



Vicki Couzens, *Taoram Marree Taoram Stones*, print, shown as part of G3's 2013 NAIDOC program; all images this article of work shown at G3 Artspace, Melbourne; images courtesy the artists

## G3 Artspace, Parkdale - Melbourne

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In addition to well-known public art galleries located in Melbourne's suburbs, including the Heide Museum of Modern Art in Bulleen, the Monash Gallery of Art in Wheeler's Hill, the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery in Mornington, and the McClelland Gallery & Sculpture Park in Langwarrin, which receive a mixture of public and private funds, there is a subtle swell occurring in the number of suburban and council-owned and run art galleries. What is interesting is their specific focus on contemporary art. While the Maroondah Art Gallery in Ringwood (opened in 2001) and The Substation in Newport (opened in 2008) are now reasonably well-recognised for doing this, the Wyndham Art Gallery in Werribee started a contemporary curatorial program in 2011 and, in April last year, the City of Kingston opened their new architecturally designed and inspiringly programmed G3 Artspace in Parkdale.

G3 successfully arose out of the collaborative efforts between the City of Kingston and Suters Architects, whose unique approach is to 'focus on revitalising community through their architecture'. Located about thirty-five minutes drive or less by train from Melbourne's CBD, between Mentone and Mordialloc, Kingston's mayor, John Ronke, has sited G3 as being 'an exciting addition to the City of Kingston's visual arts program (to) bring contemporary art and artists into the suburbs'. This, he says, will not only 'provide a focal point to our municipality's artistic community' but to artists across Victoria and from interstate. What is significant is that while all of these

suburban galleries are bringing new audiences to contemporary art, G3 is unique in what it has to offer to both artists and viewers.

Similar to RMIT University's Project Space in Carlton, though about half its size, G3 Artspace is a classic White Cube but for its 'fourth wall', facing onto the street, which is made entirely of glass. By being just as wide (a little over 6m) and as tall (close to 3m) as the gallery's interior, it enables a full view of the interior from outside. This is particularly advantageous to the type of work Kingston's curator-coordinator, Justin Gayner, has been programming for exhibition.

For this, Gayner focuses on two types of contemporary art. The first is the increasingly relevant and popular visual arts discipline known as expanded or spatial practice, resembling what used to be called site-specific installation art but for the conceptual, material and/or spatial approaches to the processes of production and the way it is installed in the gallery space.

The second is new media art. For this G3 is fitted out with the latest in digital technology. Along with well-situated power outlets and LCD screens being available for exhibiting works inside the gallery there is also a single high-res projector attached to the middle of the ceiling that can rotate and project onto any of the gallery's white walls. In addition, there is a large drop-down screen taking up most of the front window with an accompanying sound system. This enables moving-image works to be viewed and heard from both inside and outside of the gallery.



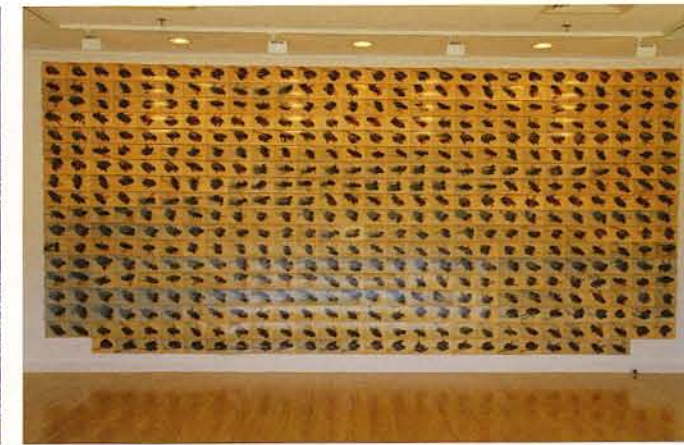
1/ Installation view (detail) of Naomi Troski's site-specific *Fosse* exhibition, G3 Artspace, 2012

2/ Megan Evans, *Funeral for 500 Bees*, 500 photographic prints, showing in the solo exhibition *Requiem* which launched G3 Artspace in April 2012

3/ Megan Evans, *Requiem* night screening, G3 Artspace, Melbourne

With the screen, Gayner has implemented a night projection program not unlike CCP's (Centre for Contemporary Photography) night projection window in Fitzroy – on the other side of town – except that the digital works will often, but not always, be part of an exhibition in the gallery. When there is no projection, the gallery's lighting is left on until late at night. By enabling all exhibitions to be viewed from the street during and beyond normal opening hours (Wed-Sat 10am-3pm), G3's front window blurs the boundaries between inside and outside, giving the work an opportunity to operate somewhere between public art and more traditional gallery art. With the increasing popularity of these newer artforms – or are they new versions of mostly 1960s and '70s artforms? – this type of space and programming is sorely needed in Melbourne. And not just for artists; as mentioned, it offers terrific exposure to a wider audience than those who usually attend galleries and museums – like the readymade crowd who attended Kingston's recently refurbished Shirley Burke Theatre which is in the same building as G3. While 'revitalising' the community, this will hopefully also encourage a wider understanding, and acceptance, of these contemporary art forms.

Regarding G3's exhibition program, Gayner's background and experience – including periods at Heide's MOMA, Gertrude Contemporary (then 200 Gertrude Street) and an internship at Artists Space in New York – is reflected in the calibre and range of innovative, engaging art he has programmed to date. His first grouping was (unintentionally) all female, including Melbourne artist Megan Evans, whose solo exhibition launched the gallery in April 2012. The next month saw an exhibition by the up-and-coming Naomi Troski, followed by a NAIDOC program in July which was continued this year: the work of Melbourne Indigenous artist Maree Clarke was on show for G3's first NAIDOC, with work by Koori (Kirrae Wurrong/Gunditjmarra) artist Vicki Couzens and Projections (from the Kingston Koorie Kids Network, on the Kingston Clock Tower) showing this year. Later in 2012 Gayner curated an exhibition involving visiting Queensland artist Jasmine Coleman with some of the artists in *Electrofringe* (October-November 2012).



G3's opening exhibition by Megan Evans, an established exhibiting artist with multidisciplinary skills in video, photography, sculpture and installation, was titled *Requiem*. Underpinned by a poetic sadness, it comprised a series of 500 photographs of individual dead bees installed in multiple rows along the gallery's back wall, a video that panned over multiple rows of dead bees laid out on white paper – recalling the rows of white crosses seen in military cemeteries – and a large, highly detailed drawing of a single bee covered in pollen while pollinating a flower. Used as a clever device in much of Evans's work to explore the idea of the 'superorganism', with the beehive seen as a living entity made up of individual cells which are the bees, here they also operate as symbols for the natural environment: like frogs, they are gradually disappearing with its destruction. Consequently, things we take for granted could soon disappear. And not just honey: through the process of pollination, bees are responsible for one in three mouthfuls of our daily food as well as the reproduction, and hence survival, of certain plants.

The most poignant element of Evans's exhibition was the DVD *Passing*, which was projected onto G3's window screen. Played in slow-motion, the filming of the swimming Koi – a Japanese ornamental fish resembling large goldfish – focused on their mouths opening and closing at the water's surface, as if they were dying in poisoned water or gasping for air. Together with an accompanying abstract sound piece – titled *Fanfare in Funeral D* – composed by Biddy Connor, this was an effective visual metaphor-as-lamentation about the impact the pollution we continue to produce in the earth's atmosphere and water is having on our environment.