

Agatha Gothe-Snape

STORY SUSAN GIBB

THE WORDS written in white Helvetica font across a blue television screen in the middle of a suburban sports oval beckon “let’s begin”. “Standing, Neutral, Legs, Knees, Heels, Hook, Gravity, Dense, Hold, Breath” follow in subsequent flashes of a PowerPoint presentation made by artist Agatha Gothe-Snape. Beside the television is Jane McKernan, a contemporary dancer who has collaborated with Gothe-Snape on numerous occasions. McKernan readies for her solo work *Opening and Closing Ceremony*.

The use of PowerPoint presentations has underscored Gothe-Snape’s practice, providing a ready tool to produce off-the-cuff “drawings” with the energy and immediacy of the ideas they encapsulate. Importantly, this particular PowerPoint references a common warm-up technique used by performers to find a place to begin work – the neutral position. It’s one that emphasises the reconciliation of mind and body for present action.

Gothe-Snape lives in Melbourne, having been awarded a Gertrude Contemporary studio for 2013–2014. It’s not the first time she has found herself here, away from her hometown of Sydney. In 2002, she studied acting at the Victorian College of the Arts after her enthusiastic teenage participation in performance programs at the PACT Centre for Emerging Artists, the Australian Theatre for Young People and the Performance Space under the tutelage of performance makers Tess de Quincey, Nikki Heywood, Chris Ryan and Martin del Amo. She only stayed for six months before returning to Sydney to complete a Bachelor and Masters of Fine Art (Painting) at the Sydney College of the Arts, but the influence of the performance techniques learned in this period are enduring.

This was clearly echoed in Gothe-Snape’s *Cruising* project, developed with her most frequent collaborator, performance maker Brian Fuata. Together they work under the moniker WrongSolo. Presented at *Primavera* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney in 2010, the *Cruising* workshops invited audience members to be guided by the artists in finding a ‘presentness’ in their bodies, before

walking and looking at the art around them with a heightened cognitive, emotional and spatial awareness. This collaborative and performative activity sat alongside a broader selection of Gothe-Snape’s works that demonstrated her compulsively multi-disciplinary mode of working, and included gouache paintings, text works, PowerPoints, collages and installation elements. As with *Cruising*, these works mapped the artist’s moods and movements through her creative practice, articulating her use of art as a way of forging space for embodied experiences.

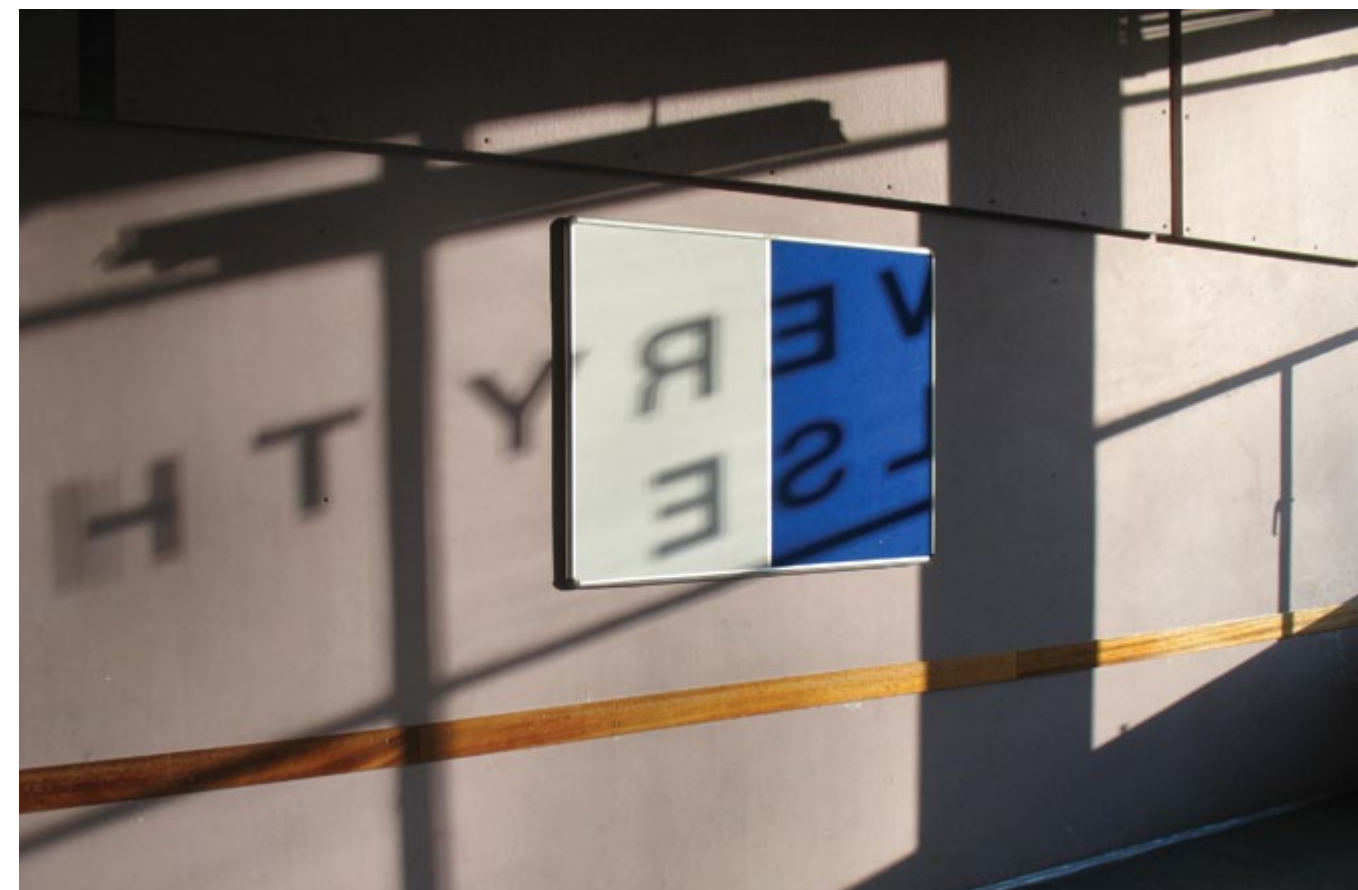
Asked about her use of multiple mediums she once remarked, “My practice is so over the top; it’s trying to deal with so much at once. I guess I work across mediums as it allows me to dip into different aspects of my experience.” This was well reflected in curator Nicholas Chambers’ essay on Gothe-Snape’s large-scale text wall work, *We All Walk Out In The End* (2012), which was presented as part of the *Contemporary Women* exhibition at Queensland Art Gallery’s Gallery of Modern Art. “While not ‘performances’ in the strict sense of the term,” Chambers aptly stated, “her works borrow certain qualities from the discipline of performance – for example, an emphasis on the activity of moving, and a nuanced understanding of bodily and spatial awareness – which she uses to consider questions about aesthetic experiences encountered in art and life.” Expressed as an overarching confluence of time and human existence, as well as a reflection on a viewer’s movements through an art gallery, *We All Walk Out In The End* was followed by another wall work, *Emotional Wall with Everything Else* (2012), at Shepparton Art Museum. It conversely reflected on the physical and emotional limits of making and viewing art.

“I try to do as little as possible to the world,” Gothe-Snape says. Her aim: “to respond to the most immediate of things at hand”. This can be seen in her most recent solo projects, *A Planet With Two Suns*, presented at Kunstvlaai: Festival of Independents in the Netherlands, 2012, and *You And Everything That Is Not You*, at The Physics Room, Christchurch, 2013. Both brought together aspects of her practice into considered constellations comprising new and existing work, found objects and subtle interventions into the exhibition spaces.



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For example, the Kunstvlaai work was presented in an old school classroom where an existing PowerPoint *Fast Meeting, Fast Feeling* (2012) serendipitously paralleled a pin-board on the wall that had white and blue panels that mimicked a hard-edge abstraction. A video snippet of Robert Hughes' *Shock of the New* was also appropriated and played for its problematisation of the modernist legacy and Hughes' place as an art historian of influence bridging Australia, Europe and America. At The Physics Room, a line from Hughes became the title. A new sound work echoed the previous and inaugural exhibition by Louise Menzies at the re-opened gallery, post Christchurch's devastating earthquake. Appropriating the text "The World, The World, Radical Fact" from one of Menzies' works, Gothe-Snape engaged a local folk singer to record the words, which were played back on loop, creating a reverberation of her own history and experiences and those around her.

For her recent solo exhibition at The Commercial in Sydney, Gothe-Snape engaged yet another medium – steel – producing a monolithic sculpture for the centre of the gallery. Painted white, the idea was that the material's physical and metaphorical weight would be rendered almost invisible against the gallery's walls, providing both a lightness of touch and hinting at the dematerialisation of the art object that went hand in hand with the historical decline of such

large sculptural forms from fashion. Gothe-Snape said her work, titled *Living Sculpture*, reflected upon "the increasing institutional commodification of performance and the current trends for its historical retrieval", as well as considering Gothe-Snape's view that the act of making and looking at art is "performative".

Like a performer standing in neutral position ready for action, *Living Sculpture* was latent with the potential to be animated by its own internal signifiers and the many moving bodies of people, knowledge and history that surround it. Like Gothe-Snape's broader practice, it suggested the living potency of art as a means to look and to feel a way through the world. ■

Agatha Gothe-Snape is represented by The Commercial, Sydney.

www.thecommercialgallery.com

EXHIBITION

Agatha Gothe-Snape c/s Sriwbana Spong

18 Jul to 1 Sep, 2015

AGNSW Contemporary

- 01 **EXPRESSION CURTAIN**, 2013, found fabric circa 1980 sourced from Sydney College of the Arts and purchased in Christchurch, Sunday 3 March, 2013, seam, dowel, open window; photo: the artist
- 02 **You and everything that is not you** (installation view), including (clockwise from left) **EXPRESSION CURTAIN**, 2013, found fabric circa 1980 sourced from Sydney College of the Arts and purchased in Christchurch, Sunday 3 March, 2013, seam, dowel, open window; **THE WORLD'S AGILITY**, 2013, with Sebastian Warne (song based on improvisation with text from The Press, Wednesday 13 February, 2013), in-situ audio recording, 2:40, looped; **QUICK PEW**, 2013, plywood, concrete blocks borrowed from corner Gloucester and Manchester streets, Christchurch, 2m x 50cm x 50cm; **DEEP TIMES**, 2013, vinyl lettering, 10m x 40cm (seen in shadow); photo: Stuart Lloyd-Harris
- 03 **A Planet with Two Suns** (installation view), including (clockwise from left) **Everything Else**, 2012, vinyl lettering on glass window, 1m x 3m; **And then to close the gap between you and everything that is not you, and in this way to pass from feeling to meaning**, 2012, video, 2:20 minutes (*Robert Hughes on What Art Is*, accessed Friday 23 November, 2012); **New Floor Work**, 2011, vinyl, dimensions variable; photo: the artist
- 04 **A Planet with Two Suns**, 2012, context specific installation; photo: the artist
Courtesy the artist and The Commercial