

EVERYDAY REBELLIONS

11 MAY – 8 JUNE 2013

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DANICA CHAPPELL (MELB) JOAN JONAS (USA), KITTY KRAUS (DE), DANE MITCHELL (NZ),
VIRGINIA OVERELL (MELB), DANAÉ VALENZA AND SIMON MCGUINNESS (MELB)

CURATED BY EMILY CORMACK

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Inside every atom there is an agitation. Mitochondriac urges generate cellular energy with relentless persistence. This inexhaustible dynamism is the grist in our mill: it is the solid we push up against as we give and take form.

To allow something to simply 'become', to find its own form propelled entirely by its own innate volition runs counter to the striated nature of civic society. It is almost uncivilised. Akin to a base wildness, like bulldozing buildings, errant immorality or radical, anarchic freedoms, this relinquishing of control allows form to extend beyond its function. Instead, matter is encouraged to take its own form and sit how it may, without the back supports and braces of our controlling ways.

Everyday Rebellions at Gertrude Contemporary begins in the front gallery with a contamination. Victoria Overell's spilt mixture of copper sulphide and water collects under foot, to be spread marking, virus-like throughout the galleries. There are copper coins oxidising in salt water, endlessly bubbling and staining, eating themselves with their interminably hungry activation. To touch Overell's shroud-like wall-hanging, dyed with copper sulphide, for too long would stain the fingers chalky blue, irritating the pores into rashes.

In slow motion another work collapses. Kitty Kraus' inky black ice-cube, "Untitled", 2006, has been embedded with a burning yellow light bulb, the heat of which causes the cube to slump, melting into a black puddle in the corner of the front gallery. Guided by the artist from liquid to solid through freezing, the light bulb then frees the material to return to liquid, only to dry and crust into a solid once more. Tricked into mimicry through the addition of heat, the work is urged across thresholds by its own dumb volition. No longer constrained, the story of these materials seeks out its space, spreading over the vagaries of the floor, dipping between vinyl folds, and swelling the boards beneath.

In Particle Physics in order to activate reactions between particles and compounds one must add what is referred to as activation energy. This energy can just as easily be reversed or mangled, subverting intended activations and thwarting function in preference for a perceived innate intention.

Silently, in the dark room Danica Chappell activates the innate properties of light. She moves Perspex pieces atop photographic paper flicking the enlarger on and off, imprinting the activities of her hands. With the act of seeing distilled into light registering on photographic paper there is an immediacy about her large photographic works. It is photography without a camera capturing light at play with itself, as if Chappell is divining light's needs, slicing colour with shadow and playing opacities off against each other. Each haptic movement is captured, embedded and stained on the paper.

Entering the main gallery of Gertrude Contemporary causes the muscles to contract, and the shoulders to clench. A tense staccato sound emits from a monitor in the far corner, a relentless amplified dripping, and the room is lit with the dim red of a photographic safe light. Paused in this other place, one feels measured and counted by the metronome-like beat. Hung at regular pulse-like intervals is a series of framed photographs by Dane Mitchell. To create these works Mitchell concocted a perfume, which emulated the smell of an empty room, which he then sprayed upon light sensitive photographic paper. This paper was then left unfixed, framed and packaged under safe lights. Presented under photographic safe lights the work is perpetually paused in the act of becoming.





Rather than encouraging the innate activity of his materials as Overell, Kraus and Chappell might, Mitchell restrains his material. He suspends a controlling tension across his media so that they hover carefully, guided across thresholds from liquid perfume - to atomised vapour - to solid in the form of a photograph. Mitchell then undermines the typical certainty of a solid, revealing it to be as equally vulnerable to variables in conditions as a liquid or a gas.

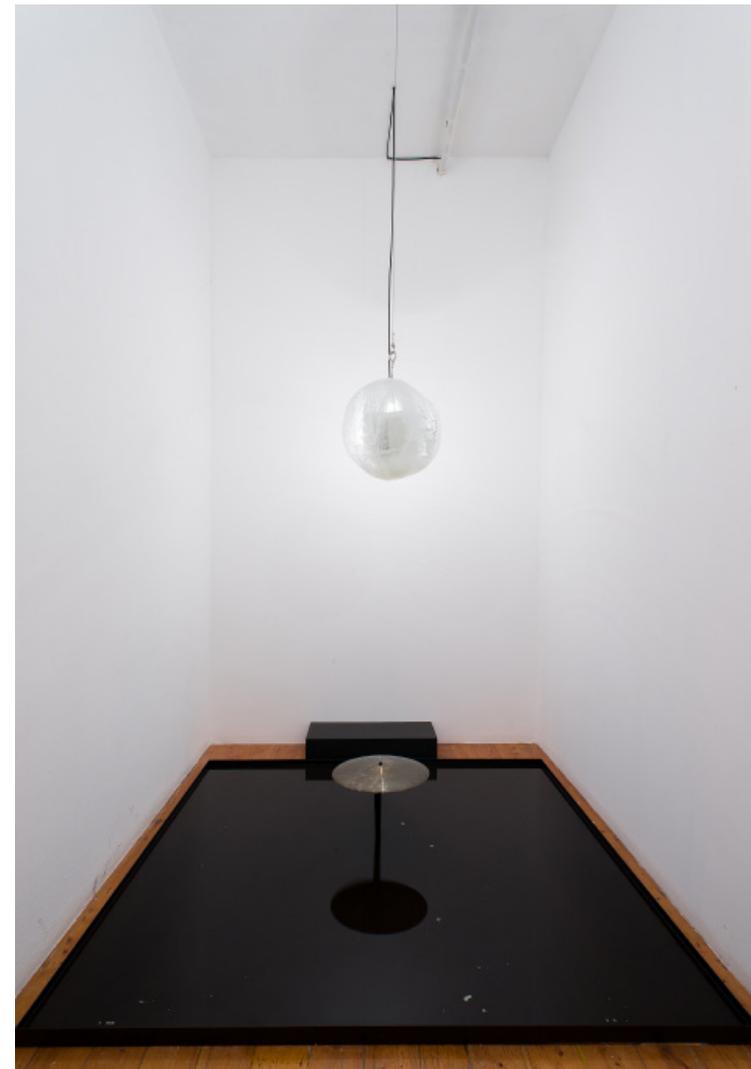
To pause this transmission between states is one thing, but to actively illuminate and highlight it is another. Danae Valenza and Simon McGuinness' work positions a large ball of ice in a darkened room. As the ice ball melts, each drip hits an amplified cymbal, which in turn activates a blinding flash of light. Like a strobe or photographic flash this work literally illuminates its own demise, as the ball moves from monumental solid to amorphous liquid mass.

Each of the artists in *Everyday Rebellions* explores the pressure that they exert on their highly active, rebellious materials. They might exaggerate or resist the innate alchemical and physical dynamics in their materials urging them to a tipping point. Each artist reveals how it is only when we attempt to restrain, pause or express this errant energy that we become aware of its true character. Frozen ice will melt - despite our urgings, light sensitive paper will always colour under daylight, and copper sulfide will always taint with its decolourising stain.

In these works the artists manipulate their materials, charting seepage and resistance, as well as the release and collapse that occurs as they wrestle reactions into shapes, and spillage into form.

Flickering, small and loud on a monitor on the floor is Joan Jonas' seminal video work "Vertical Roll" (1972). Here Jonas channels the expressive rebellion of Television's vertical hold function, manipulating the glitchy static as a means to frustrate and deconstruct representations of female identity. Our view of the dancing body inside the frame is obscured behind an interminable flickering procession of vertical bars, stuttering her fluid movements and deconstructing her body, so that its entirety is never visible, its whole identity not known. Here in this work, form measures meaning, with each speaking for the other, as the artist successfully equalises her political intent with the rebellion of her errant matter.

Emily Cormack



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Image captions:

Front: Virginia Overell, *the water is only soft when you're inside it*, 2013, muslin, metal bowls; copper, stainless steel aluminium, copper sulphate, salt water, coins, copper nails

Inside: Installation shots of *Everyday Rebellions*, Front gallery including work by Kitty Kraus, *Untitled*, 2006, lamp, ice, ink. Courtesy of Galerie NEU, Berlin and Danica Chappell, *Panel Haptic # 9*, 2012, unique hand printed c-type, in 2 parts and *Panel Haptic # 3*, 2012, unique hand printed c-type, in 2 parts.

Back top: Dane Mitchell, *The Smell of an Empty Space (Solid)*, 2011, Perfume, unfixed photographic paper, frame. Courtesy Hopkinson Cundy & the artist. Back below: Danae Valenza and Simon McGuinness, *After / Image*, 2013

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