

---

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

# Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

Museum of  
Contemporary  
Art Australia

MCA Australia

---



---

Claire  
Healy  
& Sean  
Cordeiro

---

# Contents

pg. 5

**Foreword**

Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE

---

pg. 7

**Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro**

essay by Anna Davis

---

pg. 60

**List of works**

---

pg. 62

**Artist biographies**

---

pg. 65

**The vehicle is the destination!**

Hou Hanru in conversation with the artists

---

pg. 80

**Acknowledgements**

# Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce *Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro*, the first major exhibition of the artists' work in Australia. We are particularly thrilled to present the exhibition, curated by MCA Curator Anna Davis, in the artists' hometown following their success internationally. Their work, which featured as part of Australia's representation at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale in 2009, has been shown in Washington DC, Berlin, Singapore, Basel, Lyon, London, San Francisco, Tehran, Shanghai and Kathmandu.

Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro have been collaborating as artists for over a decade, in which time they have been awarded numerous international studio residencies, scholarships and travel grants. The nomadic lifestyle the artists lead has become the foundation of their work, both conceptually and in terms of the materials they use. Travel, packing and unpacking, accumulation, storage and freight have been a critical part of their lives and these experiences continually inform their practice as artists.

As part of the exhibition, the MCA has commissioned the artists to create a new work *Stasis* (2012) on the MCA front lawn. Continuing Healy and Cordeiro's exploration of mobility through mechanised means, the work features an aeroplane suspended in a cube of scaffolding, its nose pointing precariously at the MCA building. Clearly constructed, the work nonetheless cannot fail to provoke a reaction following the events of 9/11 which changed the way we see planes approaching buildings forever.

Since it opened to the public in 1991, the MCA has supported the work of Australian artists through exhibitions, publications, the MCA Collection, public programs and events. Following major redevelopment, the MCA re-opened this year and is now in an even better position to exhibit, collect and interpret the work of today's artists. *Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro* is presented in the new, spacious gallery on level 1, designed to display ambitious installations by contemporary artists.

We are grateful to Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro for their enthusiasm and commitment to this project; and to exhibition curator Anna Davis. We thank public and private lenders to the exhibition for their generosity in making key works available and our appreciation goes to the artist's representatives, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney; Gallery Wendi Norris, San Francisco and Nature Morte, Berlin.

A number of organisations and individuals have made this exhibition possible through their generous assistance. We thank the Keir Foundation for their support of *Stasis* and INLINK for their support of the exhibition. We are grateful to the Australia Council for their assistance in realising the newly commissioned work on the MCA front lawn and to Partridge Engineering for their work on the project. We also thank catalogue contributor Hou Hanru for his insightful interview with the artists. Finally, my sincere thanks go to the MCA Ambassadors, whose donations go towards realising our exhibitions program and promoting the work of leading artists such as Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro.

**Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE**

Director

Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

# Essay

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro



*Deceased Estate* 2004

installation view, Glashaus, Weil am Rhein, Germany 2004

Photographer Christian Schnur

If space-junk is the human debris that litters the universe, Junk-Space is the residue mankind leaves on the planet. The built product of modernization is not modern architecture but Junkspace. Junkspace is what remains after modernization has run its course, or, more precisely, what coagulates while modernization is in progress, its fallout.

Rem Koolhaas, *Junkspace*<sup>1</sup>

Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro are Australian artists who reclaim and transform the fallout of consumer society. Combining a playful sense of humour and an engagement with art historical precedents, their work is characterised by the deconstruction and reinvention of prefabricated structures and the assemblage of accumulated objects into extraordinary sculptures and installations.

Healy and Cordeiro's practice reflects a preoccupation with the dynamics of global mobility – the networks, standards and financial systems that enable and restrict the movement of people and goods in the modern era. Creating tensions between order and disorder, their works are shaped by traditional sculptural concerns such as mass, form and scale, however they also incorporate the expressive potential of motion, speaking to the way things move and change over time.



*Cordial Home Project* (detail) 2006

type C LED prints, 6

Museum of Contemporary Art,  
purchased with funds provided by the  
Coe and Mordant families, 2006

Photograph: Liz Ham

Working as a collaborative duo for over a decade,<sup>2</sup> Healy and Cordeiro have spent much of their artistic careers travelling. These shifting locations, and the experience of constantly moving and uprooting their lives play a central role in their work. Drawing on their mutual autobiographies and the narratives of other intrepid travellers, a number of their sculptures trigger feelings associated with being 'on the move'. While some works evoke a sense of self-reliance and adventure, others interrogate the practicalities and emotional upheavals of storing and transporting material possessions. These highly condensed gatherings of personal belongings bring to mind the less glamorous realities of packing, unpacking, sorting, storing and freighting associated with a contemporary nomadic lifestyle.

Travelling and relocation inevitably brings with it powerful memories of home, and the question of what constitutes home today is a major theme in Healy and Cordeiro's work. Inviting us to look at how we live in new ways, their projects explore domestic space in terms of its symbolism, functionality, affordability, construction and decay. Enormous in both size and ambition, two of the artists' key works have involved the acquisition, demolition and re-contextualisation of family dwellings – a condemned suburban house in the *Cordial Home Project* (2003) and a derelict Queensland farmhouse in *Not under My Roof* (2008).<sup>3</sup> In both projects, 'home' is rendered uninhabitable and its promise of permanency and security undermined. Instead, the vacant structures are transformed by the artists into new compacted forms that speak to both the inequities of home ownership and the dense layering of memories and personal histories embedded within long-term residences. The roving artists are also fascinated by

the social and political implications of impermanent living arrangements; other works have utilised caravans, trailers, huts, sheds and even a Mongolian yurt, to explore the increased mobility and compact lifestyle afforded by these provisional structures.

The aesthetic quality of Healy and Cordeiro's work is one of its most striking features. Every aspect of their sculptures and installations is carefully orchestrated and subject to a rigorous process of formal organisation. Grids and geometric contours are used as frameworks to consolidate collections of disparate objects, while colour, repetition and texture are employed to create visually balanced and satisfying compositions. Other systems of categorisation are intermingled with these aesthetic and sculptural concerns. These schemas are unique to the particular project at hand, however they are frequently related to the logic of mobility, in particular ideas of international transit and storage. In *Wohnwagen* (2006–07) for example, the dissected elements of a once intact mobile home are placed on top of each other like four painstakingly constructed layer cakes. Balanced on top of Euro palettes, the standard unit for European international freight, the caravan's raw materials have been analysed, broken down and stacked with a careful eye to their aesthetic composition. They are also ordered in terms of their most economical spatial arrangement, a taxonomy that mirrors the concerns of global consignment in which things are packed to strict regulations in order to save money and take up the least amount of space. The relationship between transport, commerce and aesthetics is not lost on the artists, who have spoken of their work in terms of its response to the practicalities of living in-between countries and participating in the global



*Life Span* 2009

installation view, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney, 2010

175,774 VHS video cassettes, silicone

Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with funds donated by Andrew and Cathy Cameron, 2011  
Photograph: Ian Hobbs

art market.<sup>4</sup> As artists, they argue, it is necessary to devise modes of existence and working that are both economically viable and creatively productive. This is a delicate balance, which involves periods of living and working overseas in order to take advantage of residencies and other exhibition opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

*Deceased Estate* (2004) was created at the site of an artists' residency in a warehouse located in Weil am Rhein, Germany. Arriving to find the space occupied by someone else's junk, the artists decided to make an installation from everything they found inside. Held together by bright orange rope, the resulting conglomeration of domestic objects is strangely beautiful. Defying gravity, it overflows with unexpected juxtapositions and surprising relationships between incongruent forms. Like an exploding universe of over-consumption, the precarious ball of stuff also induces unpleasant thoughts relating to chronic hoarding, and people so hemmed in by their possessions they are physically and psychologically unable to move. *Do our belongings define us?* the work seems to ask. *Do they tie us down?* There is nothing like moving

countries to heighten your awareness of your material possessions and what it is you actually need. Henry David Thoreau's classic text *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854) in which the author lived for six months in a small remote hut with only the bare necessities of life, has become a touchstone for the artists. Its core philosophical question 'How much is enough?' is raised repeatedly in their work.<sup>6</sup>

In *Hamper (9 months and an hangover)* 2006 the artists combined the remains of a farewell party they held at the end of a residency at the Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, with all the printed matter they had accumulated there. Layering the waste materials to fit under a red plastic picnic table, the artists draw attention to the vast amount of refuse we generate, even after only a temporary inhabitation such as a party or an artist's residency.<sup>7</sup> Healy and Cordeiro associate the notion of the picnic with the rubbish we leave behind. The debris from the party and the mountain of superfluous paperwork stuffed under the picnic table echo the more pervasive wreckage of modern consumerism that proliferates on the planet in the wake of human habitation.

Below

*Hoard* 2006

type C photograph

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro

Right

*Location to Die For* 2001

type C photograph

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro



Above

*The Paper Trail (detail)* 2007

installation view, Art Gallery of NSW, 2007

Mongolian ger, trailer, Johnson Solids, ply, acrylic

Photograph: Jenni Carter

Anna Davis



In the developed world, it is not only our material possessions that are multiplying at an alarming rate but also our collections of virtual belongings. Inventories of digital photos, music and videos are being created and stored at levels unimaginable only a few years ago. In recent decades we have witnessed a profound shift in the audiovisual landscape moving us from the analogue to the digital age. These technological changes have had numerous repercussions on people's daily lives, influencing our social behaviour, work practices, leisure activities and domestic interactions. On a design level, even our home furnishings have changed. Mass produced entertainment units once made to hold square television sets, video decks and VHS tapes have been replaced by those designed to fit flat screen TVs, digital recorders and DVDs: and it probably won't be long until these too are rendered obsolete. Relegated to the dusty realm of technologies past, the once pervasive VHS videotape is now an object of nostalgia. Video shops were once the purveyors of home entertainment where you might bump into friends and neighbours. They now face extinction in the wake of the digital download, a much more introverted activity usually performed at home or in the solitary bubble created by headphones and a mobile screen device.

Healy and Cordeiro's *Life Span* (2009), a solid stacked block of 175,218 used VHS videotapes, sits at the intersection of these issues relating to home, sociality, design and obsolescence. Enormous in scale, the shiny black edifice is a monument to our shared technological past, evoking ideas of mortality and time passing. Described by the artists as a 'memento-mori', the imposing sculpture contains 60.1 years of viewing material if each tape were watched consecutively. This represented the



Let Us Rejoice 2009

digital print

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



average human life span in 1976, the year that the VHS tape was released to the public.<sup>8</sup> First exhibited in a deconsecrated chapel in Venice, the monolith has a mystical energy that may stem from the vast amounts of inaccessible data it contains. Looking up at the massive form, notions of consumer excess, audiovisual noise and landfill also come to mind. The artists gathered the almost inconceivable collection of tapes over a long period of time, with some donated by friends and colleagues and others obtained from defunct video stores and recycling organisations. Like house bricks, the videotapes are a predominantly uniform colour and size. The clean lines of the huge rectangular structure reference the austere forms of Minimalism and the severity of Modernist architecture, while also speaking to the practicalities of storing physical objects around the home and issues of data accumulation. Movie titles and handwritten notes on the tape labels offer glimpses into the relationship between technology and our personal lives.<sup>9</sup> Laden with history and memories, *Life Span* is also a cultural database, creating networks of crisscrossing associations that allow viewers to drift between genres and across time.

The dream of infinite movement through time and space is a theme that emerges repeatedly in Healy and Cordeiro's works. *Sameday Service or Sooner* (2008) is a humorous take on Dr Who's fictional time machine the TARDIS,<sup>10</sup> a police telephone box that appeared in the popular British TV series and enabled the science fiction character to travel anywhere in the universe within any time period. In the sculpture, the distinctive blue box is dismantled; its component parts are bound together and leant against a wall as though ready for shipping. The absurdity of flat-packing this fantastical transportation device

– and thus destroying its powers of mobility – is characteristic of the artists' playful approach to form and function in their work. Highlighting the economic structures that influence the way we transport objects, it draws attention to the hazards of blindly imposing one regulatory system onto another.<sup>11</sup>

In other works the artists look at the present through the lens of the future. Sifting through time, they perform a kind of speculative archaeology that raises questions about what will define humanity in years to come. In *Future Remnant* (2011) a strategically composed stack of partially-assembled IKEA furniture and accessories props up a life-size replica of a Monolophosaurus dinosaur skeleton. Held together with bright orange strapping, a utilitarian packing material that reoccurs throughout their work, the sculpture takes on the guise of stylised archaeological remains. The accretion of IKEA products beneath the dinosaur fossil suggests the layered debris of a culture obsessed with home wares and the sedimentary accumulation of material purchases over time. Yet while the multi-coloured stockpile speaks of over-consumption in the present, the plastic dinosaur (also a superfluous product of the petrochemical age) suggests a time long before humans and shopping existed. Like a display in an anti-evolutionary Christian theme park,<sup>12</sup> the incongruous grouping is both humorous and disturbing.

In *Dust to Dust* (2008) three pulverized coffee tables from a low-priced IKEA furniture range are displayed in glass showcases like rare prehistoric relics. Destroyed by the artists in their Berlin living room, the tables are completely unrecognizable. On close inspection though, tiny flecks of colour, the remains of their formerly smooth MDF surfaces, can be seen in the circular mounds of sawdust. Beginning

Luck Exists in the Leftovers 2010

installation view, Setouchi International Art Festival, 2010

dinosaur fossil replica, cable binding, discarded furniture and household objects

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

with a violent act of annihilation, this reflective work highlights the inbuilt obsolescence of products built for mass consumption, their environmental impact and the frustration of knowing that although they are cheap, they will not last. By presenting the ruined tables as pseudo-historical artifacts the artists invite us to imagine our enduring legacy on the planet.

IKEA is recurring presence in Healy and Cordeiro's works, its standardised forms highlighting the dynamics of global distribution and society's increasing homogenisation. Speaking about their practice, the artists have described the notion of 'generic comfort zones', places that are designed to make travellers feel relaxed and at ease no matter where they are. They point out that consumption is the driving force behind these insidious units of uniformity, which are largely tailored to middle-class needs.<sup>13</sup> Part of the massive global industry that encourages people to purchase things that will make them feel 'at home', IKEA is perhaps the quintessential model of this all-encompassing sameness that is rapidly spreading across the world, infiltrating our public space, homes and workplaces.

The wall-based sculpture *I Hope Tomorrow is Just Like Today* (2008) is constructed from a number of pieces of IKEA furniture that have been combined and misassembled. Recalling the abstract colour blocking of a Piet Mondrian painting, its uneven surface is engraved with an image that amalgamates pictograms from various IKEA instruction manuals with a design originally placed onboard Pioneer spacecraft in the early 1970s. Referred to as the 'Pioneer Plaque', this bizarre line drawing of a naked man and woman surrounded by esoteric symbols was an attempt to send a message about humanity to extraterrestrial life. It aimed, as IKEA instruction manuals do, to

Anna Davis

communicate across distances, times and cultures without using words. Interested in the tension between these two dubious systems of 'universal' communication, the artists superimpose the stirring optimism of the Space Race with the mundane realities of assembling contemporary domestic furnishings, a strategy that raises some interesting questions regarding society's changing hopes and aspirations. As they articulate, 'when the Pioneer was launched society was concerned with change and encouragement for advancement. Now we are living in a time where ... there is a longing to hang on to the status quo and create a universal sameness. Like shopping at IKEA, we comfortably slot into the dream of aspiring for something everybody else has...'<sup>14</sup>

Continuing their interest in the symbolism of space exploration, *Where we've been, where we're going, why* (2010–11)<sup>15</sup> evokes the catastrophic flipside of this optimistic thrust into new frontiers. In this series of works the artists use LEGO to recreate photographs of the 1986 Challenger Space Shuttle disaster, in which 73 seconds after lift-off the spacecraft exploded, killing all 7 crew members including the first private citizen to travel into space, American school teacher Christa McAuliffe.<sup>16</sup> These images are familiar to millions of people around the world. Broadcast live on television, the forked formation of swirling smoke in the sky is seared onto our collective memory. LEGO's uniform rectangular shapes and bright minimal colour palette, imbues Healy and Cordeiro's wall-based sculptures with the pixelated quality of the original television broadcast. Their blocky aesthetic is also reminiscent of the jagged distortions we commonly associate with highly compressed digital files, reflecting the way disaster images are now transmitted around the



*Land of the Lost* 2007

digital print

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

globe and their continued existence in society's new memory bank – the internet. By using a well-known children's toy to recreate the iconic photographs, the artists play out the sudden loss of innocence associated with the shocking event.

To invent the sailing ship or steamer is to invent the shipwreck. To invent the train is to invent the rail accident of derailment. To invent the family automobile is to produce the pile-up on the highway. To get what is heavier than air to take off in the form of an aeroplane or dirigible is to invent the crash, the air disaster.

Paul Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*<sup>17</sup>

A key point of reference for Healy and Cordeiro, French theorist Paul Virilio is perhaps the most eloquent commentator on the intrinsic relationship between progress and catastrophe. Virilio argues that technological accidents 'are not chance events' but integral to the machines we invent and, as such, 'an increasingly present cumulative reality'.<sup>18</sup> In aesthetic terms, Virilio also points out that while accidents such as the Challenger disaster are horrific, their imagery is strangely compelling. As the common saying goes, we cannot tear our eyes away from the scene of the crash. Two of the artists' recent sculptures employ aeroplanes to imply narratives of aeronautical disaster; however these open-ended works leave it up to viewers to imagine the cause or potential outcome.

While journeys into space are generally considered the pinnacle of aviation, flights in small aircraft represent another peak in the history of human

*Hänsel and Gretel* 2008

Laser engraved IKEA Knäckebröt, wooden frame

Courtesy the artists and Gitte Weise Gallery, Berlin and Nature Morte, Berlin

Anna Davis



enterprise. Highly evocative machines, small planes are capable of stirring up passionate feelings of wanderlust and the romance of travel. They are also symbolic of a particular kind of fearlessness and an individual will we often associate with the long solo voyage.<sup>19</sup> Inspired by tales of journeys on small aircraft,<sup>20</sup> Healy and Cordeiro have created a new work titled *Stasis* (2012) for the MCA exhibition. This temporary installation on the Museum's front lawn consists of a Beechcraft Travel Air suspended in a cube matrix of metal scaffolding. The bright orange plane is held aloft by the scaffolding system, yet also appears to have been captured mid-flight. Positioned with the plane's nose pointing towards the MCA, its angle of trajectory suggests an ominous result. While the work is immobile, as its title suggests, the suspended plane embodies the velocity of flight and a virtual image of movement remains. Poised indefinitely on the brink of disaster, in Virilio's terms, it foreshadows its own accident. While small aircraft tend to conjure far less agonising narratives, the work brings to mind the unforgettable images of 9/11, a horrifying incident that will forever be linked with planes flying near buildings. As the artists describe, '*Stasis* reflects on the fleeting, momentary qualities of recent events that have shaped history and imprinted themselves into the psyche and memory of society'.<sup>21</sup>

While *Stasis* arrests a plane mid-flight, seeming to prevent an imaginary disaster before it occurs, *Par Avion* (2011–12) presents a broken and reassembled plane on the gallery wall, evoking the time after a catastrophe. Virilio has described this kind of imagery as 'the autopsy of an accident',<sup>22</sup> where the wreckage of a machine is laid out piece by piece in an attempt to find clues from its shattered remains. The portions of airplane in *Par Avion* are not the

Below

*Are We there Yet?* (detail) 2011

97 boxes of 3L Black Box Chardonnay, 360 Boyardee Beef Ravioli 15 oz. tins, 83 cases of Bud Light, 624 cans of Carnation Evaporated Milk, 43 Cheerios Twin pack 37 oz., 95 cases of Coca Cola, 40 Kraft Velveeta loaves (2 x 32 ounce loaves per package), 49 boxes of Nabisco Premium Saltine Crackers 3 lb., 25 cases of Marlboro Red, 41 containers of Utz cheese balls, replica EVA Space Suit on loan from NASA, IKEA bed, pillow, duvet, gold anodized aluminum

installation view, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Courtesy the artists and Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney, and Gallery Wendi Norris, San Francisco.

Photograph Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



result of a disaster, however, but rather the product of a calculated act of destruction by the artists that allowed them to mail the aircraft from Australia to the United States and back again. To create the work Healy and Cordeiro acquired a Cessna 172 from a scrap plane yard in Queensland; they then disassembled the plane and cut it into 70 small pieces, so that each portion would fit within the maximum permitted size for airmail parcels set by Australia Post. Using gaffer tape to cover the metal edges, post and customs documents were attached directly to each piece and the destination address written by hand onto its metal surfaces. The plane was then sent piece by piece via airmail to Frey Norris Contemporary and Modern, San Francisco

Right

*Tropical Island (interior)* 2008

digital print

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



where it was arranged on the gallery floor (December, 2011).<sup>23</sup> For its display at the MCA, each piece was carefully re-labelled and airtailed to Sydney adhering to the standards set by the US Postal Service.

The cracked and misshapen entity we see installed on the MCA gallery wall is a much more speculative structure than the original plane, its once sleek form full of irregularities, unexpected gaps and spatial distortions. Like the blueprint of a machine once capable of flight, it suggests a tension between the human desire for mobility and the global systems – economic, social and political – that restrain it. In *Stasis* these systems are symbolised by the scaffolding, which elevates and supports the plane but also restricts its movement.<sup>24</sup> In *Par Avion* the postal service represents an infrastructure that hinders the plane, preventing it from flying in its usual sense, but allowing it to travel greater distances via airmail than its original design ever intended.

Inviting us to assemble and reassemble things in our minds, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro's works present alternate views of the world: tracing trajectories through time and space and reimagining our relationship with the objects and systems that surround us. Using found materials, generic products and mass-produced structures, their open-ended works reach into the future and back through the past. In this way they excavate shared memories and find beauty in the imaginative potential of sculptural form, revealing gaps between our grand aspirations and everyday reality.

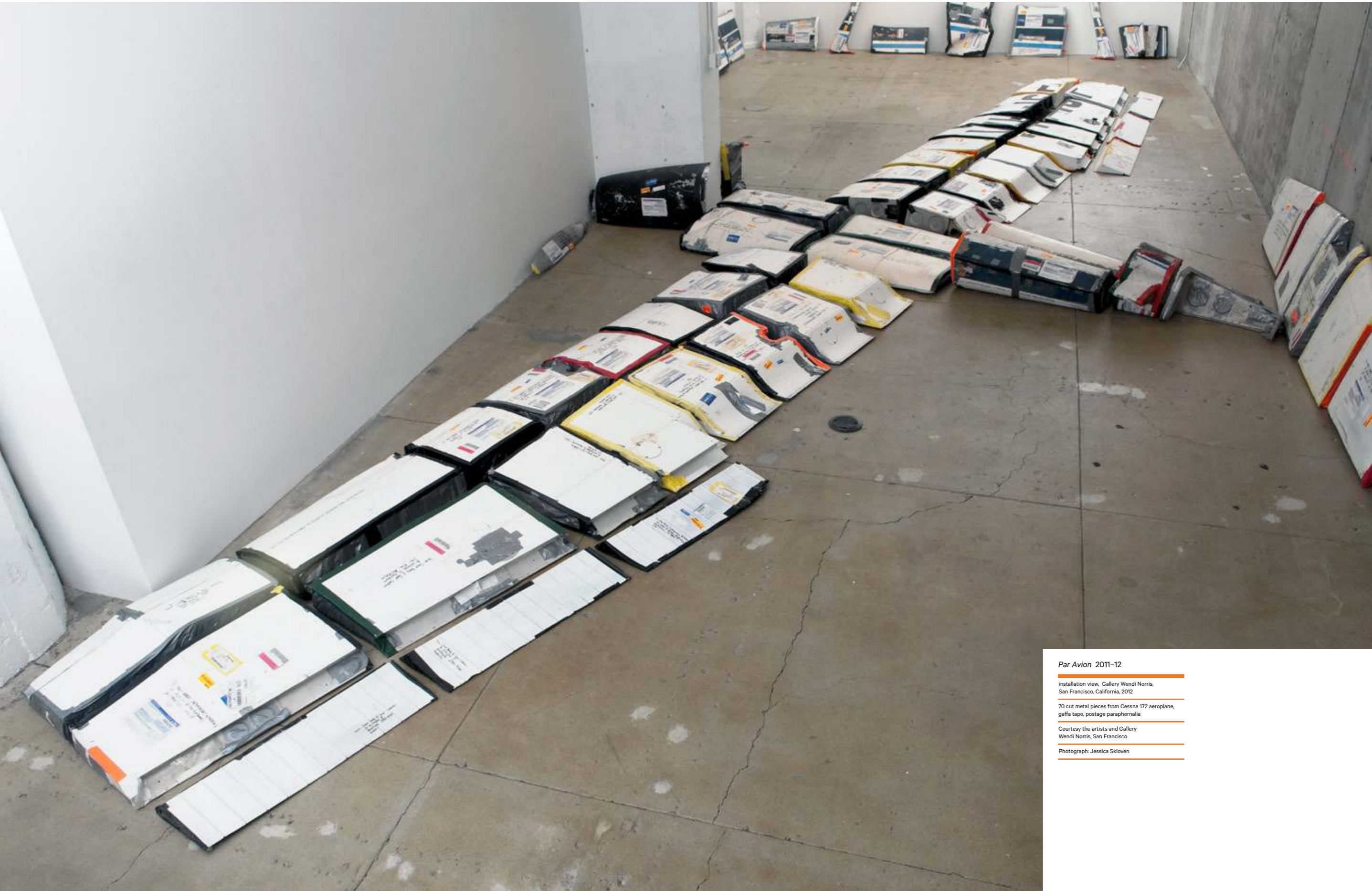
**Anna Davis**

Curator

Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

## Notes

- 1 Rem Koolhaas, 'Junkspace', *October*, vol. 100, 'Obsolescence', Spring 2002, pps. 175–6.
- 2 Healy and Cordeiro both had solo practices before beginning to collaborate in 2001.
- 3 In the *Cordial Home Project* (2003) a house was demolished, sorted into its constituent parts, the pieces cut down and layered into a rectangular edifice at Artspace, Sydney. In *Not Under My Roof* (2008) a house was separated from its footings and sliced to retrieve the floor which was then hung on the gallery wall as part of the *Optimism* exhibition at GOMA, Brisbane.
- 4 From an email interview between Hou Hanru and Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, July 2012.
- 5 *ibid.*
- 6 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854), introduction by Bill McKibben, pp. xi, Beacon Press, London, 2004.
- 7 Email conversation with the artists, August 2012.
- 8 'Life Span Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro' video interview at the 2009 Venice Biennale, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbfBqtEex6I&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbfBqtEex6I&feature=relmfu) (accessed 10/07/2012).
- 9 The artists explain, 'it was important to use tapes that were pre-loved and filled with data, each symbolizing in a sense a person's life and their life experiences', *ibid.*
- 10 TARDIS is an acronym that stands for Time And Relative Dimensions In Space.
- 11 *Sameday Service or Sooner*, artist statement, 2008.
- 12 The Creation Museum, <http://creationmuseum.org/> (accessed 20/07/2012).
- 13 From an email interview between Hou Hanru and Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, July 2012.
- 14 *Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro, MANUAL*, Gittte Weise Gallery, Berlin, 2008, [www.gittteweisegallery.com/pastexhib/H&C\\_B08.html](http://www.gittteweisegallery.com/pastexhib/H&C_B08.html) (accessed 15/07/2012).
- 15 The title of the artists' LEGO series is a reference to a lesson Christine McAuliffe was to present to American school children during the Challenger space mission. The titles of the individual works correspond to the number of seconds that had elapsed after take-off when the original photograph was taken.
- 16 *SPACE SHUTTLE MISSION STS-51L*, press kit, January 1986, <http://history.nasa.gov/sts51lpresskit.pdf> (accessed 11/08/2012).
- 17 Paul Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2003, p. 24.
- 18 *ibid.*, p.1.
- 19 Email conversation with the artists, August 2012.
- 20 When creating *Stasis* the artists were inspired by the incredible flight of West German teenager Mathias Rust who in 1987, during the last vestiges of the Cold War, flew a Cessna airplane from Helsinki to Moscow's Red Square in an attempt to deliver a message of peace to Mikhail Gorbachev. They were also inspired by the darker side of this impetus, which can be seen in an event known as the 'Tampa air crash' where a 15 year old school boy inspired by the 9/11 attacks died after flying a Cessna into a Bank of America building in Tampa, Florida in 2002.
- 21 *Stasis*, artist statement, 2012.
- 22 Virilio, *op cit.*, p. 119.
- 23 From an email interview between Hou Hanru and Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro, July 2012.



*Par Avion* 2011-12

installation view, Gallery Wendi Norris,  
San Francisco, California, 2012

70 cut metal pieces from Cessna 172 aeroplane,  
gaffa tape, postage paraphernalia

Courtesy the artists and Gallery  
Wendi Norris, San Francisco

Photograph: Jessica Skloven

Par Avion  
(production images) 2011-12

Photographs of the artwork in  
preparation of installation

Courtesy the artists and Gallery  
Wendi Norris, San Francisco

Photograph: Kelly McDonald (this page),  
Arnel Rodriguez (opposite)



Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro



*I Hope Tomorrow is  
Just Like Today 2008*

routed IKEA furniture  
Belgiorno-Nettis Foundation Collection  
Image courtesy the artists and  
Gitte Weise Gallery, Berlin  
Photograph: Uwe Walter



*Future Remnant* 2011

dinosaur fossil replica, IKEA  
furnishings, cable binding

Courtesy the artists and Nature Morte, Berlin





*Luck Exists in the Leftovers* 2010  
 installation view, Setouchi  
 International Art Festival, 2010  
 dinosaur fossil replica, cable binding,  
 discarded furniture and household objects  
 Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

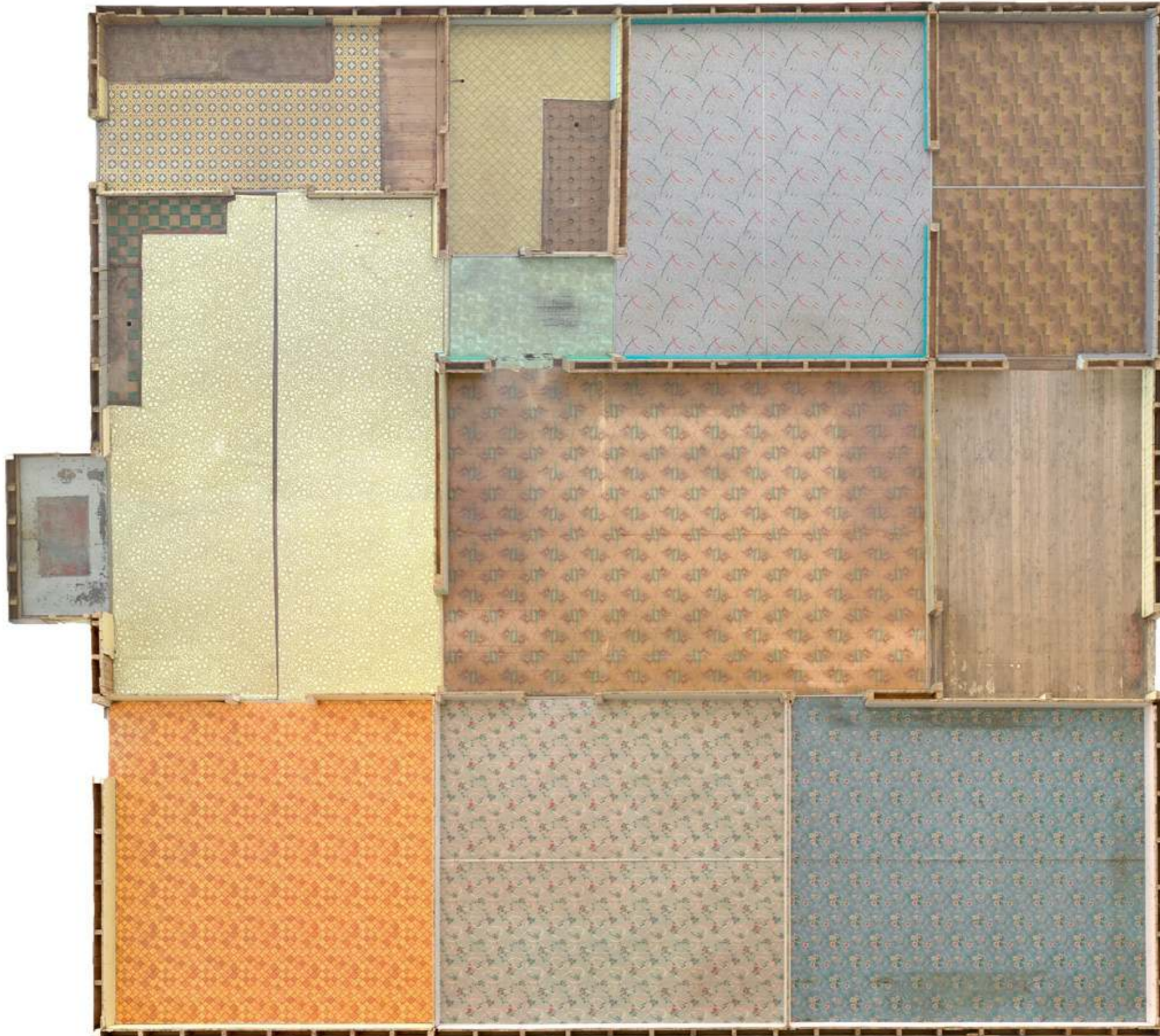
*Luck Exists in the Leftovers*  
 (detail) 2010

installation view, Setouchi  
 International Art Festival, 2010  
 dinosaur fossil replica, cable binding,  
 discarded furniture and household objects  
 Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro









*Not Under My Roof 2009*

type C photograph

Private collection, Sydney

Photograph: Natasha Harth,  
Queensland Art Gallery



*Not Under My Roof*  
(production images) 2009

Photograph of the farm house before demolition

Photograph: Queensland Art Gallery

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro





Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

*Sameday Service or Sooner* 2008

MDF, cardboard, acrylic, tie-down ratchets





*Deceased Estate* 2004

Lambda print

Collection of Newcastle Art Gallery

Photograph: Christian Schnur



Wohnwagon 2006-07

caravan, Euro pallets  
 Private collection, Hobart

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro



Wohnwagon 2006-07

type C photographs, 6

Private collection, Hobart

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



Cordial Home Project 2003

type C LED prints, 6

Museum of Contemporary Art,  
purchased with funds provided by the  
Coe and Mordant families, 2006

Photograph: Liz Ham



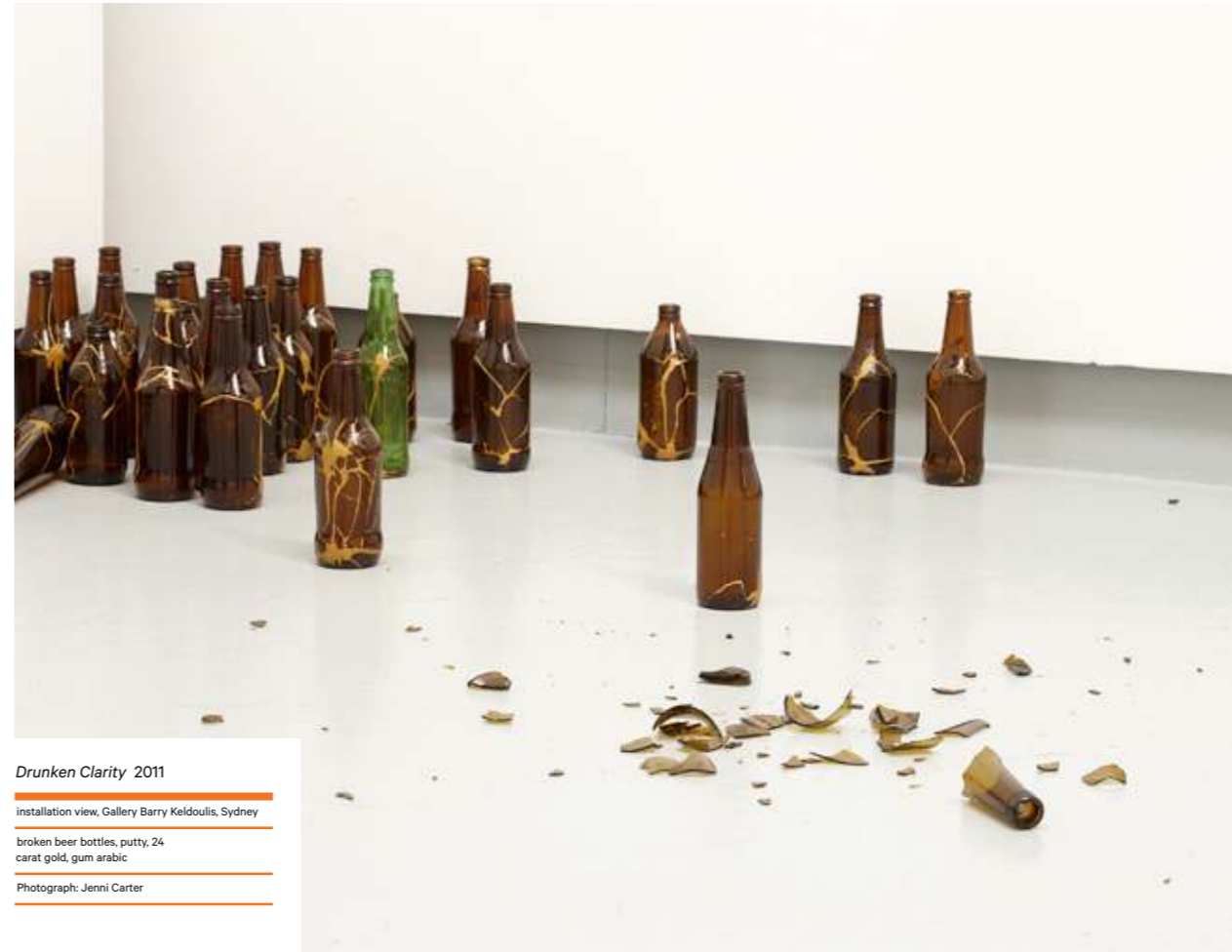


Left

*Drunken Clarity*  
 (production image) 2011

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro



*Drunken Clarity* 2011

installation view, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney

broken beer bottles, putty, 24  
 carat gold, gum arabic

Photograph: Jenni Carter



*Dust to Dust* 2008

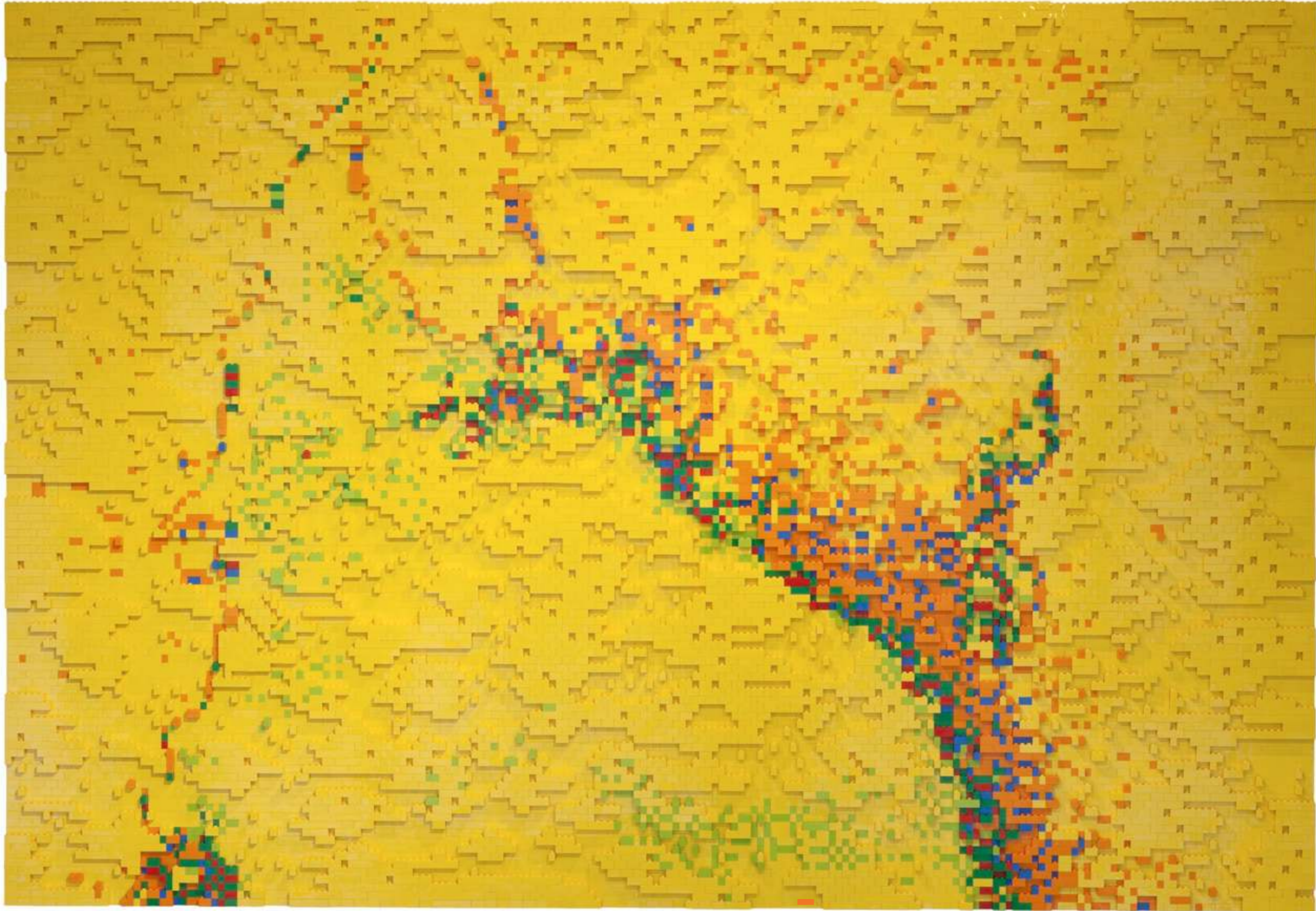
pulverised IKEA LACK tables, wooden vitrines

Courtesy the artists and Gitte Weise Gallery, Berlin  
and Nature Morte, Berlin

Photograph: Uwe Walter

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro



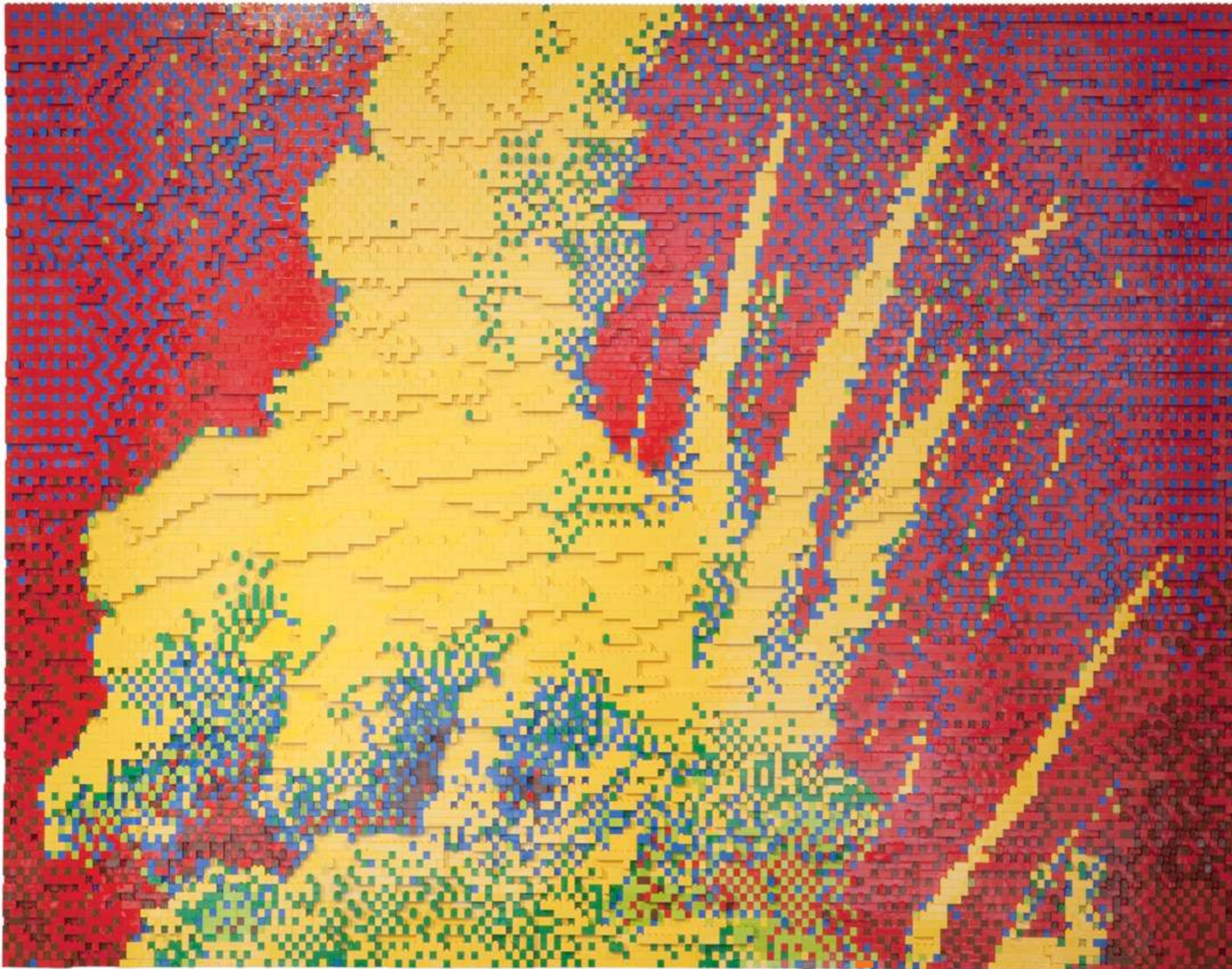


T + 64\_yellow 2010

LEGO

Private collection, Sydney

Photograph: Ryuchi Maruo



T+78\_red&yellow 2010

---

LEGO

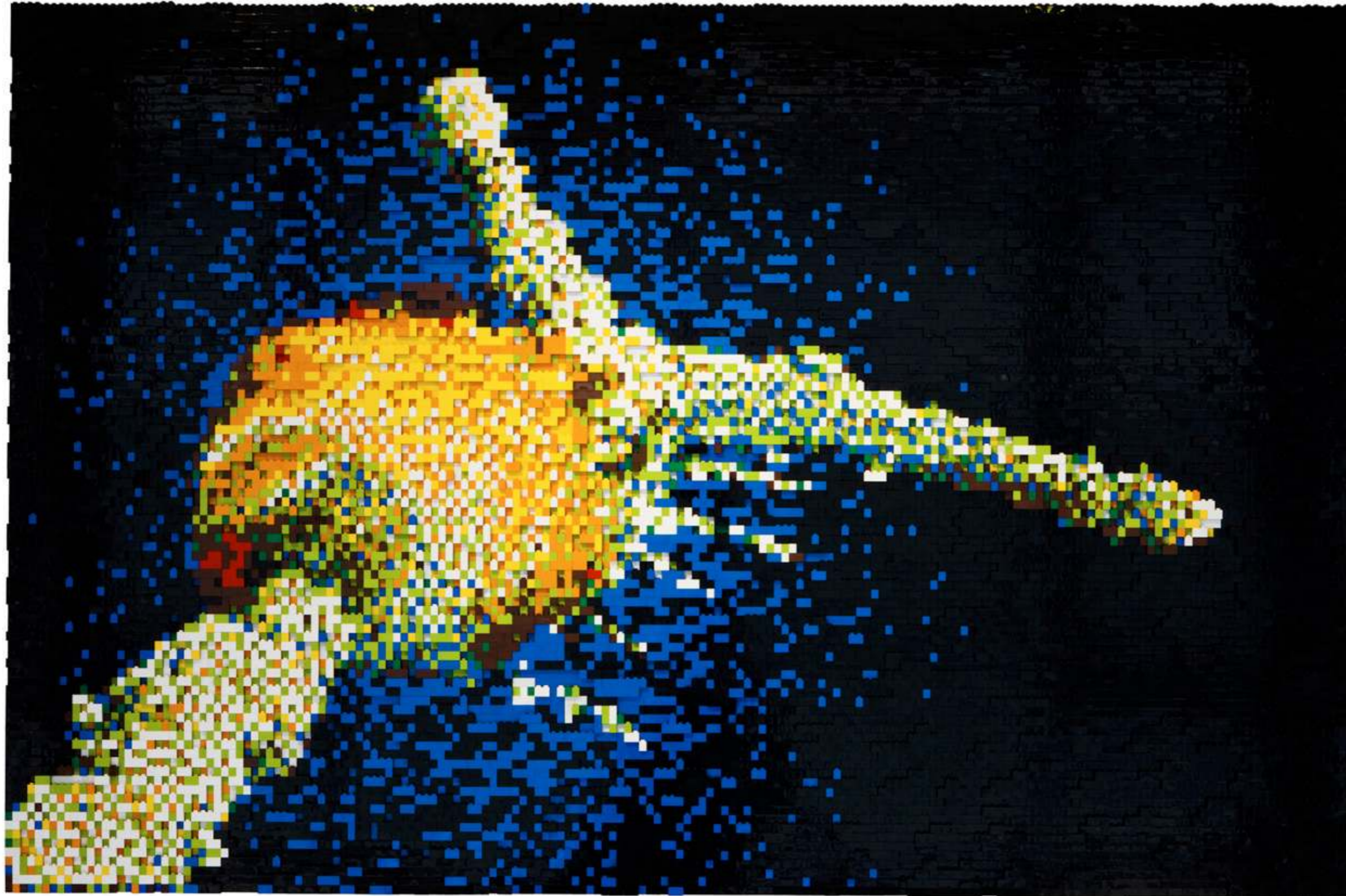
---

Private collection, Sydney

---

Photograph: Ryuchi Maruo

---

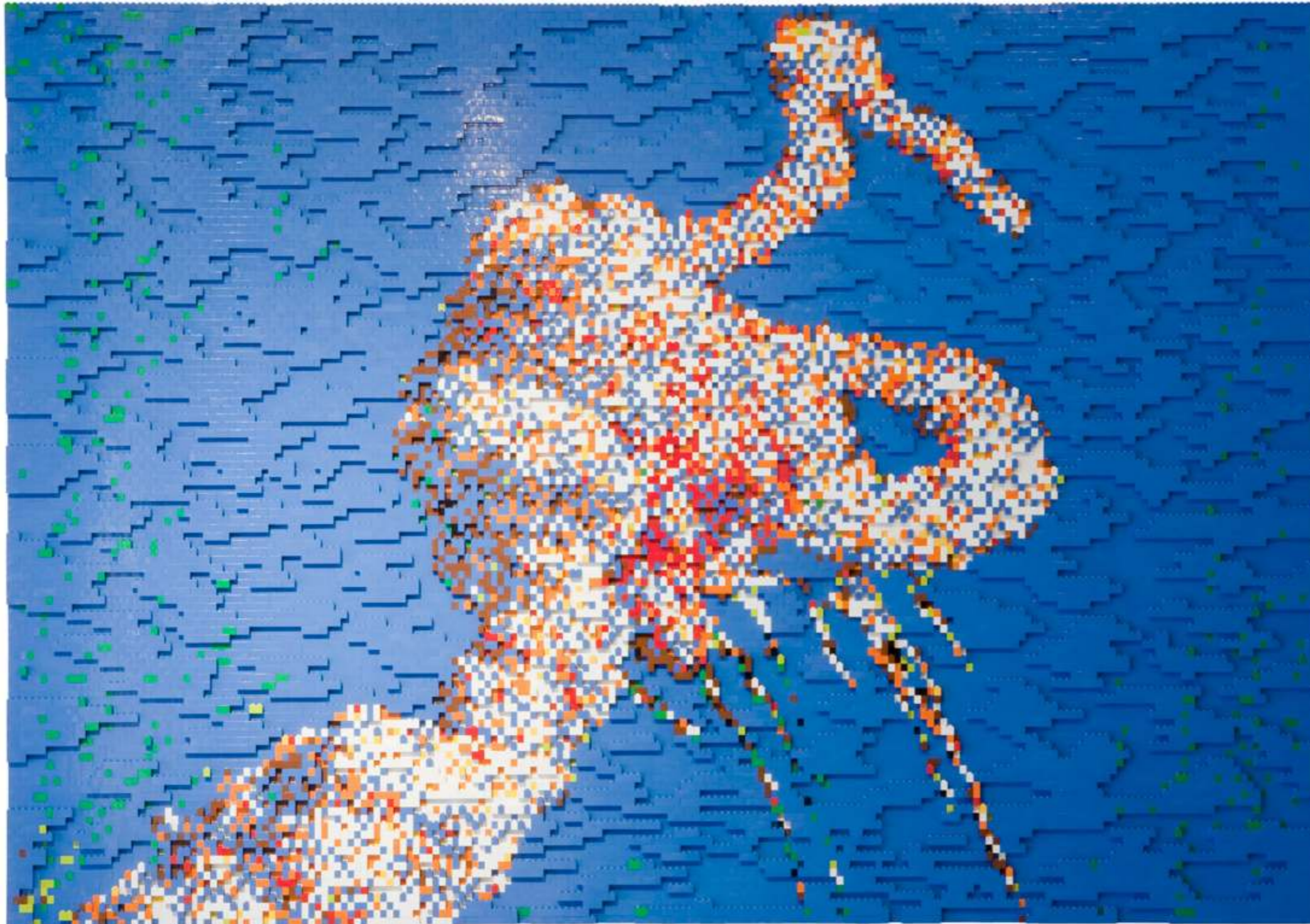


*T +79\_black 2010*

LEGO

Private collection, Sydney

Photograph: Ryuchi Maruo



T + 85\_blue 2010

---

LEGO

---

Private collection, Sydney

---

Photograph: Ryuchi Maruo

*Hamper*  
(9 months and an hangover) 2006

9 months of printed matter waste,  
picnic table, beer bottles

Museum of Contemporary Art,  
purchased with funds provided by the  
Coe and Mordant families, 2006





Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

*Life Span* 2009

digital print

Private collection, Sydney

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



*Life Span (detail)* 2009

175,774 VHS video cassettes, silicone

Museum of Contemporary Art,  
purchased with funds donated by  
Andrew and Cathy Cameron, 2011

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



# List of works and biography

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

*Deceased Estate 2004*

Lambda print  
110 x 141 cm  
Collection of Newcastle Art Gallery

*Life Span 2009*

digital print  
36 x 45 cm  
Private collection, Sydney

*Hamper (9 months and  
an hangover) 2006*

9 months of printed matter waste,  
picnic table, beer bottles  
65 x 88 x 140 cm  
Museum of Contemporary Art,  
purchased with funds provided by the  
Coe and Mordant families, 2006

*Cordial Home Project 2003*

type C LED prints, 6  
50.8 x 76.2 cm  
Museum of Contemporary Art,  
purchased with funds provided by the  
Coe and Mordant families, 2006

*Par Avion 2011-12*

70 cut metal pieces from Cessna 172 aeroplane,  
gaffa tape, postage paraphernalia  
dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artists and Gallery  
Wendi Norris, San Francisco

*Future Remnant 2011*

dinosaur fossil replica, IKEA  
furnishings, cable binding  
285 x 180 x 485 cm irreg  
Courtesy the artists and Nature Morte, Berlin

*T+78\_red&yellow 2010*

LEGO  
112 x 143 cm  
Private collection, Sydney

*T +79\_ black 2010*

LEGO  
96 x 144 cm  
Private collection, Sydney

*T + 85\_blue 2010*

LEGO  
113 x 160.5 cm  
Private collection, Sydney

*T + 64\_yellow 2010*

LEGO  
111 x 143 cm  
Private collection, Sydney

*Not Under My Roof 2009*

type C photograph  
88.2 x 82.5 cm  
Private collection, Sydney

*Sameday Service or Sooner 2008*

MDF, cardboard, acrylic, tie-down ratchets  
220 x 138 x 130 cm irreg

*Dust to Dust 2008*

pulverised IKEA LACK tables, wooden vitrines  
50 x 50 x 120 cm

*I Hope Tomorrow is Just*

*Like Today 2008*  
routed IKEA furniture  
230 x 320 x 15 cm  
Belgiorno-Nettis Foundation Collection

*Wohnwagon 2006-07*

caravan, Euro pallets  
dimensions variable  
Private collection, Hobart

*World LACK 2006*

customised atlases, IKEA LACK shelving  
79 x 110 x 27 cm  
Private collection, Sydney

*Stasis 2012*

aeroplane, scaffolding  
10m<sup>3</sup>  
This project was commissioned by the  
MCA and has been realised thanks to  
the support of the Keir Foundation and  
the Australia Council for the Arts

*Drunken Clarity 2011*

broken beer bottles, putty, 24  
carat gold, gum arabic  
dimensions variable

*Takadanobaba 2005*

Lambda print  
120 x 148 cm

Unless otherwise noted all works are courtesy  
the artists and Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney

**CLAIRE HEALY**

Born 1971 Melbourne.  
Lives and works Sydney and Berlin

**SEAN CORDEIRO**

Born 1974 Sydney.  
Lives and works Sydney and Berlin.

**Selected solo exhibitions (as a collaboration)**

- 2011 *Are We there Yet?*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC  
*Par Avion*, Frey Norris Gallery, San Francisco, USA  
*Future Furnishing*, Nature Morte, Berlin  
*Un-Built Environs*, Gallery Reis, Singapore  
*Drunken Clarity*, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney
- 2010 *Where We've Been, Where We're Going, Why*, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney
- 2009 *Premis*, La BF15, Lyon, France
- 2008 *Manual*, Gitte Wiese Gallery, Berlin  
*The Flats*, Bicentennial Park, Homebush Bay, Sydney  
*Disruptive Colouration*, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney
- 2007 *The Paper Trail*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
*Primary Producers*, Performance Space at Carriageworks, Sydney
- 2006 *Custom Living*, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney  
*Flat Pack*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin
- 2005 *Home Invasion*, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney  
*When the Bulls Fight, the Calves get Crushed*, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu
- 2004 *Deceased Estate*, Glashaus, Weil am Rhein, Germany  
*Tollgate*, Kleinhüngingen Kunst Kiosk, Basel, Switzerland
- 2003 *The Cordial Home Project*, Artspace, Sydney
- 2001 *Location to Die For*, Kudos Gallery, Sydney

**Selected group exhibitions (as a collaboration)**

- 2011 *Right to the City*, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney
- 2010 *The Ultimate Field Trip*, Akiyoshidai International Art Village, Yamaguchi, Japan  
*Once Removed*, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney  
*Setouchi International Art Festival*, Setouchi, Japan  
*Photography Group Show*, Galerie van der Mieden Antwerp, Belgium
- 2009 *Once Removed*, 53rd La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy  
*Zeigen*, Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin  
*Australian Art for Berlin*, Gitte Wiese Gallery, Berlin  
*There Goes the Neighbourhood*, Performance Space, Sydney  
*Terra Nullius*, ACC Galerie Weimar and Halle 14 Leipzig, Germany  
<< // >>, RDF Gallery, Nice, France

- 2008 *Contemporary Australia: Optimism*, Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane  
*Leading Lights*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney  
*In the Space of Elsewhere*, Stanley Picker Gallery, Kingston University, London  
*Best of Discovery*, SH Contemporary, Shanghai  
*Nothing of North Unknown*, Galerie Alexandra Saheb, Berlin  
*Urban Jealousy*, Tehran Biennial, Tehran  
*Hijacked*, Neunplus, Berlin  
*Contemporary Photography from Australia*, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania  
*Australian*, Casula Powerhouse, Sydney
- 2007 ABN AMRO Emerging Artist Award, Sydney  
*Air de Berlin*, Gallery AVU, Prague  
eg., Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart  
*Slowing Down*, Glen Eira City Council Gallery, Melbourne  
*NEW07*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne  
*Sink*, Universität der Künste, Berlin
- 2006 *Strange Cargo*, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle, New South Wales  
*Adventures with Form in Space*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
*MCA Collection: New Acquisitions 2006*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney  
*Ten[d]ancy*, Elizabeth Bay House, Sydney  
*Von Angels zu Riots*, NewYorkRioTokyo, Berlin  
*Flaming Youth*, Orange Regional Gallery, Orange, New South Wales  
*Freedman Foundation Awards Exhibition*, The Depot Gallery, Sydney  
*The Year in Art*, S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
- 2005 *Home Invasion*, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney  
*Redneck Dreaming, The Lake Project*, (TAV) Gallery, Taipei  
*From Space to Place*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth
- 2004 *Maintenance, From Space to Place*, IASKA, Kellerberrin, Australia  
*Wasted Consumer Ritual, Cult Classic*, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne  
*Work, Rest, Play(escape)*, Imperial Slacks Collective, Artspace, Sydney
- 2003 *Package Tour*, Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, Sydney  
*Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Master Major and (e)merging, Martin Place, Sydney

**Selected bibliography**

- 2012 McDonald, Kelly, 'Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro: Literary Influences', *DAS SUPERPAPER*, no. 24, Aug. 2012, pp. 68–69.  
Kraft, Jessica C., 'Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro: Par Avion', *ArtAsiaPacific*, issue 78, May–June 2012, pp. 161.
- 2011 Graton, Beatrice, 'Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro: Are We There Yet?' (exhibition catalogue), Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 2011.  
Tepper, Rachel, *Corcoran Exhibition 'Are We There Yet?' Explores Space Travel with Beer Cans, Legos*, Huffington Post, 1 Dec. 2011, www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/01/corcoran-are-we-there-yet-photos\_n\_1121057.html#s508282&title=Are\_We\_There\_Young, Jeffrey R., 'Caught between the Moon and a Jug of Cheese Puffs', *New Scientist*, 2 Dec. 2011 www.newscientist.com/blogs/culturelab/2011/12/caught-between-the-moon---and-a-jug-of-cheese-puffs.html.  
Gilbert, Sophie, 'Art Preview: "Are We There Yet?" at the Corcoran Gallery of Art', *Washingtonian*, www.washingtonian.com/blogs/afterhours/print/2011/12/02/art-preview-are-we-there-yet-at-the-corcoran-gallery-of-art.php.  
'Corcoran Gallery of Art presents Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro: Are we there yet?', *Art Daily*, 5 Dec. 2011, www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int\_sec=11&int\_new=52187&int\_mod=1#UCnP\_FYgdIE.  
O'Sullivan, Jane, 'Cordeiro & Healy Exhibit in Washington', *Australian Art Collector*, 28 Nov. 2011.
- 2010 Fenner, Felicity, *Once Removed* (exhibition catalogue), Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney, 2010.  
Healy, Claire; Cordeiro, Sean, 'Where We've Been, Where We're Going, Why' (exhibition catalogue), Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney, 2010.  
Bailey-Charteris, Bronwyn, 'Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro', *Das Superpaper*, no. 13, July 2010.
- 2009 Crosby, Alexandra, 'Venice Biennale: the future now, minus nations', *RealTime Magazine*, issue 92, Aug.–Sept. 2009, p. 14.  
Bond, Tony, Gapps, Stephen, Burrows, David, *Dark Matter: works by Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro*, 2009.  
Millner, Jacqueline, 'Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro: stack and ruin', *Broadsheet*, vol. 38.2, June–Aug. 2009.

- 2008 Birmingham, John (ed), *Contemporary Australia: Optimism* (exhibition catalogue), Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2008.  
 Kent, Rachel (ed. *Art & Australia*), *Current: Contemporary Art from Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney 2008.  
 Kent, Rachel, 'ShContemporary 08: Australia and New Zealand', *ArtAsiaPacific*, vol. 59, July–Aug. 2008, p. 144.  
 Frost, Andrew, '50 Most Collectable', *Australian Art Collector*, Jan.–March 2008, p. 124.
- 2007 Angeloro, Dominique, Angeloro, Dan, 'Following the Paper Trail', *Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro: The Paper Trail* (exhibition catalogue), Art Gallery of New South Wales Contemporary Projects, Sydney, 2007.  
 Birch, Tony, *New07: Damiano Bertoli, Christian Capurro, Nick Devlin, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, Brendan Lee, Anastasia Klose* (exhibition catalogue), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2007.  
 Armstrong, Claire, 'Healy and Cordeiro', *Art World*, no. 1, Oct.–Nov. 2007, pp. 110–115.  
 Begg, Zanny, 'Labour of love: the collaborative practice of Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro', *Artlink*, vol. 27, no. 4, 2007, pp. 32–34.  
 Crawford, Ashley, 'Sean Cordeiro & Claire Healy', *Australian Art Collector*, no. 39, Jan.–March 2007, pp. 122–124.  
 MacAdam, Barbara A., 'Object Overruled', *ARTnews*, Dec. 2007, pp. 124–127.  
 Messer, Barbara, 'A Collaboration to Die For', *COFA Alumni Edition*, no. 19, 2007, p. 7.  
 Palmer, Daniel, 'Looking back: Themed projects', *Frieze*, no. 104, Jan.–Feb. 2007, p. 132.  
 'New07 Interviewed', *Broadsheet*, vol. 36.1, March 2007, pp. 14–19.  
 Storer, Russell, 'Ten[d]ancy at Elizabeth Bay House', *eyeline*, no. 63, pp. 16–20.  
 Turner, Jonathan, 'Package Holiday', *NEW07* (exhibition catalogue), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2007, pp. 42–47.
- 2006 Angeloro, Dominique, 'No Fixed Address', *College of Fine Arts Magazine*, no. 15, Summer 2006, pp. 18–19.  
 Colless, Edward, 'Home and Away', *Australian Art Collector*, no. 38, Oct.–Dec. 2006.  
 Frost, Andrew, 'Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro', *Australian Art Collector*, no. 37, July–Sept. 2006, pp. 162–163.  
 Storer, Russell, *MCA Collection: New Acquisitions 2006* (exhibition catalogue), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006.  
 Mania, Astrid, 'Self Storage', *Adventures with Form in Space* (exhibition catalogue), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2006, pp. 26–27.  
 Mitzevich, Nick et al., *Strange Cargo* (exhibition catalogue), Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle, New South Wales, 2006, pp. 26–27.  
 Palmer, Daniel, 'Artists Invade History', *realtime*, no. 75, p. 52.  
 Rees, Simon, et al., *Small Works by Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro* (exhibition catalogue), *Kunstlerhaus Bethanien*, Berlin, 2006.  
 Wahjudi, Claudia, 'There is a Life After the Trailer Park: on Sean Cordeiro & Claire Healy's flatpack' *Sean Cordeiro & Claire Healy* (exhibition catalogue), Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney, 2006.  
 Walker, Wendy, 'The memorable: ephemeral', *The Anne & Gordon Samstag, International Visual Arts Scholarship* (exhibition catalogue), University of South Australia, 2006.
- 2005 Burrows, David, Cordeiro, Sean, Healy, Claire, Storer, Russell, *Home Invasion: works by Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro*, Artspace, Sydney, 2005.  
*The Cordial Home Project* (exhibition catalogue), Artspace, Sydney, 2005.
- 2003 Chapman, Chris, 'Compression Chamber', *eyeline*, Winter 2003.  
 Gallasch, Keith, 'Sean Cordeiro and Claire Healy', *Scan 2003, realtime*, no. 57, Oct.–Nov. 2003.  
 Mottau, Denver, 'Housing Affordability Concerns Captured in Art is a Winner', *The Paper Issue*, no. 63, Sept.–Oct. 2003.  
 'The Cordial Home Project', *Art Monthly*, Feb. 2003.

# Interview

# The vehicle is the destination!

This interview between Claire Healy, Sean Cordeiro and Hou Hanru took place by email across the oceans, from San Francisco to Sydney via Beijing and Paris after an initial meeting in Sydney earlier in 2012. This process reflects coherently the nature of Healy and Cordeiro's work as well as how art in general unfolds in our time...

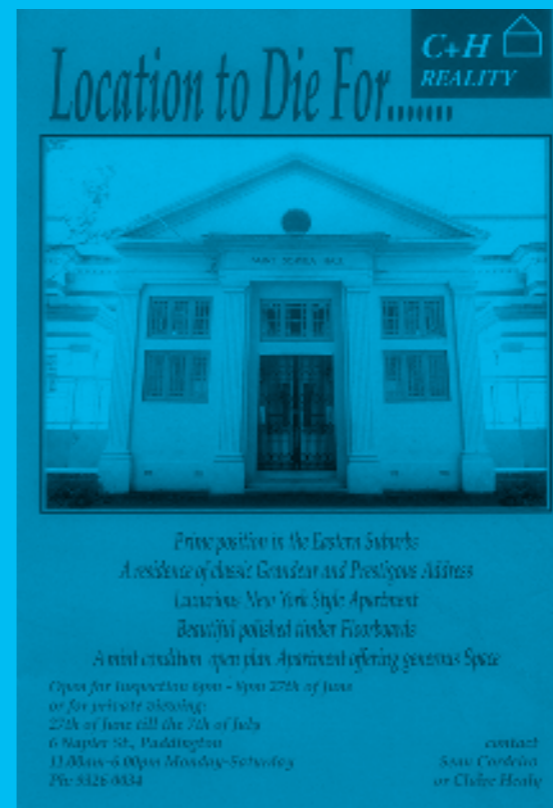


**Hou Hanru:** You have both worked as individual artists. When did you start working together? What's the motivation to decide to work together? What does collaboration mean to you?

**Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro:** Yes, we each had solo careers for approximately a decade, and it was not until we had a show together in Kudos Gallery in 2001, that we decided to do an installation together. The space was large, and we both intended to show a collection of individual works but actually thought it would be more fun to create something that responded to the space. So we staged a mock

sale of the property. We placed a huge real estate advertisement using real estate jargon out the front of the gallery. We also had a contact phone number one could call if they were interested. Upon calling the phone number one was confronted with war sounds and an estate agent never making it to the phone amongst every sound of a war zone we could collect. The project was called *Location to Die For*, the space was mapped out as if a floor plan for a house, using sand bags to demarcate each room. On the opening night there was a military drill, (at the time we were both living in pre-Olympic Sydney, in spaces that were being renovated, which we thought was akin to living in a war zone).

We didn't seriously think that we would begin collaborating from that point on, as we each had our



solo practices. We had discussed our idea for the *Cordial Home Project*, but realised it would need major funding, and so applied for our first grant together. We were both doing our graduate studies at the time with very large-scale works and we were forever helping each other out, either with logistics, or technical support and even financial support.

We were very lucky and our grant application for the *Cordial Home Project* was successful, so we embarked on this, which took more than a year to produce and meanwhile our solo practices were merging in a sense too. Conceptual ideas were coming up in each other's work, and the physical help continued. We reached a point when we realised we were already collaborating in a sense.

Collaboration means we are never lonely; a lot of our artist friends, particularly painters, express that they feel so isolated in the studio. You can often get bogged down with an idea or have no idea and start feeling insecure about it all, and if another is around the dialogue can often pull you out of that frame of mind and get things moving! Collaboration means you can chat about work over breakfast or in the car.

There are also many facets to being an artist, so it seems easier to carry out certain tasks, and to see it through to the very end. So often works can get dropped, but when you collaborate, it seems important to carry out a specific task in order for another part of the project to be realised, which may be getting done at the same time. It keeps up momentum. It feels more efficient: different skills

*Picnic (Teufelssee) 2008*

digital print

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



can be brought together to make a stronger unit. On another note, working as a collaboration can be a little more honest; how many solo artists out there are actually employing nameless others to create their work at every level of the creative process?

### So collaboration leads to embracing the other...

Embracing the other... Well, as for the way we work, there needs to be a period of time to pass and distill the initial concept or idea that the other person proposes. We often dislike each other's initial concepts, and end up having to write them down and shelve them until the right moment comes along. Sometimes it's like the movie 'Inception': one person talks about an idea and then that

idea grows in the other person's head and then suddenly they feel it's their idea! We have very different ideas about everything but somehow we have a very similar understanding when it comes to spatial formalities and aesthetic decisions.

### The notion of inhabiting is somehow another key element in your thoughts and work when your life has become more nomadic. You were living in Berlin before returning to Australia. How has this tension influenced your new thoughts and work?

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro



The vehicle is the destination!

*Deceased Estate*  
(production image) 2004

Photograph of found detritus from artists' warehouse in Weil am Rhein, Germany

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro

Our artwork and lifestyle really inform each other. Throughout our artistic collaboration we have investigated various modes of living and working and this feeds into our creative output. It's a funny thing but in many ways it is easier to be an Australian artist living overseas, than to be an artist at home in Australia. But that's another story.

Because we are sculptors, our attention naturally gravitates towards mass, form and space – when you combine these elements with movement – ideas that are sculptural mutate into ideas that are more often considered in terms of international shipping and global marketing. But these are the themes that drive our work. Living in Europe gave us the opportunity to watch the way things move and flow across the continent. At one time we were squatting

in a warehouse behind a giant supermarket on the border of Germany and Switzerland. Chestnuts were sold from China, pineapples from Cuba, tomatoes from Israel; the networking it involved boggled our minds. But in the end all it meant to us was that we didn't have to pay for any fresh produce. We just ate the stuff that they threw out to make more room for the next shipment from a corner of the globe.

Now, being back in Australia... some people talk about Los Angeles in terms of it being built to the scale of a car rather than human scale. Maybe Australia has been built to the scale of the airplane. Australia is a huge country but there is very little dialectic difference in language from one edge to the other. If someone were to drug you and fly from Sydney to Perth (a four hour trip), on waking from

*Par Avion*  
(production image) 2011

Photograph of the aeroplane being cut up

Courtesy the artists and Gallery Wendi Norris,  
San Francisco

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



your induced sleep, you might think that you had been dropped off in Parramatta (a thirty minute car ride); the language and architecture are so similar. Our interest in movement is piqued by the systems that operate in Australia to create this kind of homogeny and our new work explores this.

This leads to my next question: nomadism seems to be at the heart of your way of living, thoughts and practice. With a recent work involving a dismantled plane mailed in pieces to a gallery in San Francisco, and your latest

**project installing a whole plane in front of the MCA for your solo exhibition, this reaches a pinnacle!**

Traditional nomads move around to seek different food sources and also to inhabit spaces that offer the best environment according to the particular season. International artists and curators do the same thing: they follow the exhibitions and the residencies, which basically boils down to the search for optimum food and shelter!

We are interested in nomadism but we are not interested in utopian ideas of freedom commonly associated with nomadism; we are more interested

in the parameters that modern nomadism operates within. For instance our work *Par Avion* is informed by our previous work *Wohnwagon*. For *Wohnwagon* we shipped an old caravan from Germany to Australia. The caravan was irrevocably altered by this shift after it was cut into sections that were able to fit on Euro pallets. In *Par Avion* the international airmail system was used to transport a Cessna 172 from Roma Queensland, to San Francisco and then to Sydney for the MCA exhibition. The plane was cut into pieces that fit within the standards dictated by the postal service. These pieces were then treated as giant postcards: addresses and stamps were directly fixed to the parts and these parts duly airmailed to their destination.

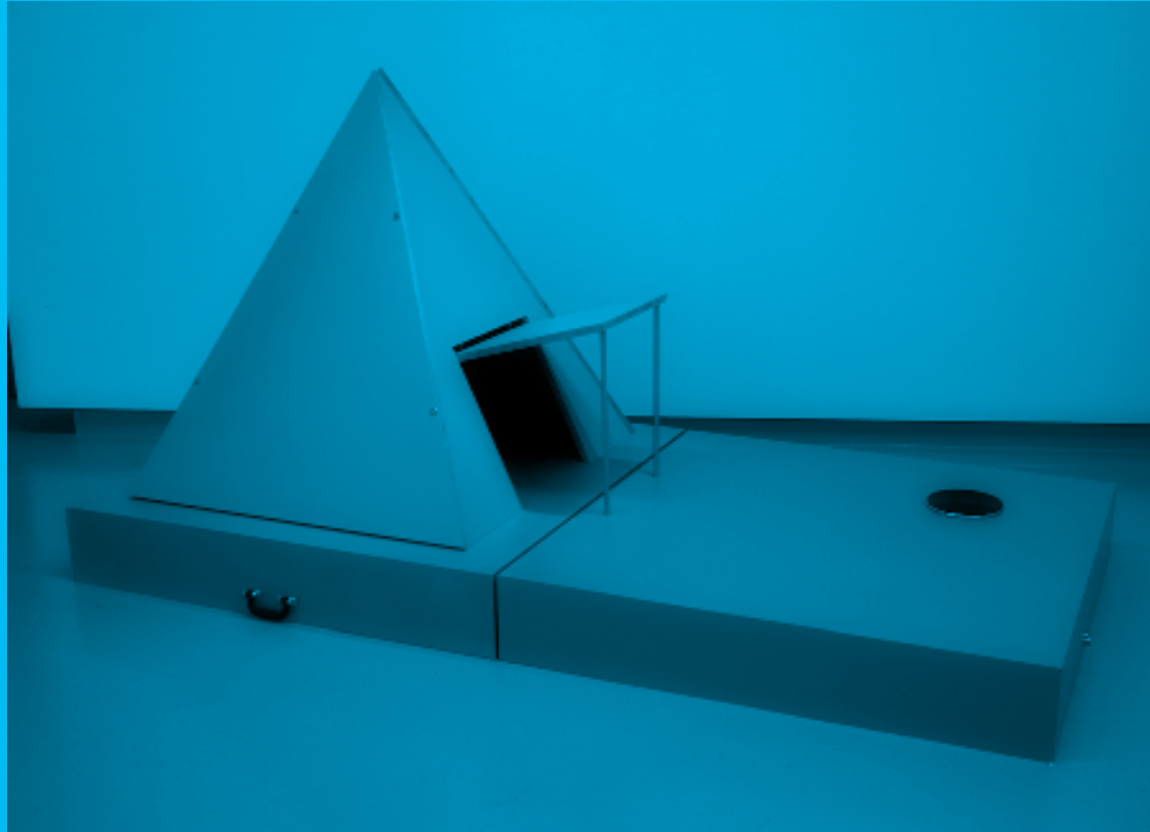
These works are made to highlight the tension between the individual will to move and the systematic constrictions that are at work within these structures.

I'm also interested in, once again, the tension between travelling and dwelling. Over recent years, you have developed projects that involved existing furniture, housewares, and personal effects of the inhabitants of given sites in various parts of the world. I have seen this part of the work generate a very interesting social dimension.

Once a Jolly Swagman  
(Dessert Spice) 2008

ply, acrylic, hot plate, handle, wheels

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro



### Can you elaborate more on this?

Aside from the systematic parameters that make international travel possible there are also the internal, psychological buffers that make travel possible. Not every traveler has the *savoir-faire* of Sir Richard Burton. Nomadism not only offers an expanded vision of the world, it also involves culture shock, alienation and loneliness. The story of the modern nomad is the quest for novelty versus the need for comfort and familiarity. In this sense, the ghost of Howard Hughes haunts our practice. Howard Hughes had the monetary means to be anywhere in the world, anytime he wished. But he had to try

creating buffers to deal with this omnipresence. Like Phileas Fogg he kept to a single time wherever he was in the world. He blocked out windows, replicated his living spaces with the same furnishings, ate the same meals and drove the same model car in an attempt to help his mind cope with the change. People who work in the diplomatic corps or travel a lot for business or culture do similar things, such as buying the same IKEA furniture for each continent they live on, eating at Paul's patisserie and shopping at Carrefour. Our works *I Hope Tomorrow is Just Like Today* and *Takadanobaba* address how consumption is used to create these generic comfort zones.

Wohnwagon  
(production image) 2006–07

Photographs of the caravan part way through being deconstructed

Photograph: Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro



The vehicle is the destination!

Conrad sums it up well in his description of seamen in *Heart of Darkness*:

*Their minds are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them—the ship; and so is their country—the sea. One ship is very much like another, and the sea is always the same. In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance.*

Which brings us back to your mention of *Stasis*, our aeroplane suspended in scaffolding in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art. The vehicle is the destination! And when the vehicle is the destination,

why not just fly straight into a building rather than hassling around with customs at the airport?

With a certain sense of humour, and even irony, you are proposing to see the vehicle as the destination. This reminds me of English architect Cedric Price's proposal to build an airport that flies with the plane, or a bird cage that flies with the bird. Your project is located at the Museum of Contemporary Art. But it intends to go beyond the spatial constraints of the institution.





Furthermore, it invites us to skip the bureaucratic constraints of border control, customs and the airport – one of the most evident and overwhelmingly impressive symbols of the power of the State institution. Doesn't this manifest a strong will to challenge the established order defined by the ideology of stability and control of institutional powers in general? Then, the nice-looking but slightly misplaced plane, somehow highlighting your artistic and even

political intentions, seems to become a conveyor of social and political critique. Do you agree, in the end, despite your refusal of utopianism, that one should understand your work, as well as your lifestyle, as an attempt to resist being institutionalised? Perhaps, this is exactly what inhabiting really means in our time: inevitably oscillating between settling and nomadism.

We only refuse utopianism in the same way a jilted partner refuses love: we have been let down by something we want to believe in, boo hoo to us!



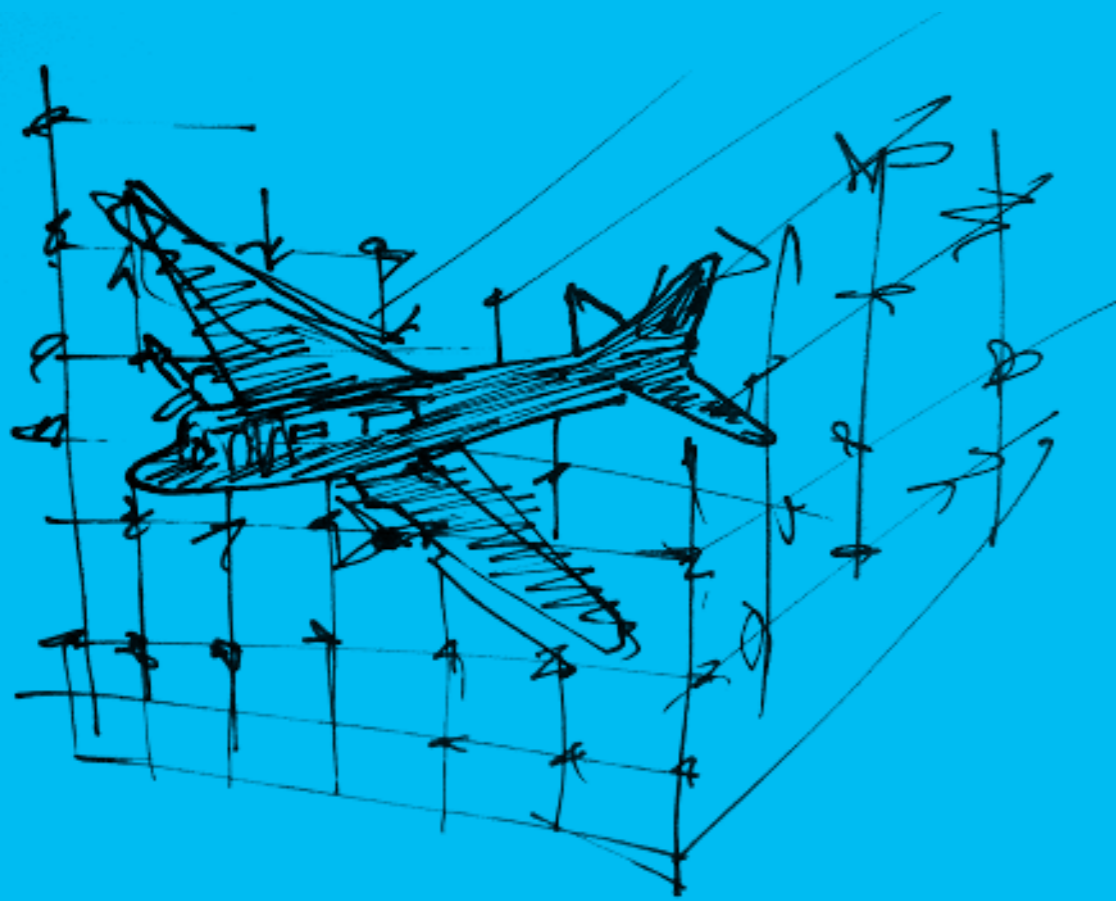
Our relationship to the institution is much like any individual's relationship to larger society. There is the illusion of personal free will and personal vision but in the end, every action we undertake is all part of a complex web of human networks.

We believe the artist must challenge the established order, but in what way? The super-rich challenge the order of the State by simply not paying taxes; it is estimated that there is currently \$US21 trillion stashed away in tax havens such as Switzerland and the Cayman Islands. It is crucial for the artist to operate in the slipstream. But is this the model that we ought to aspire to? Albert Einstein covers the issue in 'Why Socialism?'

The vehicle is the destination!

*Man is, at one and the same time, a solitary being and a social being ... and their specific combination determines the extent to which an individual can achieve an inner equilibrium and can contribute to the well-being of society.<sup>2</sup>*

As artists we employ a combination of nomadism and permanence to achieve the best situation to create work and live, or as you describe it – 'inhabiting'. As artists we exploit the freedom of travel to produce the headspace and conditions necessary to create work but we also rely upon the support of our native society. The trick is how to gain the support of the society we live within while still maintaining a critical stance towards the institution.



*Stasis* illustrates this point. A plane flying towards a building represents the will of an individual to take a stand against an institution. Although this is a lone gesture, it can never really be free from the society that it seeks to fight against – hence the supporting scaffolding around the plane. A parallel idea could be the image of a man buying petrol to throw a Molotov cocktail at a gas company.

Then again, a plane flying into a building may be the opposite of an act of protest; it may represent an act of colonialism. Our conflation of vehicle and destination illustrates touristic colonialism: it is Starbucks in the Forbidden Palace; it is the flipside of nomadism. It is the philosophy of the Winnebago Warrior, where every place is the same because you have brought your house with you.

As artists, it is easy for us to claim to be nomadic. But what we offer or what we represent to the countries that we visit should also be questioned. It is a sad position to be in when you believe that you are a cultural critic but in reality you are the inheritor of Gauguin's syphilitic wanderings.

But that is a depressing way to finish. Maybe the greatest gift that travel or nomadism can offer is humility, in the words of that great traveller Henry Miller:

*Over there you think of nothing but becoming President of the United States some day. Potentially every man is Presidential timber. Here it's different. Here every man is potentially a zero.*<sup>3</sup>

*Stasis*  
(production image) 2012

artists' sketch

*Stasis* 2012 commissioned by the MCA and supported by the Keir Foundation and the Australia Council for the Arts

### Hou Hanru

Chinese born writer and curator Hou Hanru is currently Director of Exhibitions and Public Programs and the Chair of the Exhibitions and Museum Studies program at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Hou is the curator of the 2013 Auckland Triennial and has previously curated the Shanghai Biennale (2000), the Gwangju Biennale (2002), 2nd Guangzhou Triennial (2005), the 10th Istanbul Biennial (2007), The 10th Lyon Biennale" (Lyon, 2009) and the French Pavilion (1999), Z.O.U. – Zone of Urgency and the Chinese Pavilion (2007) at the Venice Biennale.

### Notes

- 1 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin Classics, UK, 1988, pps. 29–30.
- 2 Albert Einstein, 'Why Socialism?', *The Monthly Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, May 1949, New York, <http://monthlyreview.org/2009/05/01/why-socialism> (accessed 10/08/2012).
- 3 Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer*, Granada Publishing Limited, Panther Books Limited, UK, 1974, pps. 154-5.

First published on the occasion of the exhibition *Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro*

**Museum of Contemporary Art Australia**  
4 October – 2 December 2012

National Library of Australia  
Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

**Author:** Davis, Anna.  
**Title:** Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro / Anna Davis, Hou Hanru.  
**Edition:** 1st ed.  
**ISBN:** 9781921034589 (pbk.)  
**Subjects:** Healy, Claire – Exhibitions. Cordeiro, Sean – Exhibitions.  
**Other Authors/Contributors:** Hanru, Hou. Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney, NSW)  
**Dewey Number:** 730.92

© Museum of Contemporary Art Limited, the artists, authors and photographers.

Copyright for the texts in this publication is held by the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the authors. Views expressed in these texts are not necessarily those of the publisher.

All rights reserved. Apart from fair dealing permitted under the copyright act, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

## Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

140 George St, The Rocks  
Sydney, Australia  
PO Box R1286  
Royal Exchange NSW 1223 Australia  
Phone 61 2 9245 2400  
Fax 61 2 9252 4361  
www.mca.com.au

### Museum of Contemporary Art Australia Project team

**Curator:** Anna Davis  
**Curatorial Assistant:** Kelly McDonald  
**Registration:** Shinae Stowe and Megan Williams  
**Installation:** Tony Mighell, Shinae Stowe, Grant Wallwork and the MCA preparators  
**Conservator:** Melanie Forward  
**Public Programs:** Clare Willcox  
**Catalogue Design:** Arnel Javier Rodríguez  
**Photography:** Jenni Carter, Liz Ham, Natasha Harth, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, Ian Hobbs, Ryuchi Maruo, Kelly McDonald, Arnel Javier Rodríguez, Christian Schnur, Jessica Skloven and Uwe Walter.

Unless otherwise noted all images are courtesy the artists and Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney. All works are © the artists.

**Paper:** Spicers Paper  
**Printer:** Peachy Print Australia  
**1<sup>st</sup> Edition of 500 copies**

### Acknowledgements

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia would like to thank Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro for their enthusiasm and dedication in the realisation of this exhibition and publication; Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney; Gallery Wendi Norris, San Francisco; Nature Morte, Berlin; the Keir Foundation; the Australia Council for the Arts; INLINK; Partridge Event Engineers; Tri-Point Rigging Services; Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority; City of Sydney Council; John Milligan. We would also like to acknowledge exhibition lenders for their generosity and assistance.

**Anna Davis** would like to thank Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro for their fantastic work and for being so wonderful to work with. Thanks are extended to Barry Keldoulis and Mary Wenholz at GBK and Julia Prezewowsky and Duncan Ballantyne-Way at Nature Morte, Berlin. Thank you to everyone at Gallery Wendi Norris especially Melissa Bernabei and Erin Yattaw for all their hard work posting Par Avion to Australia. Thank you to Hou Hanru and Philip Keir. My sincere gratitude goes to all the MCA staff. Special thanks to Curatorial Assistant Kelly McDonald for her dedication and enthusiasm. Finally, thank you to my husband Jason Gee for his love and support.

**Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro** would like to thank Louise Healy, the Cordeiros, the Healys, the Murrays, the Kinnanes, Barry Keldoulis, Mary Wenholz, Wendi Norris, Raman Frey, Melissa Bernabei, Catie Patton, Erin Yattaw, Peter Nagy, Julia Prezewowsky, Duncan Ballantyn-Way, Linda Green, Carlotta Rösner, Gitte Weise, Christopher Snee, Diego Bonetto, Cliff Rudge, Perry Taylor, John Milligan, Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris, Marissa Batemen, Marcel Cooper, Annalice Creighton, Oscar Fenner, Felicity Fenner, Rebecca Goosen, Danielle Hairs, Tony Nesbitt, Jennifer Beck, Lucy Turnbull, Lisa Paulsen, Michelle Sheins, Simon and Catriona Mordant, Penny Clive, the Belgiorno-Nettis Foundation, Newcastle Art Gallery, Anna Davis, Kelly McDonald, Shinae Stowe, Arnel Rodríguez, Grant Wallwork, Luke Turner, Tim Bannister, the Keir Foundation, Andrew and Cathy Cameron and the Australia Council for the Arts.

Supporting Sponsor

**inlink.**

*Stasis* 2012 commissioned by the MCA and supported by



*T + 85\_red&blue* (detail) 2010

LEGO

Private collection, Sydney

Photograph: Ryuchi Maruo



Trade & Investment  
Arts NSW



THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY



Planning & Infrastructure  
Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority

The Museum of Contemporary Art is assisted by the NSW Government through ARTS NSW and by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. The MCA was established through the JW Power Bequest, with assistance from the New South Wales Government.