviour and why people gamble, there is much less research on the style of the gambling environment, it's sense of hyperreality, the illusion it creates and the resultant misery/loss that can be experienced by the gambler. By researching the gambling environment through performance I hope that this work does contribute to an understanding of gambling in this way, and that it may point to further research to be conducted on the relation between gambling, site, hyperreality and misery/melancholy.

CONCLUSION  
*Critical*  
*Evaluation*

### **Exegesis**

The research process undertaken involved me in a very broad range of modalities; reading about the social impact of EGMS, collecting gaming paraphernalia and gambling at the casino for example. While this did, I think, make for a dynamic performance, since the diverse materials supported the fragmented and disparate 'scene-style' of the piece, when it came to writing the exegesis, this breadth of approach made things quite complicated. This eclectic exploration had generated a vast amount of information and ideas. Wanting to express all of this in the written document was perhaps too ambitious. The material and subject matter had become too broad and I struggled to gather all of the perspectives that had contributed to my thinking, in a way that could truly illuminate the performance work. Perhaps a reevaluation of the research aims earlier on, when the project began to move in a different direction would have focused the breadth of the research, making it more contained and its outcomes clearer. Furthermore, as the exegesis and performance were not produced and developed simultaneously, the exegesis unfortunately seems to be detached from the greater part of the work, the performance. This tenuous relation between the two was not intended. If I was to do this again, I would produce the exegesis in conjunction and at the same period of time as making the performance in hope of creating a more harmonious relation between the two.

# Conclusion

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When I began conducting site research at Melbourne's Crown Casino, I experienced that it portrays itself as a slick and glamorous place and wishes for us to believe that if we gamble there, it will be an exhilarating and exciting experience. In my experience this mystique quickly dissolved as once I inhabited it and experienced all that it claims to offer, I realised that the casino is an artificial, disorienting and isolating place. I then decided to investigate common, everyday gambling sites to compare how they are constructed to affect the visitor.

After conducting my research in this diverse range of sites — Crown Casino, suburban TABs, rural RSLs with EGMs — interchanging between spectator and participant, my interest shifted from the construction of the site, to uncovering and exploring the underlying sense of despair that can be felt by the gambler. Whether the gambling environment is Baudrillard's realm of ecstatic hyperreality or Livingstone's suburban simulacrum, what is common to these sites are the feelings of melancholy, misery and unhappiness that can be caused to the gambler by visiting. I presented a performance that represented the gambler as not always happy, euphoric or content. In the casino or gambling environment, the odds are against us. My performance endeavored to explore what occurs to the gambler once they have realised or become victim to that.

In the apartment, through a matrix of effective elements, I sought to produce an experience of otherworldliness to create a feeling of dislocation and removal from the everyday. Through the effects of the highly designed, seductive and immersive apartment I intended to produce an experience similar to visiting the casino environment without the spectators being entirely immersed in the environment. Like the casino or other gambling environment, I hoped to reveal that the apartment environment is not what we initially believe it to be. We can perceive it as both luxurious and domestic yet, discover it as a sparse, unhomey and isolating place.

I intended to explore the contradictions at work within the apartment; the unstable tensions between the flat and soaring space, the luxury environment and domestic interior, the domestic interior and the unhomey environment.

I was able to conclude that I cannot simply be the flaneur within and around this environment; the casino can take over and control how I navigate my way around and what I do. I have aligned my work with Ed and Nancy Kienholz, IRAA Theatre and Lynn Hershman as other artists who explore the construction and effect of site. I have defined my practice as site-oriented art engaged in a process of 're-siting' and unhinging traditional site-specific art. I have highlighted how this process of 're-siting' the work differs from traditional site-specific performance because the final product is physically detached from the place under investigation. From this performance work, I intend to re-site the performance in order to find new meaning and gain critical sharpness through a re-contextualization (Kwon 1997, 104). I am also committed to continuing this research of the gambling site to develop this performance so that it perhaps explores a diverse range of perspectives of the effects of this site.

I have highlighted how these gambling sites do not wish to acknowledge that they are places that have the potential to cause a significant number of

## CONCLUSION

### *Conclusion*

people to experience disappointment and bad fortune. I used performance to represent the experience of misery that can be caused by the gambling environment, which is completely absent from the representation of gambling produced and promoted by these sites.

I hope this project will also contribute to existing research on the construction of the gambling environment and the effects of visiting these sites. I also hope this methodology of ‘unhinging’ site specificity will contribute to performance discourse and assist other art practitioners who are interested with a similar process.

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