

**MISH MEIJERS
AND
TRICKY WALSH**

6 SEPTEMBER–4 OCTOBER 2014

**THE COLLECTOR
12:
PAROXYSM**

THE COLLECTOR 12: PAROXYSM
CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

WARNING!

Do not attempt to view this exhibition in a straightforward fashion, from beginning to end. These spaces and objects contain many different stories and adventures that you may have when you attempt to understand the mysteries of *The Collector 12: Paroxysm*. From time to time as you move along, you will be asked to make a choice. Your choice may lead to success or disaster!

The exhibition you view is the result of your choices. You are responsible because you choose. After you make a choice, follow the instructions to see what happens to you next.

Think carefully before you make a decision. Viewing exhibitions can be dangerous! Think before you make a move. You can't go back. The exhibition is vast. The space is unexplored. Your mission to understand the mysteries of *The Collector 12: Paroxysm* will be difficult. Good-luck!

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At the entrance of *The Collector 12: Paroxysm* you find yourself in an antechamber. To the left, pinned to the wall is a gridded map or floorplan. It features small illustrations. These drawings have been carefully made and are beautifully intricate. There are further annotations with titles, quotes, observations, suggestions. The antechamber is yellow. A particular kind of yellow. Bodily. A small, hanging, hessian punching bag with snippets of hair and sewed-on cigarette butts is in the corner. Everything is dank and stained and... yellow. Take a closer look at the drawings on the wall. There are two passageways covered by grey felt.

If you decide to go through the left passageway, go to section 5.

If you decide to go through the right passageway, go to section 19.

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You have entered *The Interior*. You've plunged underground and into the collection of Henri Papin. Papin has been collecting and observing for some time. In front is *The Anesthesia*, a long object pointing to a compass on the ground. Constantly rotating, the compass struggles to find North. But remembering the outside, you think you know better. But maybe not. Actually, you can't remember. Who is Henri Papin again?

To find out more about Henri Papin, proceed to section 6.

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Henri Papin is a collector and a character invented by Mish Meijers and Tricky Walsh. Papin obsessively gathers objects, building habitats for them that become large, immersive installations. As with *The Collector 12: Paroxysm*, each iteration of the Papin series uses fiction and appropriation to create absurd environments that mirror the complexity and mayhem of the outside world. This space is a fantastical obsession, a rabbit hole for you to fall into where delusion and illusion are key. The narrative of *The Collector* relies on deceiving and confusing you as a way to condition your perception of what is to come. Be wary.

There's much for you to grasp. The illustrated antechamber map has escaped from the surface of the wall and into three-dimensional reality. Temporary partitions and large sculptural constructions form paths and links through the gallery space creating vignettes within the broader narrative. Records spin, fans rustle hanging objects, and lights flicker. Hair and fur cover plastic knobs and buttons while bulging yellow tumours grow out of wooden scaffolding and cling to dirty white walls. Large sculptures act as architectural structures supporting smaller architectural models. Inside, tiny

white figures act out strange scenes — dancing alone or copulating underneath the light and the sounds of their surroundings.

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Hidden away in the furthest corner of the gallery is *The Sequestered Woman*. Pieces of wood cut into the shapes of pyrite stone, a bingo cage shuffling around its contents, a small radio contributing white noise. A tail of long, coarse hair levitates up and down, an inarticulate puppet possessed by the ailments of the mind.

By thrusting this plethora of seemingly incongruous objects and shapes together, *The Collector 12: Paroxysm* explores the interaction between your comprehension and the actual 'objective' evidence presented. If there is a moment of paroxysm within the exhibition, this is it.

Leave *The Sequestered Woman* now. Turn left, walk forward, enter a different room.

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You're now in a relatively mundane purple waiting room with chairs, coffee table, framed pictures and a television playing an old daytime documentary video about the infamous 1994 Tonya Harding–Nancy Kerrigan ice-skating affair. The Harding–Kerrigan saga was a gigantic, salacious news story that the general public couldn't get enough of. The two American athletes were at the top of their game, until Harding's ex-husband attacked Kerrigan by clubbing her knee in the lead up to the Winter Olympics. Harding was publicly shamed by the media for her husband's actions, while Kerrigan managed to recover to win silver, thus becoming everyone's darling. The incident was seared into the public consciousness, even this year it was the subject of two documentaries commemorating the event's twentieth anniversary.

From the start, it was seen as a battle of archetypes: Harding, cast as a trailer-trash brat with teased blonde hair, brash costumes, and immense athleticism, challenged the conventions of a demure figure skater. Kerrigan, on the other hand, was refined and polished, her long brown hair and bespoke Vera Wang costumes effortlessly merged with her genteel style of skating. Years of tabloid coverage followed the attack. Although Harding profusely denied having anything to do with it, Kerrigan's classically feminine image conspired against Harding's media persona. There are literally thousands of videos on YouTube depicting the media's somewhat fictitious, melodramatic, and black and white narrativisation and fetishisation of the 'violent femme'

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So, if Henri Papin and *The Collector* world is a super fiction (each gesture of the installation sliding between actuality and fantasy, adopting stereotypes itself, constructing non-linear narratives and asking you to author your own path), perhaps the Harding–Kerrigan tale is another, this time in a more familiar setting. The installation's reference to the Harding–Kerrigan affair may prompt you to deconstruct the information provided about the world of Henri Papin, and, in turn, your role within it.

The depiction of women as silenced public possessions, viciously interrogated by societal scrutiny, perpetuates a number of negative stereotypes and deserves to be complicated. However, rather than necessarily complicating the stereotypes, *The Collector 12: Paroxysm* asks you to think about your role in authoring and perpetuating them. In turn, your memory of the installation shifts to reveal its dependence upon the floorplan presented at the beginning of the exhibition where it was pinned to the wall. Hope you looked closely.

Kelly Fliedner









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Gertrude Contemporary
200 Gertrude Street
Fitzroy VIC 3065 Australia
Telephone +61 3 9419 3406
info@gertrude.org.au
www.gertrude.org.au

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Image captions:

Mish Meijers and Tricky Walsh

The Collector 12: Paroxysm, 2014

Site-specific installation

Installation view, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne,
2014

Courtesy the artists

Photo credit: Christo Crocker