

CODEX

BRIGITA OZOLINS

6 FEBRUARY TO 15 MARCH 2009
CARNEGIE GALLERY
HOBART CITY COUNCIL

This is what makes writing wild. One returns to a savage state from before life itself. And one can always recognise it: it's the savageness of forests, as ancient as time. It is the fear of everything, distinct and inseparable from life itself. One becomes relentless.

MARGUERITE DURAS

I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE

1.

From dusk to dawn the words caught in their throats,
Then, wordlessly, caught, they hid from the light,
And began an endless night-time confession,
In which I became encrypted.

2.

I have a confession to make.
Words run away with me,
They spurt like birdsong from downy bodies,
Revelations, vows and pleas.

3.

At first I thought at first I wrote I wrote from within from under from the inside all I heard and all I saw and everything I imagined I wrote in words so fine and bright as moonlight on the shadow of the earth
∞0∞ my words were smart as buttons I believed I could read myself and everything around me in their reflections ∞0∞ I believed I could catch myself in words and tell myself back to a world that first told me ∞0∞ this much is true ∞0∞ in the morning I believed I wrote the sun to begin the world again in my sleep I thought I could read the hides of the lions that shared my lair the scales of the snake that lay on cold diamonds in the undergrowth I thought I could read my future in a curl of my own hair I believed that as ink spilled like blood like blood it could communicate ∞0∞ I wrote without end every day a different version I couldn't lie still for the urge of it rolling through my nerves I told stories as if they were rivers that could drown a man alphabetically with 26 different ways to fill his ears and his eyes and his mouth with words and pull him under and roll him around ∞0∞ my stories were stories of disguise and camouflage of wolves as sheep and men as women and children raised by dogs and children raised

by spiders ∞0∞ this much is true ∞0∞ under the branches of a large tree below a flat rock in a cave whose entrance was shadowed by a cloud that fell across the moon I lay hidden and obscure and told the stories that had never been told before ∞0∞ in the morning I wrote the sun on my walls to begin the world again and wept to see in my words the shadow of the earth over the moon ∞0∞ I saw my stories about birds and their fluency in air refuse to fly my story of a river in torrent refuse to flow my story of a desert that never ended end in a green oasis ∞0∞ I have a confession to make ∞0∞ my first language is not the language of the world ∞0∞ I have a confession to make the world translated by me like all translations will never read as well as the original ∞0∞ still fast asleep unable to stop I engrave my stories on the walls of my prison in longhand shorthand Braille and when all the walls though not mine are full of me I still write not cancelling out but overlaying the words underneath to erase a word handwritten write spiral-ivy over the top my story spiral-ivy. And so I am born. And my name is Cipher.

4.

I have a confession to make,
This much is true.
At light's loss and light's return,
Words run away with me.
Whenever I hear birdsong's code
I know that to stop is to be undone.

I know that a child, downhill, headlong,
overbalanced,
Runs safe as long as he moves,
I know death will decipher me in silence.

Elizabeth Bennett

ELIZABETH BENNETT'S INTEREST IN SOUNDSCAPES AND VISUAL ART FEATURES IN HER WRITING, WHICH INCLUDES SIX RADIO PLAYS PRODUCED BY THE ABC.

ACT

"The origin of the work of art – that is the origin of both the creators and the preservers, which is to say of a people's historical existence - is art. This is so because art is in its essence an origin: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical."¹

Truth, for Heidegger, contains its opposite, untruth. Beings emerge from nonbeing through our naming them – a state of being to us. Things are in 'strife' where they are either concealed or unconcealed. When concealed, in Heidegger's terms, beings are in *earth* and when unconcealed they are in *world*. They are not the same thing that we either see or don't see. *Earth* resists all attempts to penetrate it by remaining undisclosed or unexplained, all that is known has moved into world and is removed from *earth*. By naming we bring beings into *world* while the unnamed and unknown remains in *earth*.

We, in modern times, seem driven to call things into *world* by naming and explaining them. We are reluctant to allow things to remain in *earth*, to remain in mystery. We seek mastery over the *earth* through knowledge. Art can thwart this impetus by collecting both *earth* and *world* into itself, thus revealing the essence of truth. The ambiguity of the poetic in art achieves the happening of truth by making explicit its with-holding from the light of knowledge. Art then reveals what we always avoid - that everywhere the unknown remains concealed and the known revealed.

"Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings to their Being *from out of* their Being."²

Relentless writing suggests the need to put our thoughts down, recording them to share with others or to look again at our thoughts and re-think them. They can inform us about our mental activity, the ceaseless firing of synapses, the thoughts we constantly forget.

We can use writing to focus, to discipline ourselves and maintain a line of enquiry. Every day thoughts are lost from moment to moment and the physical act of writing forces one to slow down the loss - surely we think quicker than we can write? Perhaps there are thoughts in between the written words that are left out? It seems the fear of death and loss is very like the fear of the unknown.

Language brings Being to thought but Being also brings language to thought.

Colin Langridge

¹ Martin Heidegger 'The Origin of the Work of Art' 1935 in Krell, D. (Editor), *Martin Heidegger - Basic Writings*, HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1992, p. 202
² Ibid, p.198

DR COLIN LANGRIDGE IS AN ARTIST, A LECTURER AT THE TASMANIAN SCHOOL OF ART, AND PROGRAM COORDINATOR AT CAST GALLERY IN HOBART.

CODEX

CODEX, 2008-9
765 convex mirrors (10cm dl), constructed room (3.25m x 6.5m x 3.5m), 64m running wall space, paint, single channel video (40' loop), soundtrack

A darkened space, the walls glinting with circular convex mirrors, and a room within a larger room that cannot be entered. The mirrors spell out words that snake around the space from right to left and in reverse. There is also sound – scratching, breathing, a body moving. The source is inside the room within the room - a woman writing, scribbling incessantly and obsessively on a blank wall. What does she write and why does she write so relentlessly?

CODEX explores the links between writing, mystery, subjective experience and a yearning to access the unknown and the ineffable. It creates an inner world and an outer world, juxtaposing the body with the written word, and the written word with the reflected self. It is about inside and outside, accessible and inaccessible, movement and stillness. It is also about the body as manuscript - as a vehicle for conveying an untold but urgent history.

Brigita Ozolins

BRIGITA OZOLINS MAKES ART ABOUT LANGUAGE, KNOWLEDGE, BUREAUCRACY AND IDENTITY. WORKING PRINCIPALLY WITH INSTALLATION, SHE HAS EXHIBITED REGULARLY SINCE 1995, INCLUDING COMMISSIONS FOR THE STATE LIBRARY OF TASMANIA AND THE SOROS FOUNDATION LATVIA. SHE HAS RECEIVED NUMEROUS ARTIST GRANTS, INCLUDING THE 2008 INAUGURAL QANTAS CONTEMPORARY ART AWARD, AND HAS UNDERTAKEN RESIDENCIES IN RIGA, LONDON, PARIS, PORT ARTHUR AND GORGE COTTAGE, LAUNCESTON. BRIGITA ALSO LECTURES AT THE TASMANIAN SCHOOL OF ART.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The artist wishes to extend special thanks to Gerard Willems for the construction of the interior room, Raef Sawford for video and technical expertise, Tracey Allen for catalogue design and Ben Booth and Philip Watkins for painting and patience.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

Published by Hobart City Council and Brigita Ozolins
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Brigita Ozolins
GPO Box 1446 Hobart
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ISBN 978-0-9805139-7-4

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Design by Tracey Allen
Printed in Hobart by Focal Printing

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The Carnegie Gallery is a cultural initiative of Hobart City Council.

