

# **Creative Reportage**

*Story-Making from the Social Terrain of the Everyday*

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An exegesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Masters of Art and Design.

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

---

Signed: David Edwin Thomas

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## Abstract

*Creative Reportage* refers to a theorised arts practice methodology of making installation artworks from *everyday story* subject matter. I coined the name *story-making* to neatly encompass the ideals of this practice that concerns itself with the crafted and spatialised (re)telling of everyday stories of social relevance. This exegesis charts and explains the theorising, research and studio practice methodologies I engaged in to critique my own practice interests and those of other artists, before then conceptualising and materialising my exhibition project – a *story-maker's studio* that depicts the process of *story-making* in action.

Resonating with installation art, design and documentary making, I theorised *story-making* as a creative practice in which a *story-maker* (artist) freely applies multiple art media and methodologies to engage with the characters, history and aesthetic detail of selected stories. The developed aims of this practice are to produce narrative rich and tactile installation environments through subjective retellings of stories, which will engage the audiences in critical reflection on story topics. The highly engaging artworks and art practices of six artists, who for this exercise could be theorised as *story-makers*, are described and examined, using a series of guiding critical questions, to demonstrate key aspects of the proposed practice of *story-making*. The exegesis concludes with an account of my conceptualisation for, and production of, a *story-maker's studio* as an exhibited installation art concept, and outlines a case-study everyday story (*Aporo 13*) used to demonstrate this process.



## Section 1. Introduction

Working as an artist/researcher, my Master's project evolved through a combination of primary research, conceptual reflection and studio practice. My conceptual idea underwent a number of iterations during the course of my research (and making) process, before finally settling on the conceptual direction I have dubbed *Creative Reportage*.

*Creative Reportage* as a project iteration, developed from a concept that envisaged artists seeking inspiration from 'everyday stories' for their art-making practice. These 'everyday stories' may have *some* current visibility in the everyday socio-cultural terrain, but typically they have either disappeared from view or did not remain registered in the public's consciousness, despite them possessing a genuine social potency and significance. My concept of *creative reportage* proposes that these 'everyday stories' could be valuably and fruitfully examined and explored through a creative arts practice.

Through this Master's project, I aimed to identify, 'sketch-out', critique and develop a model of an arts practice (*story-making*) that would involve a visual arts practitioner researching and tangibly retelling (recreating) current and/or historic 'everyday stories' from the *terrain* of our shared social history. I envisaged this would be a socio-culturally responsive arts practice, one that tangibly recreated significant 'everyday stories' through creative thinking processes, the development of story narratives, and the considered application of arts production methodologies and arts media.

The subtitle of my exegesis – *story-making from the social terrain of the everyday* – puts forward useful parameters for the proposed arts practice. These words intentionally imply that this *story-making* practitioner would 'think locally, explore locally and produce locally,' focusing on social-issue stories of merit from familiar geographic territories. These would be endemic stories, with an identifiable *local* place of origin and would with all likelihood potentially 'ripple outward,' affecting other communities and overlapping with other stories.

I use the words *story-maker* and *story-making* to refer to the arts practitioner and the arts practice at the centre of this inquiry. I very deliberately hinge the words 'story' and 'maker' together, as I envisage that a visual artist or designer – *makers* of things – would be at the centre of the proposed practice. This type of 'hands-on' creative

practitioner would be exploring and aesthetically producing narrative-driven artworks in response to particular *stories* focused around the social issues at their heart. I was intrigued to explore what could emerge from an arts/design practice that emphasised the co-development and interplay of narratives from *everyday stories* and arts production methodologies, in order to create three-dimensionalised narrations of these stories *from the social terrain of the everyday*. Figure 1.1 provides an illustration of the *story-making process*.

#### CONCEPTUAL STORY-MAKING PROCESS MODEL

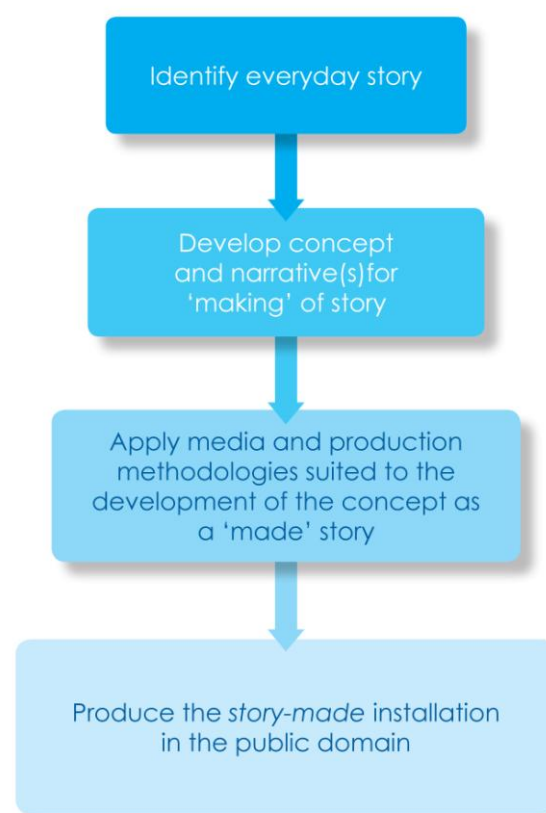


Figure 1.1: The story-making process.

Through studio-based experimentation and research, I came to envisage *story-making* as an arts practice that would concern itself with producing artworks that were keenly developed in respect of strongly impacting on audiences. Narratives developed from selected stories would guide the production of spatial installations that would evoke, detail and ‘flesh-out’ the story under creative scrutiny. Audiences would get to walk through intimately detailed installation spaces, the design of which had been guided by a *story-derived narrative*.

After a crucial period of research involving close scrutiny of a number of artworks and art-maker's practices, I identified and developed a set of methodologies and guidelines for *story-making* as an idealised arts practice. This was a conceptualised arts practice model that closely mirrored my own primary art production interests, as I had come to recognise them through studio-based experimentations and the research processes. From this emerged an exhibition concept that aimed to evoke and illustrate the qualities and methodologies of the proposed practice and the artworks types that this *story-making practitioner* would likely produce. The exhibited installation artwork took the form of a *story-maker's studio*, momentarily vacated by a *story-maker* in the midst of a project. It was spatially devised as an installation, providing the audience with a 'walk-through' experience of the *story-maker* in the throes of creative production. The *story-maker's studio* was witnessed as a working mechanism for art production, embroiled in the research and exploration of a case-study story *from the social terrain of the everyday*.

In developing this installation environment, I sought to simultaneously provide a tangible illustration of the conceptualised arts practice, and to provide a suggestion of the creative outputs that might typify the *story-making practice*.

## Section 2. ‘From Where am I Making?’

“Artists make things” (Schön, 1991, cited in Lervig & Madsen, 2003, p. 245) is the most unencumbered ‘definition’ of what artists do that I’ve heard, and in many ways it is sufficient. If you start to embellish this definition any further, you find yourself in danger of leaving some artists’ work outside the boundaries of any new definition. However, the *artists make things* definition says nothing of what an artist’s wider intent and purpose can be with the production of their artworks and creative projects. I would like an expanded definition of what artists do to say something like: *artists make things out of a desire to critically, aesthetically and emotionally respond to the matter, social patterning and history of human life, and out of a desire to share their critical and creative insights and artworks with wide audiences.* At least this is how I would self-interestedly describe the work of artists that captivate and interest me.

As an artist who makes things, my critical and emotional responses to the artworks of other creative practitioners is influenced by their choices: i.e., from *what standpoint* are they motivated to make from, how do they *materialise* their works, and how do they *place* them in the public domain. I admire art-makers who invest their creative energies in smartly exploring socio-cultural issues; I enjoy artworks where art media and methodologies are inventively applied in the exploration of concepts/issues; I appreciate art-makers who through good design, create meaningful art experiences in public space. Artists who conceive and create artworks in regard to these qualities of practice are likely to wholeheartedly and critically engage me.

An artwork I consider to be ‘great’ will arrest my attention and provoke an emotional and intellectual response. Whenever I come to experience, reflect upon and critique one of these ‘great artworks’, a number of ‘critical questions’ inevitably arise:

- What issues and ideas is the artist exploring in respect to an identifiable subject?
- How did the artist’s perspective and decision-making shape the development of a concept and narrative for the made artwork?
- What and why did the artist use particular media and production methodologies to produce their artwork? (That is, how did the concept guide this decision making?)
- What design approaches have they taken in presenting their artwork to audiences in the public domain?



Such questions are vital to my examination of artworks, as this is where my research and analytical methodologies intuitively go to work. My critical engagement with what I consider to be ‘great artworks’, creates a constructive and stimulating feedback loop into my own arts-practice thinking (see also Figure 4.1).

I am drawn to artists who are talented and resourceful at both art-thinking and design-thinking. In my opinion an artist who can think and operate within both of these different but overlapping fields, has the ability/opportunity to develop and produce ‘perfectly-pitched’ and smartly-rendered artworks from a strong conceptual starting point. By design, a perfectly-pitched artwork would: engender an appropriate degree of complexity; stimulate dialogue with audiences; and utilise arts media and production methodologies in a considered manner. (In trying to convey complex art concepts, artists often employ multi-media approaches, though I feel that the choice and up-take of various media must resolutely *serve* the artist’s conceptual intentions). The development of a perfectly-pitched artwork would at all stages be creatively and conceptually led.

In this Masters, my engagement is with arts practices that produce smart artworks that develop from narrative-driven concepts, through a considered utilisation of arts-media, arts-production methodologies and tactically clever spatial/installational design-thinking.

My thoughts on how to conceptualise and realise a Master’s exhibition project evolved significantly throughout the duration of my research and my studio making exercises. To demonstrate these shifts, and to identify key influences, I have developed a Key Moves Timeline of my research and studio practice. This chronologically charts the project’s iterations, alongside significant experiences and encounters with influential artists and artworks (see Figure 2.1).

## CREATIVE REPORTAGE Key Moves Timeline



Figure 2.1: Key Moves Timeline

## CREATIVE REPORTAGE Key Moves Timeline (cont'd)

Emily Siddell & Katy Wallace



Cul Collective



Jill Sorensen



NY Public Library Reading Room

2008

FEBRUARY

SPLORE 08:

This time I curate and coordinate the programme of sculptures, multi-media artworks and art installations. I involve a strong narrative element, through the concept of 'first encounters'. Actors lead festival-goers on a journey through the artworks, telling the story of the strange and wondrous objects first encountered by a sailor to these shores.

MAY

FIONA JACK, PALISADE:

I encounter *Palisade* in Okahu Bay as a ready-built structure. It has a beautiful, resonant and haunting look in dusk light.

AUGUST

WICI: WAITAKERE INFORM CHALLENGE INSPIRE:

I attend a seminar programme focused on concepts for a sustainable future, which brings the Transition Towns movement to my attention.

DECEMBER

SAN FRANCISCO:

At SFMoMA I see Emily Jacir's *Where we come from* and Pierre Huyghe's *The Third Memory*.

DECEMBER

BROOKLYN, NYC:

Home for six months (-June 09). NYC is an inspirational stimulating city. I adopt the grand reading room at the NY Public Library in Manhattan as my place to research and write.

2009

FEBRUARY

EMILY JACIR, *MATERIAL FOR A FILM* (PERFORMANCE):

My first Guggenheim visit reveals this compelling and emotive personal/political art installation. I spend a lot of time with this artwork.

Figure 2.1, continued

## CREATIVE REPORTAGE Key Moves Timeline (cont'd)

### 2009 CONT'D

#### FEBRUARY

##### MASTER'S PROJECT, ITERATION 4 (FINAL!):

*Creative Reportage: Story-Making Within the Social Terrain of the Everyday.* My project focuses on arts-making practice akin to documentary making or journalism. I dub this practice *story-making*, and set about researching, describing and defining story-making as a hypothetical arts practice.

#### MARCH

##### MICHAEL RAKOWITZ, *THE INVISIBLE ENEMY SHOULD NOT EXIST*:

I encounter this fantastic installation at the Museum of Art and Design, NY. His detailing and story-telling practice wows me.

#### MARCH

##### PAUL VILLINSKI, *EMERGENCY RESPONSE STUDIO*:

I first read about Villinski's ERS project while searching the Internet for projects about artists' studios.

#### APRIL

##### MICHEL GONDRY, *BE KIND REWIND*:

I discover this 2008 project through Gondry's wonderful book, *You'll Like This Film Because You're In It: The Be Kind Rewind Protocol*, which I find at Spoonbill & Sugartown booksellers, Williamsburg.

#### APRIL

##### MAX GIMBLETT:

I meet Max for an extended 3-hour coffee at the Guggenheim on the last day of *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia*, an exhibition he is included in. An inspiring conversation ranges from art and artistic success to spirituality, ego and human nature.

#### APRIL

##### CREATIVE REPORTAGE:

##### *Exhibition Project: The Story-Maker's Studio*

Numerous thoughts coalesce into a concept for *Creative Reportage*. I decide to create a working studio environment for a *story-maker* as my Master's exhibition project. The *story-maker's studio* will – as an installation environment – extol the virtues and processes of my described practice. I have to decide between creating a *hypothetical studio* or *my studio* (where I would operate as the *story-maker*).



"Conventional reportage"



Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, NY



Rubber glove moulds, NY

Figure 2.1, continued



## CREATIVE REPORTAGE Key Moves Timeline (cont'd)

### 2009 CONT'D

#### APRIL

##### AN APPLE IN YOUR EYE:

I select a case-study story *from the terrain of the everyday* for the story-maker's studio project. Namely, the project looks at an 80-year trade war resulting from Australia's ban on NZ apple exports. A symbolically named new NZ apple variety - Eve - will play a central role. I start researching and planning.

#### MAY

##### MAX GIMBLETT:

Visit to Max's studio on The Bowery and dinner. Max jabs his finger at me at one point, and tells me I have to choose between being an artist or a designer and that this is the time to do so. He perceives I am 'fence-sitting', and not fully committing to either practice. A good question! I see this project as about both and the overlaps between.

#### JUNE

##### MARFA, TX:

I have always been interested in Donald Judd's work and jump at the opportunity to visit Marfa. It's really exciting and inspiring to see Judd's artworks in 'permanent installation' settings, to visit his home/studio compound and to witness how a small town has evolved through the creative work and legacy of this prominent sculptor.

#### JULY

##### APORO 13:

Back in NZ. I am still keen to pursue *An Apple in your Eye* as a case-study project for the *story-maker's studio* installation. However, after interviewing orchardists in the Nelson area I gain a new perspective on this story and decide against pursuing it further. I start to develop a new case-study story idea called *Aporo 13*. An iteration of the Marmalade project concept, this story focuses around suburban food production networks.



Apple Diary: 'Cortland' 16 April 2009



Chinati Foundation, Marfa, TX, USA



Tamarillo (*Solanum betaceum*)

...to be continued

Figure 2.1 final

### Section 3. Defining a Practice: Story-Making

*The fiction of the aesthetic age defined models for connecting the presentation of facts and forms of intelligibility that blurred the border between the logic of facts and the logic of fiction ... Writing history and writing stories come under the same regime of truth (Jacques Ranciere, quoted in Nash, 2008, April, p. 120).*

I have created the term *story-making* to name a set of practice principles and a mode of practice that fits with the personal art-making ideals that I value as a creative practitioner. This process of naming and defining an arts practice mode – story-making – was an integral part of my studio-based research explorations within this Master’s project. In this section, I define story-making as an arts practice proposition.

#### What’s in a Name?

My *Creative Reportage* project examines the concept of an arts practitioner (a story-maker) exploring and piecing together tellings of socio-historical stories. Where this contrasts with conventional documentary-making is that this practice works at realising 3-dimensional ‘makerly’ outputs that are narrative-led. Here, *narrative* refers to the particular take on the story the artist represents.

Traditionally, the documentary film-maker records and edits a moving-image work to provide an audience with their *interpreted* account of subject. Defined as “the creative treatment of actuality” (Grierson, cited in Morris, 1987), the documentary process *subjectively* threads together the artefacts, arguments, personages and history of the story subject. The documentary-maker’s narrative not only informs an audience about a subject, it also encourages and cultivates an understanding of, empathy for, or a reaction to, the subject matter, leaving them better informed and ‘moved’ to some degree by their experience (Nichols, 1991). The audience impact or reception of a documentary is crucial to its success.

The story-maker works with the same intent as the documentary-maker, striving to represent a story in a manner that engages, informs and strongly affects viewing audiences. In the story-maker’s case, the creative output (product) of the practice coalesces as a *narrative-driven* and *spatially designed installation* art environment. This means the artist is involved in creatively producing, composing and editing essential story elements – in suitable media and by suited methods – to complete cohesive and eloquent 3-dimensional story spaces. Here viewing audiences are invited to step inside

highly detailed and carefully crafted ‘*made documentary*’ environments. I envisage these *story-made installations* as evocative, multi-faceted and responsive art spaces that narratively enfold around their audiences, evoking critically engaged responses.

A quality ‘made story’ – like a good story in print or on celluloid – needs to be well-made (told), and resolutely inhabit a spatial installation form which enables and enhances the telling beyond the basic details. Nevertheless, it needs to remain ‘open’, somewhat in flux, able and ready to change, to morph and to be variously read.

## **Story-Making: practice principles and methods**

I envisage that story-making as an arts practice, would be guided by a set of principles, which would include the following (these are in no particular order of importance and are graphically depicted in Figure 3.1):

**1. *Positivism: ethically and socio-culturally centred artmaking.*** Through my studio-practice research, I came to envision story-making as a creative and socially-conscious arts practice that researched stories of merit to develop narrative-driven designs for reproduction as installed spatial environments. I wished this practice to be about a practitioner investing their creative energies in smartly exploring socio-cultural issues and inventively applying art media and production methods to *make* socially relevant artworks.

**2. *A story-maker is both an artist and a producer.*** This ‘multiple media’ approach doesn’t mean an artist need be a master of all media, production methods and technologies. What it does mean, is that the story-maker needs to be skilled and ‘literate’ in orchestrating the production of *element, artefact and episode* designs for story-made installations in whatever media and by whatever means suit the narrative concepts that have developed from the examined story. Such an artist can be involved in hands-on art-making, and also in art-directing creative specialists and production processes in media they lack highly specific knowledge or mastery of. (This stems from a belief that a good narrative concept – developed from a researched story – should not be compromised in its physical execution as a story-made installation, by an artist’s own physical production skill-set).

**3. *Striking a balance: mixing artistic/creative subjectivity with straight reportage.*** I believe that the level to which author subjectivity on the part of documentary-makers and journalists ‘plays a part’ in steering the development of their story narratives,

determines how engrossing the resulting documentary or article is for audiences. This should also hold true in relation to the subjectivity a story-maker displays in their uptake, exploitation and mixing of the various story resources/elements to develop narrative concepts and their spatial design decision-making for story-made installations. This means the process is not tidy and the story-maker does not remain anonymously and objectively *outside* the story. Instead, the practitioner jumps in (rather like the fictional time-traveller who returns to their earlier days and meddles with their past to positively affect their future), eagerly and subjectively collecting data and impressions from the story's history and character. This is about an artist steering a kind of 'gonzo' styled arts practice approach, akin to the famed gonzo style of journalism. In a recent interview with the writer P. J. O'Rourke, Bill Ralston (2009) described this journalism style as originally "highly subjective and told in the first person, with the reporter completely immersed in the story, often rich in humour and raddled with drugs" (p. 32). The story-making practice that I'm outlining here, would invariably produce installation artworks that reveal the character of their maker and the process of their making, as well as clearly and creatively articulating (subjectively interpreted) narratives drawn-out from the explored stories.

Clearly, through their approach and working methodologies, a story-maker would need to strike a balance between their subjectivity as a practitioner – which is inevitable – and paying suitable reverence, care and respect to the material and characters of any given story. A recent issue of *frieze*, which was dedicated to "artists' increasing involvement with documentary" (Nash, 2008, April, p. 120), described a concept that is worth thinking about in regard to balancing subjectivity: artistic agency and border crossing:

*the notion of artistic agency [is] one in which the artist, in one way or another, crosses back and forth between the domains of reality and fiction. Rather than being faced with a choice, the artist solves the problem of this relationship through his or her activity of 'border crossing' (Nash, 2008, April, p. 120).*

Nash asked: "what does it mean [...] when an artist creates a scenario that partly relies on existing social realities, or when they actively enter that social reality to generate work?" (Nash, 2008, April, p. 120). The research and development of narratives and story-made elements, artefacts and episodes within each story needs to be carried out with some sensitivity to the particular circumstances and nature of that story. However, at the same time, the story-maker needs to push *against* story boundaries somewhat, to



create subjectively and creatively interpreted story-made installations that raise issues and questions and hopefully elicit reactions and shifts in comprehension in regard to the *stories being made*. Story-making is not the documenting of ‘reality’: details from the base story are taken-up selectively, and may be juxtaposed and associated in a particular manner to suit the narrative intent and installation design prerogatives of the story-maker. Nor is this practice mode about providing the audience with definitive conclusions about the explored story. Instead it is about provoking introspection, dialogue with and in reaction to the provided narrative, from those persons linked to the explored story, and from viewing audiences that experience the story as a *made* installation art environment.

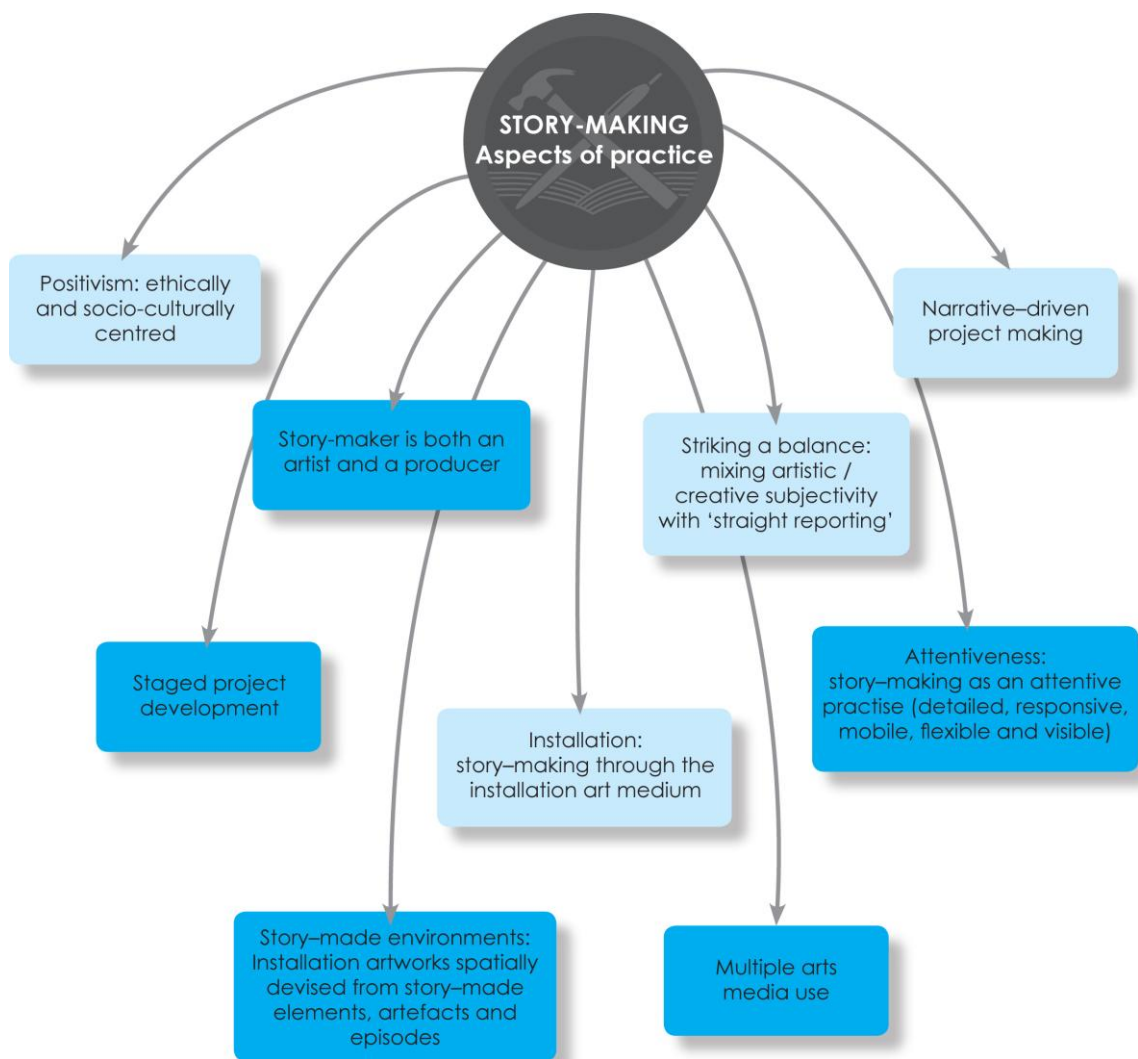


Figure 3.1: Aspects of story-making practice

**4. Art project making driven by narratives.** Narrative concepts of quality for the creative production of story-based art installations develop out of good research combined with an artist’s eye for detail. Resources for the creation of narrative concepts

from a story include its historical timeline, the dynamic relationships of involved parties, the aesthetic details and material artefacts associated with the story and the people involved in the story. These story aspects will lend themselves in different ways to the development of the key story narrative concept(s) that will drive the design and production of story-made installation art environments.

**5. *Projects develop in stages.*** Story-making as an art production process would unfold through a logical sequence of developmental phases. The first phase (narrative development) involves the practitioner researching a story to develop a guiding narrative concept(s). In the second phase (story production), the narrative concept(s) guide decision-making and design processes concerned with the physical production of the *story-made* artwork elements, artefacts and episodes. The final phase (story installation) sees these artwork elements, artefacts and episodes cohesively integrated as an installation art environment for audiences to experience.

**6. *Installation: story-making through the installation art medium.*** I believe that the utilisation of multiple media and methods to explore, express and develop story narrative concepts for story-made artworks, fits well within the medium of *installation* art, which has recently become defined as a practice involved with conveying its message “by whatever means” (de Oliveira, Oxley, & Petry, 2003, p. 14). The traditional conventions for exhibiting paintings and sculptures involve gallery wall areas or plinths being systematically used to mount these artworks. There is typically no relationship between the artworks and the exhibition space, other than in providing a venue for audiences to view the artist(s)’ work. In contrast, rather than having a neutral, detached or self-serving relationship to the environment as (only) a space for art display, installation artworks have a synergistic relationship with the environments they are installed in: “in a work of installation art, the space, and the ensemble of elements within it, are regarded in their entirety as a singular entity” (Bishop, 2005, p. 6). It has been argued that the artist’s work in creating this “arrangement that is an integrated, cohesive, carefully contrived whole” (Rosenthal, 2003, p. 26), should be seen as akin to the traditional artistic practice of composition (Rosenthal, 2003).

Bishop (2005) describes the different relationship the audience then has with installation artworks:

*Installation art creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters, and insists that you regard this as a singular totality ... Installation art therefore differs from traditional media (sculpture, painting, photography, video) in that it addresses the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space. Rather than*

*imagining the viewer as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance, installation art presupposes an embodied viewer whose senses of touch, smell and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision. This insistence on the literal presence of the viewer is arguably the key characteristic of installation art (p. 6).*

Ran (2009) has similarly argued that “installation artworks necessitate a layered discussion of their materiality, their environment, their context, and status in the political arena of exhibition and reception” (p. 140). Installation artworks can thus offer their audiences – those who share the space of installation – an opportunity to intimately immerse themselves in an experience of the artwork. The relationship between artist and audience – and audience reception – is an important feature of installation art (de Oliveira et al., 2003).

Utilising *installation* as a medium for creative expression fits well with story-making approaches as here, all/any art media and methods can potentially be utilised, to serve the practice’s purpose of telling stories, through narrative-led spatial design approaches.

**7. *Attentiveness: story-making is an attentive practice (detailed, responsive, mobile, flexible and visible).*** With this concept of arts practice, projects are determinedly undertaken to ‘shine a light’ on everyday stories that the story-maker considers important. *Story-made installations* would need to visibly present both the processes of production for story-making and the narrative concepts that drive these processes – which have been given a public, 3-dimensional ‘depiction and voice’ through this type of installation art environment.

Any story-making project would need to be managed with great attention to detail from beginning to end. Both the *story-making practitioner* and their *story-making practice* need to be responsive, mobile and flexible to the story being ‘made’ and the circumstances and opportunities that unfold from the story as it is explored. This fits with “the current idea of art as a ‘project’ [that] requires a pliable time-frame and a flexible or portable site” (de Oliveira et al., 2003, p. 30).

**8. *Story-made environments: installation artworks are spatially devised from story-made elements, artefacts and episodes.*** With the story-making concept, it is desirable that the viewing audience becomes immersed in the ‘constructed’ story. A strong narrative, resourced from a quality story *from the terrain of the everyday*, is utilised by the story-maker to direct all art media and production methodologies that are necessary to make a number of *story-made artworks (elements, artefacts and episodes)* to be spatially edited together within a suited environment as an installation artwork. The

visitor can experience and draw meaning from the narrative related here – through the form, function and aesthetic nature of *component* story artworks (elements, artefacts and episodes), and their spatial association and juxtaposition within the story-made installation environment. The story-maker's version (developed narrative) of the story, is relayed through the aesthetic and spatial design qualities of this installation artwork as well as through its location. This spatially-configured telling of a researched and *made* story would be designed to absorb and involve visitors (*interactivity and receptivity*) in this installation site and encourage them to respond to the story perspective presented.

**9. Story-making involves utilising multiple arts media.** My studio research has lead me to conclude that effective conceptual outcomes for narratives and story-made installations would best develop from a story-making practitioner who utilised and combined both conventional 'plastic' art production methods/media (sculpture, painting, photography) and moving-image and performance production methods/media. Through mixing a broad range of art methodologies and media (conceptually and narratively determined) in story-making production, *made* stories are most likely to develop as 'alive', open-ended and highly stimulating experiences for their audiences. These generalised guidelines and practice principles evolved out of my studio-based experimentation and research and offer a broad view of story-making as a conceptual mode for art-making. At this point however – as an artist and designer – I need to 'walk the story-making talk' that I have been theorising around, and discuss what art production imperatives I would pursue in developing a *story-made* project.

## **Story-Making Principles and Practice: walking the talk**

Now it's time to describe how I would operate as an artist, working within this defined practice manner as a *story-maker*. To do so, I will metaphorically 'stand in the story-maker's shoes,' to pose, and answer, a series of questions.

*In developing my thinking around story-making as a practice approach, I found it helpful to identify a case-study story **from the social terrain of the everyday** and then to conceptualise around how this story would be researched, tangibly produced and made as a spatial environment. I found myself attracted to the story of the ban on New Zealand apple exports to Australia that has been in place for some 80 years. The story intrigued me for many reasons (see Appendix 1) and through researching this story I started to conceptualise ways in which I could story-make an installation environment from it. During this period of research I diarised my thinking on a daily basis in what I*

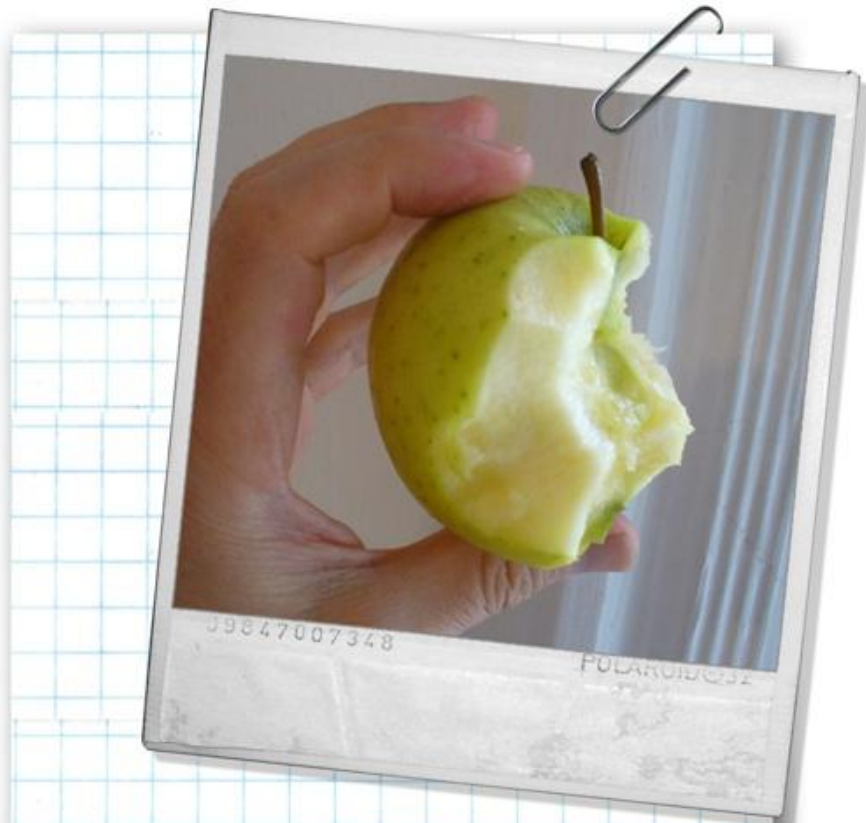
*called an apple diary (see Figures 3.2 – 3.5). I ate an apple at some point during each day, and wrote down my thoughts about the qualities of the story-making approach and the qualities of the apple being eaten.*

***As a story-maker practitioner, how would I systematically approach the development and production of a story-made installation environment?*** The principles for the

proposed practice would guide my approaches as a story-making practitioner, with my own peculiar and subjective views shaping and ‘colouring’ my creative, critical and aesthetic approaches to the development of any story-made installations. My experiences as an art-influenced designer or as a design-influenced artist, would strongly affect my identification of story narratives and development approaches and my choices of art media and production processes for creating a spatial environment from an ‘everyday story’. I would make full use of my art and design skill-set to develop the aesthetics of story-made installation environments.

My production process (research, design, development) for any given story-making project would progress via a set of general strategies and protocols (which would, to some degree, be tempered by the nature and specific detail of any particular story being examined). The general process would involve the following steps:

- Thorough research of the identified story – collecting and making notes on story history, including characters/parties/organisations, key aesthetic story details (colours, textures, tones, materials, manners) and key story artefacts.
- Development of a strategy tailored to the story in regard to media, marketing, partnership and fundraising, to support the project’s development.
- Developing a trajectory for the project in regard to its aims, development/production, life-cycle and conclusion.
- Development of a narrative approach for the *making* of the story, sketching-out preliminary concepts for made-story elements, artefacts and episodes and a spatial design for the story-made installation art environment.
- Making contact with personages (characters/parties/organisations) from the story and beginning to work with them to necessitate the development of narrative-led story elements or episodes.
- Working with the story personages to create some/all of the made-story elements, artefacts and episodes.
- Establishing a detailed spatial design for the story-made installation and establishing likely locations for the siting of the story-made installation(s).



08 January 2009

"MUTSU" - Japanese apple type (1960's).  
The best breakfast apple so far.  
Crisp and a little tart.

I'm thinking that the 'eve apple' concept has legs. I've found 40 articles on 'highbeam' around the issue. So much hyperbole between NZ and Australia over apple trade! Lots of emotion, science, reason and unreasonableness. It all provides a bigish space within which to project make. [Perhaps a mix of the benign studio work and some more 'act-up' type approaches.... like taking fruit to the Australian border (rather 'declaring it')...to customs i.e. 'limits testing in the real').]

Figure 3.2: Apple diary: Mutsu 08 January 2009





16 APRIL 2009

"CORTLAND" - sweet apple bit a bit ho-hum. Didn't finish.

Was thinking yesterday about the 'apple story' as an installation space, working as some kind of memorial hall - "Celebrating the guardian's of a good crispy apple." To honour those that 'fought the fight' in defense of tasty apples for all" etc. Ministers of Agriculture, orchardists and fruit lovers. All the story-made elements would honour a gallant struggle etc.....

Medals, honours boards, champion varieties, trophies etc.

Figure 3.3: Apple diary: Cortland 16 April 2009

- Completing the production and assembly of the story-made installation art environment(s).
- Maintaining, administering and promoting the finished story-made installation space(s) as necessary.
- Disestablishing the story-made installation(s) when appropriate or further evolving the story-made installation space(s) in response to opportunities that arise.

***As a story-making practitioner, what would I ethically need to concern myself with, in regard to producing ‘respectable, high-quality’ retellings of examined stories in the form of spatialised environments?*** As a story-maker, I would wish to subjectively create and develop story-made installations from the stand-point of an independent practitioner, and would desire that these installation environments presented to audiences as sincere and enthused retellings of the examined stories.

I envisage that the production of story-made elements, would often directly involve persons and places connected to the explored story. This brings up some ethical issues. Clearly, in practising as a story-maker, due care would need to be taken with these collaborative processes and with the depiction and representation of people, events and places linked to the examined story. (Beneficially here, these episodic collaborations with story-related characters, would likely provide un-arts initiated persons with art-making and creative practice experiences, through their involvement with a story-made project. Mutually so, the story-maker would frequently find themselves practicing outside of conventional art contexts such as studios and galleries).

Conceptually, I see each story-made installation environment as providing a ‘home’ for the story to inhabit. I believe that by design, both the made-story elements and the ‘archi-spatial’ form of each story-made installation should pay homage to the story by developing new perspectives and experiences from it and carrying these to new audiences.

As a story-maker I would envisage that both the production processes and the exhibited outcomes of story-making would strive to keep stories ‘alive’ in the present moment and highlight them in our socio-historical and socio-cultural memories and consciousnesses (as epitomised by artist Emily Jacir’s practice, discussed in the next section).





21 April 09

"Jonagold"

Nice apple but tooth-achingly cold straight from the fridge. Could eat this one regular!

The 'apple story' has a nice fit as a case-study project for the 'story-maker's studio'. It's not exactly a life'n'death issue but it ~~does~~ have a lot of gravity in a localised one - a real issue for real folks. How to story-make this story then?

Seems like there are a whole lot of plastic art options but also some re-enactment stuff - but over-blown and camped-up for effect. A mix of media approaches to satisfy all the senses.

Figure 3.4: Apple diary: Jonagold 21 April 2009

***As a story-making practitioner how would I conceptually create and develop the physical content for and spatial design of story-made installation artworks?***

Successful story-made installations artworks as I envisage them, would include and narratively combine a number of essential story elements, artefacts and episodes derived directly from, or made in relation to, the researched story. These *component made parts* of a story-made installation could be described/defined as:

- ‘Elements’: sculptures and story-making props that *story-tell* through representation and support an interactive experience (such as that epitomised by artist Michel Gondry’s project, discussed in the next section).
- ‘Artefacts’: genuine and re-fabricated artefacts or fictionalised artefacts: e.g. objects, newspaper clippings, photographs, recording personal possessions, and so on. (Such as those epitomised in artworks by Emily Jacir and Michael Rakowitz, discussed in the next section).
- ‘Episodes’: moving-image recordings, audio recordings and performance actions (drama, movement) that are directed to re-enact, dramatise and elaborate aspects of the explored everyday story. A production process that in a sense serves to fictionalise and/or accentuate the non-fiction or accepted details of the everyday story. (Such as those developed by artist Pierre Huyghe, discussed in the next section).
- ‘Archi-spatial’ elements: story related or non-story related media, materials, spatial devices and effects that cohesively connect elements within the story-made installation environment.

In practising as a story-maker, I would utilise the narratives developed from examined stories to determine what art media, methodologies and actions would be required to produce the story-made elements, artefacts and episodes that will coalesce to form a story-made installation environments. I would also use these story-derived narratives to direct the production of these items, and to direct the ways in which they would spatially engage and associate within the story-made installation and how they would work to interactively engage an audience. The degree to which a story-made installation could potentially be changed or modified by a viewer, and the degree to which a viewer of such an installation could be influenced and affected, through their interactive relationships with the content of such an artwork environment, are important and interesting questions.

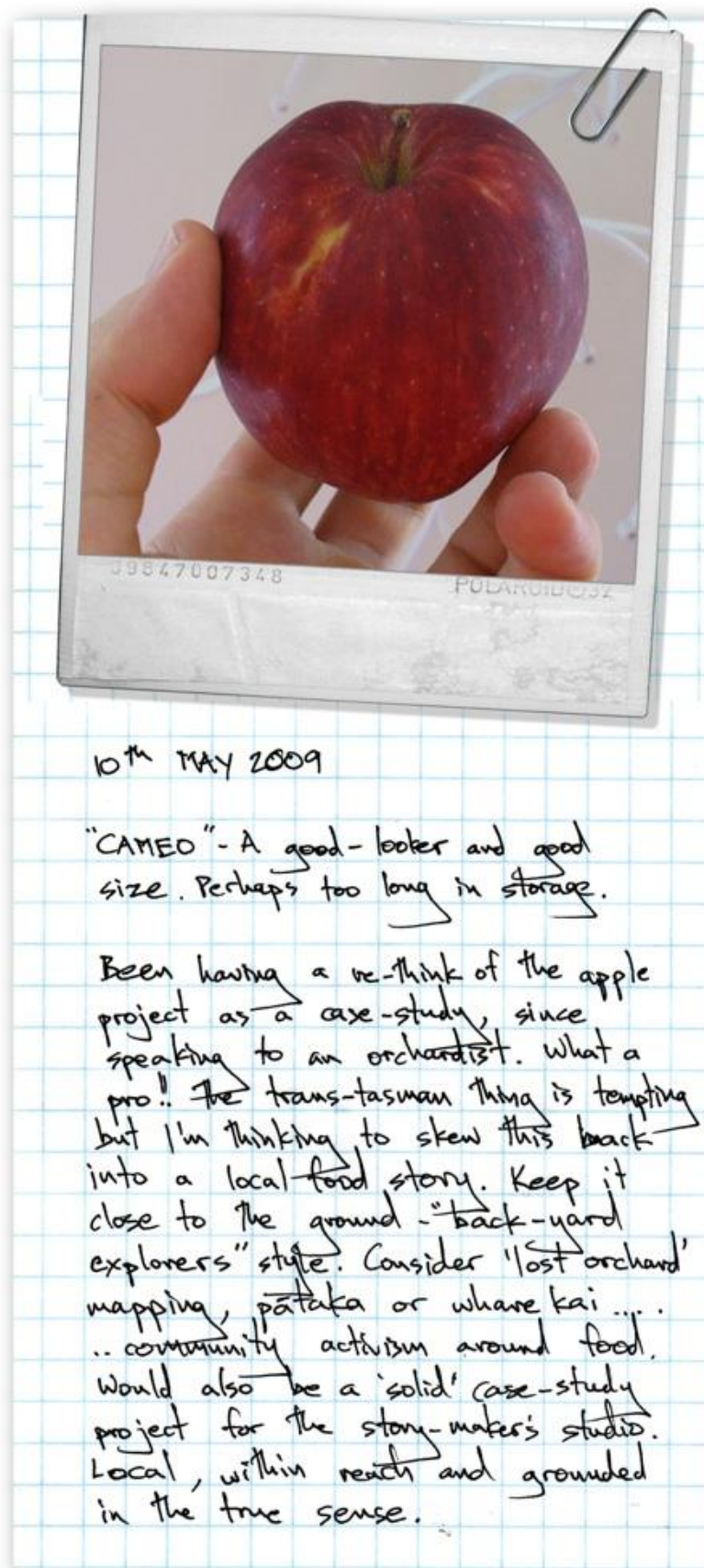


Figure 3.5: Apple diary: *Cameo* 10 May 2009

Designing *story-made* installation spaces to encourage and enhance audience interactivity and increase audience *reception* is crucial. ‘Conveyance’ of the story can best be achieved by engaging viewers in getting closely involved/engaged with the installation they are viewing. With story-made installation environments, the elements, artefacts and episodes that are produced would be designed and spatially arranged to engage audiences in physical, mental and emotional interaction with the story being told.

As a story-maker, I would develop thematic archi-spatial designs for story-made installations, to embody the central story themes from which story-derived narratives have been developed. By example a story-made installation could thematically and archi-spatially take a form that was suggestive of a memorial hall, if the narrative(s) that emerged from the explored story suggested that this was a suitable form/theme for spatially retelling and representing this story.

## **Summary**

In this section I have defined the qualities and traits of story-making as an arts practice and have suggested how I would envisage that a creative and subjective story-making practitioner would approach the production of story-made installation environments. Through identifying a set of practice imperatives and methodological approaches to artwork production as ‘story-making’, I provide myself with an opportunity to helpfully draw upon this definition when involving myself in the critique of artworks and art practices that engage and produce in related ways.





## Section 4. Examining Practice: Artists Make Things

*True reality lies beyond immediate sensation and the objects we see every day. Only what exists in itself is real ... Art digs an abyss between the appearance and illusion of this bad and perishable world on the one hand, and the true content of events on the other, to re-clothe these events and phenomena with a higher reality, born of the mind ... Far from being simple appearances and illustrations of ordinary reality, the manifestations of art possess a higher reality and a truer existence (Hegel, quoted in Morris, 1987).*

Story-making, as defined, is about artists researching and conceptualising from ‘everyday stories’ to create installation artworks for the potent engagement of art audiences. I now examine and critique several engaging and thought-provoking artworks from six practitioners that captured my attention during my research for this Master’s project. The artworks were produced by Michael Rakowitz, Emily Jacir, Michel Gondry, Pierre Huyghe, Fiona Jack and Paul Villinski. Although in some respects the artworks are reasonably different, qualities in each inspired my thinking around the concept of *story-making* and the exhibition development for my *Creative Reportage* project. They all, through quite different methods and media, fulfil a description of what installation art can achieve, that is it “invent[s] flexible models of imagination and narrative outside of the enforced routines of cultural consumption” (de Oliveira et al., 2003, p. 9).

I describe, analyse and critique each artwork using the ‘critical question’ set outlined earlier, to learn from my reactions and responses to them. For the purpose of clarity, these key ‘critical questions’ are:

- What issues and ideas is the artist exploring in respect to an identifiable subject?
- How did the artist’s perspective and decision-making shape the development of a concept and narrative for the made artwork?
- What and why did the artist use particular media and production methodologies to produce their artwork?
- What design approaches have they taken in presenting their artwork to an audience in the public domain?

This questioning process is graphically depicted in Figure 4.1.

The aim of this analysis is to identify the essential qualities that mark them as significant and influential in the development of my story-making concept and my thinking around the design of art environments and the viewer's experience of them.

#### KEY CRITICAL QUESTIONS DIAGRAM

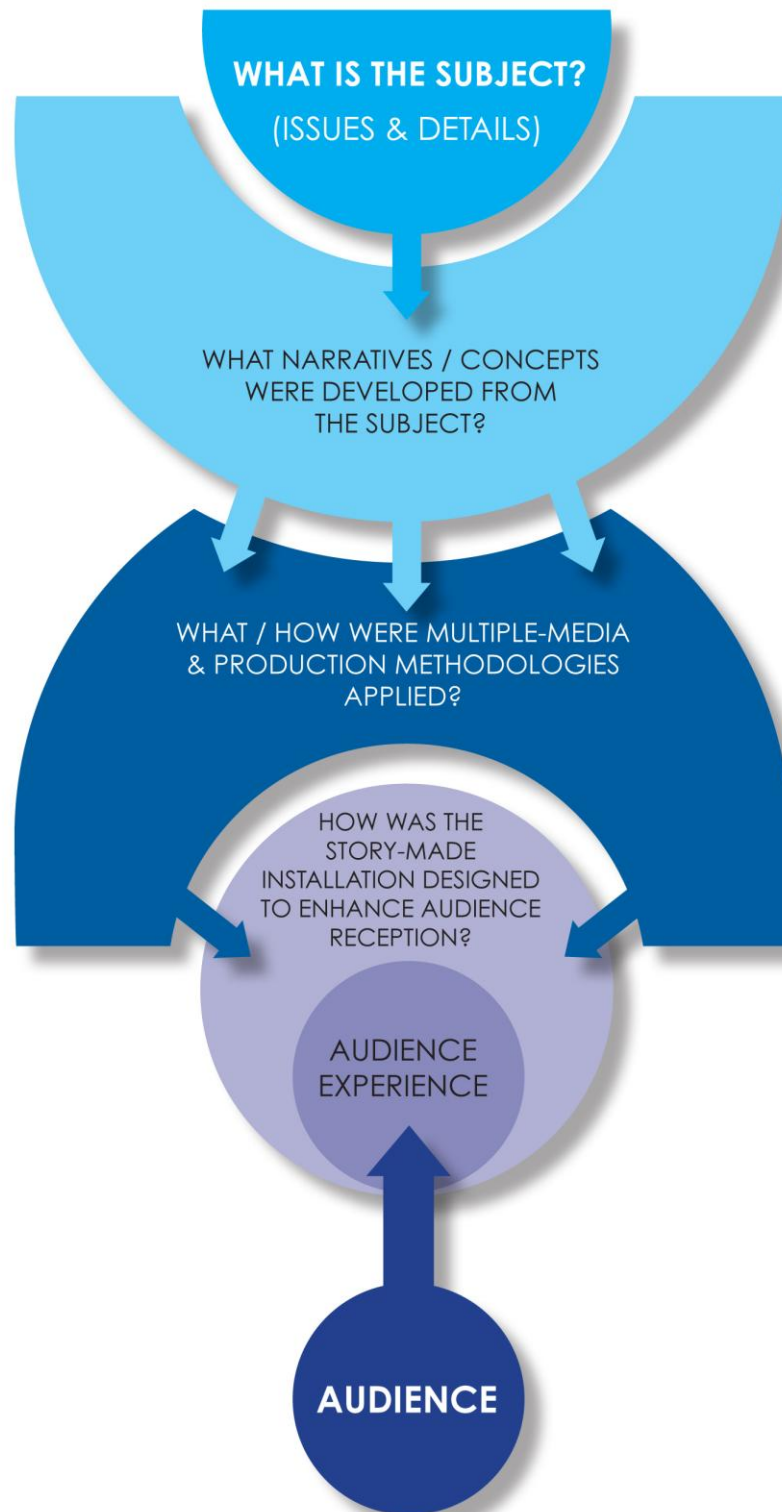


Figure 4.1: Diagram of key critical questions for artwork analysis

In response to my first question, each artworks takes its lead from a strong idea: cultural loss and destruction (Rakowitz); political assassination (Jacir); democratising creativity (Gondry); the ‘staking-out’ of historical grievances (Jack); the subjectivity of truth (Huyghe); and the use of creativity as a tool for the post-disaster rebuilding of communities (Villinski). What connects them is the creative and compelling exploration of social and cultural issues arising out of the ‘politics of state’, socio-political phenomena and the psychology of the human condition. These artists are engaged in *socially-conscious arts practices* through which they research and explore subject matter (stories) and develop narrative-driven designs for installed spatial environments/artworks.

### **Michael Rakowitz: The invisible enemy should not exist**

*Let me say one more thing. The images you are seeing on television you are seeing over, and over, and over, and it's the same picture of the same person walking out of some building with a vase, and you see it 20 times, and you think, "My goodness, were there that many vases?" (laughter) "Is it possible that there were that many vases in the whole country?" (Donald Rumsfeld (2003) commenting on television pictures of the looting of the National Museum of Iraq, quoted in Gagnon, 2007b, p. 34).*

Michael Rakowitz's installation *The invisible enemy should not exist* (2007) centres upon the tragic April 2003 looting of the National Museum of Iraq following the fall of Baghdad to American forces, during which approximately 15,000 ancient artefacts were stolen, many of which remain missing. Rakowitz's artwork consists of a number of objects fashioned in paper (see Figures 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7) that sit atop a long wooden table (see Figure 4.2), a number of drawings (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4) chronologically arrayed across an adjacent wall, and a sound track playing an unobtrusive accompaniment to the visual display.

The table-top, rectangular for most of its length, takes a turn out of a rectangular plane toward one of its ends. The shape maps the outline of an ancient Babylonian ceremonial pathway called the Aji Bur Shapu (in translation, *the invisible enemy should not exist*). The many small objects displayed on the table are 3-dimensional paper replicas of some of the artefacts looted from the National Museum of Iraq. Working from a web database of the looted artefacts, Rakowitz and his team of assistants – “fabricated [these items] to scale out of packaging materials used to wrap Middle Eastern foods and Arabic-language community newspapers in the United States ” (Feldman, 2008, para 12).



Rakowitz describes these ethno-cultural consumer items as “brief ‘moments of cultural visibility’ within a culture – North American – that otherwise endeavours to impose a sheen of invisibility on the populations that consume them” (Feldman, 2008, para 12). As the artwork continues to travel and show in galleries and in conjunction with biennales, Rakowitz’s team continues to fabricate replicas of the other missing objects from the museum’s collection.



Figure 4.2: Michael Rakowitz *The invisible enemy should not exist* (2007)

*Courtesy of the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York.*

The accompanying drawings are “evocative combinations of realistic-seeming imagery and handwritten texts” (Smith, 2007, p. 48), providing a web of information about ancient civilizations, the US invasion and the charismatic Director General of the National Museum of Iraq Dr Donny George. In being displayed together, “the drawings and sculptures reinforce each other” (Smith, 2007, p. 48) and narratively contextualise the installation space. The wafting soundtrack is Deep Purple’s *Smoke on the Water* (written after they witnessed a large public auditorium in Geneva burn to the ground in 1971 during a notorious Frank Zappa concert). This version was recorded for Rakowitz’s installation by New York-based Arab band Ayyoub. Dr Donny George played in a Deep Purple and Pink Floyd covers band called 99%.



Figure 4.3: Michael Rakowitz *The invisible enemy should not exist* (2007); installation detail.

*Courtesy of the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York.*

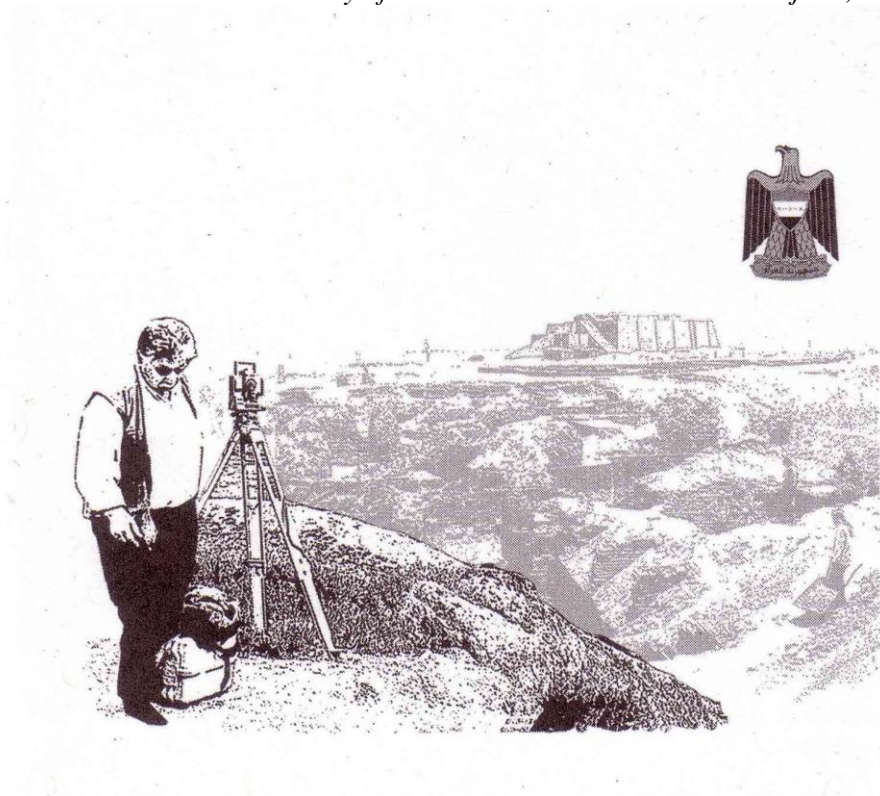


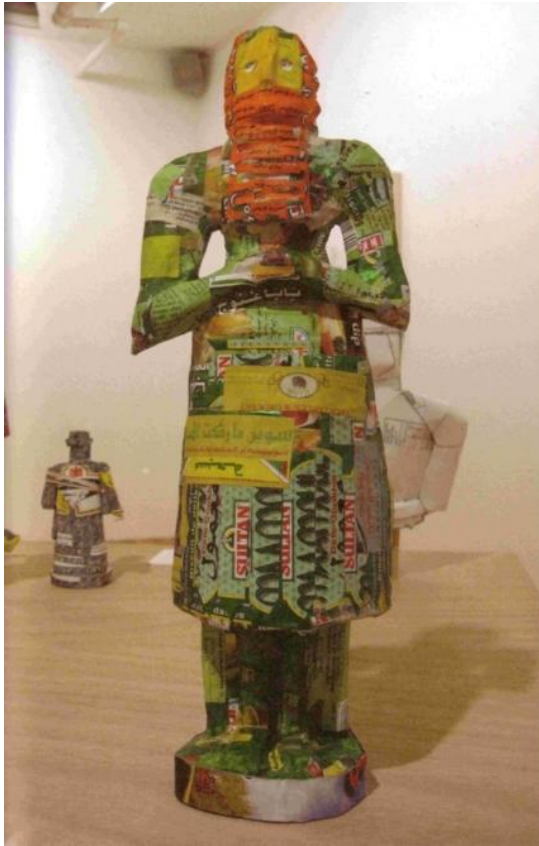
Figure 4.4: Michael Rakowitz *The invisible enemy should not exist* (2007); installation detail.

*Courtesy of the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York.*

Jean Gagnon, curator at Montreal's SBC Gallery, described *The invisible enemy* as distinguishing "itself as much through the materials deployed as the themes focused upon" (Gagnon, 2007a, p. 8) and that this artwork makes an "unequivocal statement while drawing on multiple conceptual ramifications ... providing a stark examination of



cultural memory and the way that war assaults this memory and heritage” (Gagnon, 2007a, p. 8). Gagnon says of Rakowitz that his re-creation of lost artefacts throughout this installation project “has spurred a conceptual network, not only on a cultural level, but also through the way in which the work intertwines the ideas of globalised commerce, war, and the annihilation of cultural heritage” (Gagnon, 2007a, p. 8).



Figures 4.5 & 4.6: Michael Rakowitz *The invisible enemy should not exist* (2007); installation detail.

*Courtesy of the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York.*

The artwork’s detailing, material aesthetics and spatial design lend it a layered complexity and serve in making the ideas that drive the artwork fascinating and accessible. That *The invisible enemy* is not static is important. The long length of the ‘processional’ table and the chronological arraying of drawings across the wall are suggestive of a continuum: of history repeating itself and about to repeat again, layer upon layer, act upon act. Stephanie Smith (2007) says of *The invisible enemy* that it “is always in flux” and that although the project is “complete as a conceptual enterprise” it “may never exist as an intact physical entity, given both the enormity of the task and the constant dispersal of the existing replicas to far-flung collections” (p. 50).

*The invisible enemy* maintains a vigil of sorts for these lost artefacts, asking the viewer to consider the gravity of cultural loss and obliteration. The artwork as an entity is encountered at some point along its journey, presenting itself to the viewer as both a complete and self-contained and dynamically open-ended and fluid.



Figure 4.7: Michael Rakowitz *The invisible enemy should not exist* (2007); installation detail.

*Courtesy of the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York.*

### **Resonances for story-making and artwork design strategies...**

- **Regarding culture:** *The invisible enemy* centres around one dramatic event, then circles outward, forwards and backwards in time, drawing the viewer into web of issues around the value and visibility of culture, commerce and conflict. The design of this artwork resonates with story-making because many connecting and associated ideas have been explored and referenced through intelligent material use and object/spatial design.
- **Alluring aesthetics:** This artwork first engages on a surface level, with its seemingly benign and charming display of hand-crafted objects – paper replicas of looted ancient artefacts – but then leads viewers into the vortices of politics, war and cultural destruction. The audience is engaged through clever use of tactile materials/media and hand-made aesthetics, which is also central to the theorised story-making practice.
- **Touring and re-siting:** Rakowitz has smartly designed a re-sitable and transformable installation artwork, that grows with the addition of more and more paper replicas, meaning that the telling of the narrative is frequently re-visioned. This resonated for me – as with story-making practice, a story can be repeatedly re-told as it is re-made as an installation, at different sites over time. It raises the question how the telling of a particular story shifts each time it is re-designed/re-made for a new setting.

### **Emily Jacir: Where we come from, Material for a film, and Material for a film (performance)**

Emily Jacir lives and maintains arts practice between Ramallah (Palestinian West Bank) and New York. I recently experienced her artworks *Where we come from* (2001-2003) at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and *Material for a film* (2004-2007) and *Material for a film (performance)* (2006) at the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum (NY).

*Where we come from* thematically addresses the Palestinian people's loss of freedom and of their homeland. In creating this work, Jacir asked Palestinians who were prohibited entry into their homeland and/or were restricted from movement within their homeland, "If I could do something for you, anywhere in Palestine, that you yourselves are unable to do, what would it be?" (Nash, 2008, April, p. 122). Jacir then documented herself attempting to fulfil the requests for these people – which formed an installation

of photographs, video and text passages. In the images and stories it was possible to see Jacir, for example, lighting a candle in Haifa, visiting a mother's grave or playing soccer with a boy ("Emily Jacir: Artist," n.d.). The installation invites us to imagine Jacir *performing* the wishes of Palestinians who are disenfranchised from their homelands and are politically and socially disempowered. With *Where we come from*, the artist uses "her American passport to realize the desires of Palestinians who lacked the freedom of movement needed to cross borders freely between Israel and the West Bank" (Wise, 2009, para 5). The gallery visitor witnesses Jacir - via images and text - carrying out a series of simple 'everyday' acts on behalf of those that cannot. With each successive action what begins to 'hit home' is that she is doing the kinds of activities that viewers would cherish doing within their own lives and in their own homelands. In witnessing Jacir carrying out these 'everyday' actions on 'behalf of those that can't', our own lives and accompanying privileges fall into focus. We, the viewer's are reminded of what we all too often take for granted in our daily lives.

Jacir's installation of the *Material for a film* and *Material for a film (performance)* artworks, which won the 2008 Hugo Boss Prize (Johnson, 2009), revisit political themes related to Palestinian disenfranchisement. These two complex and beguiling works, introduce the viewer to the life and tragic death of Palestinian intellectual Wa'el Zuaier, assassinated by Israeli Mossad agents outside his Rome apartment in 1972. This murder "marked the beginning of an assassination cycle perpetrated by Israel against Palestinian intellectuals and writers" (Darwish, 2008, para 2) in retribution for the hostage murders carried out by Black September gunmen at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Zuaier was shot 13 times from close range with a .22 calibre pistol – a favoured weapon of Mossad agents. One of the bullets lodged in the spine of an Arabic language version of the book "One Thousand and One Nights" that he was carrying – Zuaier had been working on translating this classic story into Italian for some years. *Material for a film* and *Material for a film (performance)* incorporate photography, cinema, sound recordings and archive materials personal to the subject, and were calculatedly installed side by side through a series of differing spaces/rooms. First, in a relatively open area, the viewer encounters numerous wall-mounted photographs of pairs of pages from Zuaier's copy of *One Thousand and One Nights*, each set featuring a ripped bullet hole, with no textual explanation (part of *Material for a film (performance)*) (see Figure 4.8). Jacir then builds on the intrigue, as the installation moves into tighter spaces where, in *Material for a film*, she has gathered together and displayed photographs, books, music, letters, interviews, telegrams and other personal



artefacts which introduce the viewer to Zuaite's life. These spaces are not so much rooms, but passages that encourage the viewer to become intimate with the layers of information provided about Zuaite. The installation area occupied by *Material for a film* forces viewers to compromise their personal space before being 'released' into the expansive void of the last room, upon which the installation conceptually and hauntingly pivots.



Figure 4.8: Emily Jacir *Material for a film (performance)* (2006); detail

Photo courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York

In the last room, the second part of *Material for a film (performance)* is installed: the glossy and blank white covers of 1000 small books line the walls on shallow shelves from floor to ceiling declaring their blankness (Jacir, 2007) (see Figure 4.9). Each had (previously) been shot through with a .22 calibre bullet by Jacir (see Figure 4.10). This is a minimalist and yet detailed array, with each book only sinisterly differentiated from the others through the position of the bullet hole that pierces its cover. Here we witness Jacir's performance, but after the fact.

With this space Jacir has created a mausoleum within which the loss of Zuaite can be contemplated. Released from the more constrictive parts of the installation space, the visitor suddenly finds himself or herself floating in this eerie, still white-on-white room.



The deadly and methodical mark-making tool of choice, a .22 calibre pistol, is now silent. The 1000 bullet holes magnify the subsequent silence of this space. “The books were white and were blank” stated Jacir “and symbolised the thousands of stories that have not been written and will not be written” (Wise, 2009, para 13).



Figure 4.9: Emily Jacir *Material for a film (performance)* (2006); detail

*Photo courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York*

With Jacir’s careful, aesthetic patterning of artefacts and intelligent approach to spatial design, a compelling and provocative installation artwork has been produced. Jacir’s intention was to invite the viewer to make their own journey through this artwork calling it “a documentary film in the form of an installation in which the viewer has agency to move through the materials in their own way” (“Emily Jacir: Artist,” n.d., para 4). What she achieves with clarity of conceptual purpose, is an installation design that introduces and honours her subject, allowing visitors to contemplate the tragedy of his loss for the Palestinian people and for humanity as a whole.

A few weeks before his death, Zuaiter had prophetically ended an article for the newspaper L’Espresso by quoting the English mystic Francis Thompson: “That thou canst not stir a flower, Without troubling a star” (Jacir, 2007, para 3).



Figure 4.10: Emily Jacir *Material for a film (performance)* (2006); preparation detail  
 Photo courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York

### Resonances for story-making and artwork design strategies...

- ***Narration in space***: With *Material for a film* and *Material for a film (performance)*, Jacir designs and creates a story-made biographic *space* about her subject – the installation is spatially dimensioned and aesthetically tailored to create the emotive flow of the narrative she relates. In story-making, the story-maker's subjective view is similarly imparted through designed spatial and aesthetic elements. Jacir's work demonstrates the importance of the *whole space* in this process.
- ***A 'made documentary environment'***: Jacir's mix of real-life artefacts and the elements she has made herself (the mausoleum space of shot-through books) evoke a documentary environment, where the 'truth' of the story is powerfully claimed. Here, as with the story-making proposal, 'truth' and artistic/creative subjectivity work side by side to tell the story.
- ***Documented action and 'evidenced performance'***: Both *Where we come from* and *Material for a film (performance)* provide the viewer with *evidence* of the *actions* that created them, which are integral to the story. One *story* is built on photographic evidence and the other *story* is built on evidence of the artist performing graphic acts. Likewise, story-making is a practice that reveals its process through the production of installation spaces that are constituted from narrative-derived elements, artefacts and episodes.

## Michel Gondry: *Be Kind Rewind*

In 2008, Deitch Projects hosted Michel Gondry's *Be Kind Rewind* exhibition, an utopian experiment where an environment was provided within a gallery (Figure 4.11 shows the gallery frontage), within which groups of visitors could script, shoot and then watch films they made during their visit (Figures 4.12 & 4.13 illustrate this process). In his book about the exhibition, *You'll Like this Film Because You're In it: The Be Kind Rewind Protocol*, Gondry (2008) self-diagnosed himself as having "utopian tourette's" which led to "utopias bursting out of [his] imagination" (p. 14). Gondry set about creating a practical, democratic and non-hierarchical film-making environment that he hoped would allow all-comers – including un-arts-initiated people – the opportunity to make films.



Figure 4.11: Michel Gondry *Be Kind Rewind* (2008); installation detail

*Image courtesy Deitch Projects. Photo credit: Tom Powel Imaging*

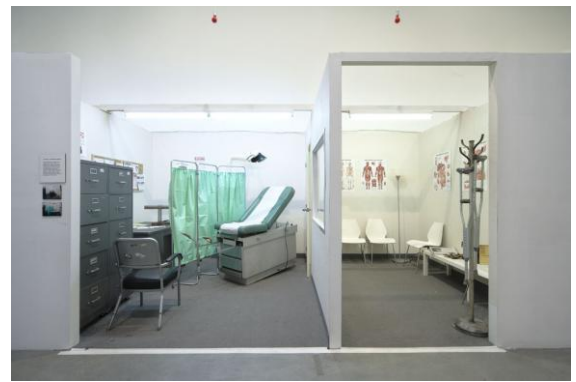


Figures 4.12 & 4.13: Michel Gondry *Be Kind Rewind* (2008); installation detail

*Image courtesy Deitch Projects. Photo credit: Tom Powel Imaging*



With this project, Gondry provided a film-devising space for determining genre, title and narrative, a number of versatile and interconnected film backdrops within the gallery (see Figures 4.14 – 4.17) and a set of specific protocols and systems that ensured that the film-making groups produced their film in an efficient, democratic, collaborative and non-hierarchical manner during their 2-hour visit (Gondry, 2008). Each film scene would be shot in narrative order, eliminating the need to edit the final product. The last set visited was a video store interior (see Figure 4.17), where the freshly-made films sat on the shelves and visitors to the gallery could watch their own creation or films made by other people. During the period of exhibition, approximately 120 films were made (Gondry, 2008).



Figures 4.14 – 4.17: Michel Gondry *Be Kind Rewind* (2008); installation detail

*Image courtesy Deitch Projects. Photo credit: Tom Powel Imaging*

Here, Gondry's defined artwork – to stake a boundary around it – is the tactile film-making work site – complete with a devising space, a suite of film sets and a video hire shop-cum-projection space and the protocols and systems that help to ensure it works functionally, efficiently and fairly. As defined in these terms, each film that is successfully completed by a group of visiting collaborators serves as a 'proving work'

or testament to the successfulness of Gondry's utopian and experimental installation art/film-making mechanism.

I found *Be Kind Rewind* to be a purely conceived and very compelling work. He created an installation artwork that operated as a functional, systems-centred creative production environment. The *Be Kind Rewind* concept provided an environment and a set of governing systems and protocols that were designed to functionally assist and foster creative activity – in the form of film-making – amongst groups visiting the gallery. “The underlying assumption” that sits behind the project's central protocol is that “anyone's idea is worth being expressed” (Gondry, 2008 p. 28-29). Gondry (2008) goes on to say that “the ideas or expressions we usually encounter in the public sphere come from people who are making a living off of them” and “that we have very little access to those ideas that emerge from something other than financial or professional ambition” (p. 29).

As most designers will attest, the hardest brief to respond to is the brief that sets no limits and no parameters. Gondry (2008) maintains that with *Be Kind Rewind*, both the opportunities and limitations of the physical film-set environment and the systems and protocols governing the devising and production of films within the space were designed to “provide a minimum number of restrictions and a maximum amount of creativity and fun” (p. 5). He wished to provide a balancing set of rules (protocols) that would “stimulate everyone's imagination, avoid inadvertent domination of the creative process by stronger or more compulsive members of the group” and “allow the community to be the leader” (Gondry, 2008, p. 5).

In critiquing his own installation in *You'll Like This film Because You're In It* (2008), he defines a system as an ‘ensemble of imagined rules that allow a participant to achieve a certain outcome’ and that these rules “let people focus on a single moment, while ensuring that all the efforts produced add up to the desired result” (Gondry, 2008, p. 15).

With the creation of this installation system, Gondry indelibly put his creative stamp on this as an artwork environment, but simultaneously removes himself and his artist's ego from the space. The genesis and the genius of Gondry's project lies generously in the artist's desire to share the thrill, the liberation and the enjoyment of working creatively and collaboratively make films.

## Resonances for story-making and artwork design strategies...

- ***Process before product:*** As noted in relation to Jacir's work, for story-making, the process of making for the practitioner – individually and in collaboration – is *as* important as the finished product. It is desirable that 'evidence of process' (i.e., of the story being made) is designed to be tangibly visible in the finished installation artwork. Gondry's project is an exemplar of process over product, as he provides a functional *process* environment that supports the production of a product (films). The quality of the finished films is immaterial; the experience for project participants in making films as part of *Be Kind Rewind* is crucial.
- ***Governed interactivity and creativity:*** *Be Kind Rewind* is governed by specific systems and protocols that are designed to encourage interactivity, creative productivity and equality of participation. In my concept of story-making, I envisage that parameters for any given story would be designed and developed to guide and influence creative production, but with the aim of producing *quality* outcomes.

### **Fiona Jack: *Palisade***

Jack's 2008 project *Palisade* involved her collaborating with Ngati Whatua o Orakei (one of the Maori tribal groups of the Auckland area) and a television arts documentary crew, to reconstruct a palisade fence along part of Auckland's harbour frontage. The original historic palisade fence (tiwatawata) had been built in 1943 by volunteers from a Ngati Whatua settlement in Okahu Bay, Auckland (Daly-Peoples, 2008, December 5) in "an attempt to regain some privacy and maintain a sense of community in the face of encroaching colonial urbanisation, which was exacerbated by the construction of a major roadway through the village that separated the main living areas from the sea" (Daly-Peoples, 2008, December 5, para 7). The original palisade fence was burnt along with a number of marae buildings in the early 1950's, thanks to the National Government's use of the Public Works Act as a tool "to confiscate the land, demolish homes and evict about 100 hapu members" (Tahana, 2008, April 21, para 9) from Okahu Bay. *Palisade* took Jack and a host of volunteers several weeks to build. Thousands of manuka poles were lashed to frames to make dozens of short-length, portable fence sections, which were then joined together to make a long fence structure (see Figures 4.18-4.20). *Palisade* remained installed from 19 April – 25 July in Okahu Bay before being removed and put into storage ("Behind the scenes: Art is not an island," 2008). Importantly, the palisade fence was produced in a sustainable manner



through integrally involving Ngati Whatua o Orakei in its fabrication and by designing it in short, (re)joinable segments so that it could potentially be reused.

Jack has been described as a creative practitioner who “works across many media to investigate the conceptual, geographical and political definitions of shared space – a space that includes linguistic, physical, social and historical contexts” (“Fiona Jack: Palisade, 2008,” 2008, para 1). Her *Palisade* project produced a structure of protest that was both superbly functional and symbolically laden with history and meaning. The latent potential for reuse, embodied in the artwork’s structural function and design, is a great conceptual feature. Jack invests Ngati Whatua o Orakei with a practical installation tool, that can be put to use time and again for physical and symbolic interventions in real space, to demand respect for culturally and historically significant territories. The ‘craftedness’ of *Palisade* softens this pointy hand-lashed fence. Its aesthetic condition and adaptability lend it a *permeability* that I would like to suggest, speaks of dialogue being possible, in regard to the resolution of historic injustices perpetrated against the iwi.



Figure 4.18: Fiona Jack *Palisade* (2008)

*Image courtesy of Fiona Jack & Ngati Whatua o Orakei*

In *Toward a Metaphysics of Shit*, Jean Fisher asked “whether art can function as an effective mediator of change or resistance of hegemonic power” (Robyn Critical Studies 2008, 2008, August 9, para 2). Fisher observed that a disjunctive global world – where there is much cultural chaos, many fractured social-scapes and much discontent – provides a “fertile ground for art that deals with untranslatable, postcolonial, transcultural issues” (Robyn Critical Studies 2008, 2008, August 9, para 1) and art that attempts to “connect a past with the present through lost histories, ideologies and people” (Robyn Critical Studies 2008, 2008, August 9, para 1). The blog’s author expresses the view that Jack – through projects such as *Palisade* – operates as an “effective mediator” by anchoring “the actions of the hegemonic power of the past in the present, through generosity and exchange of knowledge” (Robyn Critical Studies 2008, 2008, August 9, para 2). The implication here is that Jack’s arts practice working methodologies allow her to connect “the past to the present to mediate the production of new insights and relations through exchange of knowledge of the histories and ideologies” (Robyn Critical Studies 2008, 2008, August 9, para 2).



Figure 4.19: Fiona Jack *Palisade* (2008)

*Image courtesy of Fiona Jack & Ngati Whatua o Orakei*

In Okahu Bay, *Palisade* created a disruptive line through public space giving voice to a *site* of grievance that otherwise doesn’t ‘protest’ loudly about its recent history of loss and community disintegration. Like Richard Serra’s sculptural installation *Tilted Arc* (1981), which controversially bisected New York’s Federal Square (1981), *Palisade*

provocatively and determinedly interrupted the patterned use of the Okahu Bay site. Serra maintained that through his sculptural intervention “the viewer becomes aware of himself [sic] and of his [sic] movement through the plaza” (“Richard Serra's Tilted Arc, 1981,” n.d., para 1). *Palisade* encouraged a similar self-awareness amongst visitors to this public space, but also served to unsettle them, raising important questions about the site’s previous history.



Figure 4.20: Fiona Jack *Palisade* (2008)

*Image courtesy of Fiona Jack & Ngati Whatua o Orakei*

Seen in isolation, the palisade fence structure created through Jack’s project is a pile of inanimate, lashed together sticks. The great value of this project as either a one-off installation event or potentially as an ongoing and repeatable installation event is that these simple lashed-together arrangements of sticks are a vehicle for community action and a tool for cultural activism.

### **Resonances for story-making and artwork design strategies...**

- ***Practical participation:*** *Palisade* sees Jack working directly with participants to produce an artwork that is designed to create and build-on inter-generational connectedness. In terms of story-making, Jack’s design strategy provides a model for how everyday people - for whom the story is socially or otherwise significant - can be involved in the production of an artwork.

- **Telling and re-telling:** Through the designed use of a kit-set structure, Jack creates an artwork that enables the repeated re-telling of the same ‘story’, in any number of different sites. This resonates with my story-making concept, as I am keenly interested in story-made installations being ‘retold’ or repeatedly installed across various sites.

## **Pierre Huyghe: The Third Memory**

French artist Pierre Huyghe’s split-screen video artwork *The Third Memory* (2000) draws from the real-life story of “John Wojtowicz’s famous bank robbery of August 22, 1972, an event that inspired the 1975 film *Dog Day Afternoon*, directed by Sidney Lumet and starring Al Pacino” (SFMOMA, 2002, para 1). The robbery, committed to pay for gender reassignment surgery for Wojtowicz’s lover, was big news: “the first-ever live television broadcast of a crime, [which] even interrupted network transmission of Richard Nixon’s speech at the Republican National Convention” (SFMOMA, 2002, para 1).

Huyghe invited Wojtowicz (after his release from prison) to tell his side of the 1972 bank robbery – as he best recalled it – in front of a camera and with the aid of a basic recreation of the bank interior and amateur actors Wojtowicz could direct to perform various roles. These dramatic reconstructions of memory were captured on video, and then woven together by Huyghe with other tellings of the ‘same’ event: archival news and *Dog Day Afternoon* footage. The viewer watches this ‘weave of versions of events’ as a two-channel video-projection (see Figure 4.21) with accompanying posters. Amongst these projected images, we see Wojtowicz compellingly ‘setting the story straight’ on camera, through directing amateur actors to replay the action from this one event, that would come to shape the rest of his life.

Though this artwork primarily involves moving-image media, Huyghe’s editing and film back-drops give this artwork a strong spatial feel. The editing of original news coverage, film footage (*Dog Day Afternoon*) and Huyghe’s recreated scenes with Wojtowicz mark time back and forth between the original event and the present. All of the filmed material is framed with essentially the same background, namely a bank where the robbery takes place. However we are presented at various moments with the real bank as background, the film set version of the bank and Huyghe’s austere cardboard recreation of the bank.



Huyghe's completed moving-image artwork compellingly examines "the intersection between film, filmic reality, reality as memory, and reality as constructed by the media" (The Renaissance Society, 2000, para 2).

When Huyghe splices this action with the other moving-image material, a gap opens-up between the likely reality of the events of 1972, and Wojtowicz's own spirited recollections of these events. Through his tactical interweaving of film footage, Huyghe sketches out the shape and colour of this *third memory* as something that is powerfully mediated by media, Hollywood story-telling and the passage of time. In doing so, Huyghe's artwork asks important questions of its audience about the value we apportion to memory, our faith in the accuracy of memories and their susceptibility to being mediated by cultural factors and time.



Figure 4.21: Pierre Huyghe *The Third Memory* (2000); projection detail

*Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris*  
*Double projection, beta digital, video on monitor, 13 posters. Duration 9 minutes, 46 seconds*

### **Resonances for story-making and artwork design strategies...**

- ***The importance of truth and accuracy?*** Huyghe's engagement with truth, through his revelations of (inconsistent) layers of memory, representation and meaning, reveals the subjective nature of story-telling. For story-making, this suggests truth

and accuracy in the re-telling can be decentred; subjective interpretations and partial representations are vital to *telling a good story* that engages the viewer *with* the story in an ongoing way.

- ***Retelling in pictures***: In Huyghe's artwork, I found the recreation segments, where Wojtowicz tells his story of the bank robbery, to be the most compelling and engaging. This reinforced my identification – in relation to story-making – that using multiple media can create the most compelling retelling of past-story events. Here, Huyghe designed sets in various materials to recreate the original story scene, projected photography and film imagery and re-made story artefacts for this multi-media installation.

## **Paul Villinski: Emergency Response Studio**

On a gallery visit to a New Orleans in 2006 – in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (August 2005) – New York-based artist Paul Villinski was jolted by the impoverished conditions many local citizens still suffered (Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, n.d.). After a slow Federal Government response to the human catastrophe, the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) had eventually distributed mobile trailers to house homeless families. These 'FEMA trailers' were meant to be a temporary measure, but many poor citizens still remain living in them.

In response, Villinski created his *Emergency Response Studio (ERS)* (Villinski, 2009), a "mobile artist's studio, repurposed from a salvaged FEMA-style trailer" (Villinski, 2009, para 1). In 'repurposing' his own FEMA-type trailer to create the *Emergency Response Studio*, Villinski critically and ethically elected to convert the FEMA trailer 'from scratch'. He started by stripping the trailer of the synthetic materials it came fitted with, materials now known to be off-gassing carcinogenic substances into the living spaces of those who still dwell in these trailers (Kaplan, 2008, January 29). 'Clean-tech solutions' (e.g. solar panels, a micro-wind turbine) were installed to *independently* power the *ERS*; energy storage was created under the floor with the use of large batteries. The space was (potentially) expanded: a large wall section was added which cranked down to become a deck; another section of wall was designed to pop out to form an internal cantilevered extension.

The structural design features of the *ERS* trailer create a morphable space, "both opening outwardly and inviting the outside in, enabling free exchange between artist



and environment” (Villinski, 2009, para 2). Through a considered design process the *Emergency Response Studio* evolved into a ‘smart’ creative working facility that boasted a minimised carbon footprint and offered an “enhanc[ed] quality of life for its inhabitants” (Villinski, 2009, para 4).



Figures 4.22 & 4.23: Paul Villinski *Emergency Response Studio* (2008); trailer exterior  
*Photos courtesy of Jonathan Ferrera Gallery, New Orleans*



Figures 4.24 & 4.25 Paul Villinski *Emergency Response Studio* (2008); trailer interior  
*Photos courtesy of Jonathan Ferrera Gallery, New Orleans*

Villinski designed this solar-powered, “sustainably re-built, off-the-grid living and work space” (para 1) (see Figures 4.22 – 4.25) in order “to enable artists to ‘embed’ in post-disaster settings, and respond and contribute creatively” (para 1). The *ERS* trailer is both a highly functional working studio (see Figures 4.24 and 4.25) that can locate to a place of need, and a highly symbolic project that makes a striking argument about the value of creative processes and project making, in response to social and civil emergencies.

Villinski’s *ERS* artwork makes the statement that, artists need to be deployed “as part of the mix of disaster workers, medical personnel, NGOs, architects and urban planners,

charged with responding to, repairing and re-envisioning disaster sites like New Orleans” (Rice University Art Gallery, 2009, para 2).

As a finished product, Villinski’s project would sit comfortably in a gallery space as a critical and symbolic built installation, and in the field as a practical and productive creative studio that could embed within damaged post-disaster neighbourhoods.

### **Resonances for story-making and artwork design strategies...**

- ***Mobility and versatility***: The *ERS* is a versatile conceptual *and* practical artwork: it can sit comfortably in a gallery space as a conceptual work; as a practical studio space, it can efficiently be deployed into communities as needed, and respond to needs in different ways. As such ‘mobility’ and ‘versatility’ are key design aspects of story-making, for the story-maker in terms of what they conceptualise, and for their product: mobile, versatile and flexible concepts and story-made environments.
- ***Creative worth***: By design, the *ERS* project supports creativity and collaborative art-making for post-disaster community rebuilding. It makes a strong argument for the deployment of creative activists into these situations alongside emergency relief workers (water/food/medicine/shelter) and for creativity as an essential component of community recovery and renewal. Likewise the belief that creative practice and ‘making’ from socially relevant stories is vitally important for social engagement and social change, is at the heart of story-making.

### **Summary**

My experience of these artworks has been critically important in the development of my Master’s project. *Creative Reportage* – as a broad concept from which story-making as a theorised arts practice emerged – evolved and took shape through my experience and critique of artworks such as these and the arts practices of their makers. The entry point to my methodological research was firstly and very importantly as an audience member viewing and experiencing these artworks. My methodological engagement with these works then evolved into more rigorous processes of examination and critique, to distil essential questions, regarding purpose, approach and practice, which ultimately crystallised in the development of the theorised concept (and practice) of *story-making*.



## Section 5. Making an Installation of the Practice

*The viewer is asked to investigate the work of art much as he or she might explore some phenomenon in life, making one's way through actual space and time in order to gain knowledge. Just as life consists of one perception followed by another, each a fleeting, non-linear moment, an installation courts the same dense, ephemeral experience. [...] The viewer is in the present, experiencing temporal flow and spatial awareness. The time and space of the viewer coincide with the art, with no separation or dichotomy between the perceiver and the object. In other words, life pervades this form of art (Rosenthal, 2003, p. 27).*

### Spatial Play: conceptualising an exhibition

With the Creative Reportage project, my early studio-based research and experimentation processes led me to identify and define a theorised arts practice mode that I was keenly interested in. I dubbed this arts practice 'story-making' – for the sake of critical efficiency – and carried the ethos of this conceptualised practice as a critical lens when examining first-hand, several significant artworks that I would encounter over a one year period from 2008 – 2009 (see Section 4). My experience of these fascinating artworks cemented my interest in installation art and in developing design and narrative-led artwork experiences.

With story-making as a theorised vehicle of practice, narratives were drawn from everyday stories, which then governed the literal making of these stories in any suited media, as 3-dimensional installations. Ultimately, I desired that these story-made installation environments would have high reception values for viewers, enabling them to successfully and evocatively comprehend – be affected by – the story from which this spatialised and materialised *telling* had been derived. This meant that the *story content*, the aesthetic qualities, the material detailing and the spatial design of any story-made installation artwork needed to be well thought through and intelligently coalesced within the exhibited environment.

My research pathway through this Masters brought me to realise that as an artist/designer, I was intently interested in my ongoing arts practice (post-Masters) being one that involved me in creating/making narrative led, tactile and evocative installation artwork environments that effectively drew from socio-culturally significant story/subject matter. This tied neatly into areas of personal interest for me, including art-making for social impact, creative activism, multi-disciplinary artmaking, and of course, design.

In consideration of this practice position and its idealised qualities, I determined that I would develop an installation artwork environment as my final Master's exhibition. To somewhat add complexity to this task I decided that the underlying story subject of the installation would be the conceptualised practice of story-making. With this tack, I intended that the practice ideals and production methodologies of the proposed story-making arts practice would be smartly conveyed or insightfully discovered by viewers through an immersive experience of this installation environment.

In order to do this, I centred upon the concept of creating a mock *working studio* for an itinerant *story-maker*, experienced as an installation artwork within the gallery space. As an exhibition concept, this built studio environment aimed to provide a viewing audience with a virtual or as-real experience of a story-maker's studio – a conceptualised story-making facility interrupted in the throes of *making* an installation from an identifiable *everyday story*. A *working studio* replete with studio tools, furnishings, production props and materials (see Figures 5.7 – 5.11). This was a multi-layered exhibition concept, which put me in the position of *making a 3-dimensionalised narrative-driven installation environment about a story-maker making stories*.

### **An Installation Environment: materialising a practice concept**

With the *Creative Reportage* project exhibition, I developed an installation environment that purported to be and presented as, a working story-maker's studio – for viewers to explore, experience and decipher. The viewer stepped into this *installed* studio environment fully engaged in the 'making' of a story sought from the *social terrain of the everyday*. The practitioner was personally absent from the studio space, but the inference was that he/she had momentarily 'downed-tools' – perhaps fetching lunch or coffee. The viewer witnessed both a functioning story-making studio, and a case study story-making project (named: *Aporo 13*) underway – with the materialising of a story-made installation artwork from an identified everyday story. By design, this installed studio environment portrayed and demonstrated a holistic view of the methods, processes and outcomes of the story-making practice – with the viewing audience opportunely witnessing a kind of *creative reportage* in action.

Conceptually and tangibly, the *story-maker's studio kit* offered a complete set of items for undertaking the practice of story-making. Simplistic in design, the studio kit had a 'standard issue' aesthetic and appeal. The temporarily-situated studio displayed the subtle but distinctive branding of *The Guild of Story-Makers* (see Figure 5.5), inferring



that it was a *franchised* story-making practice studio for a *certified* or *licensed* story-making practitioner (see Figure 5.6). I meant to imply here (for the viewer), that there were other such studios functioning elsewhere, in the same manner and in the same practice mode. These key details added a *performative* and theatrical edge to the installed studio space.

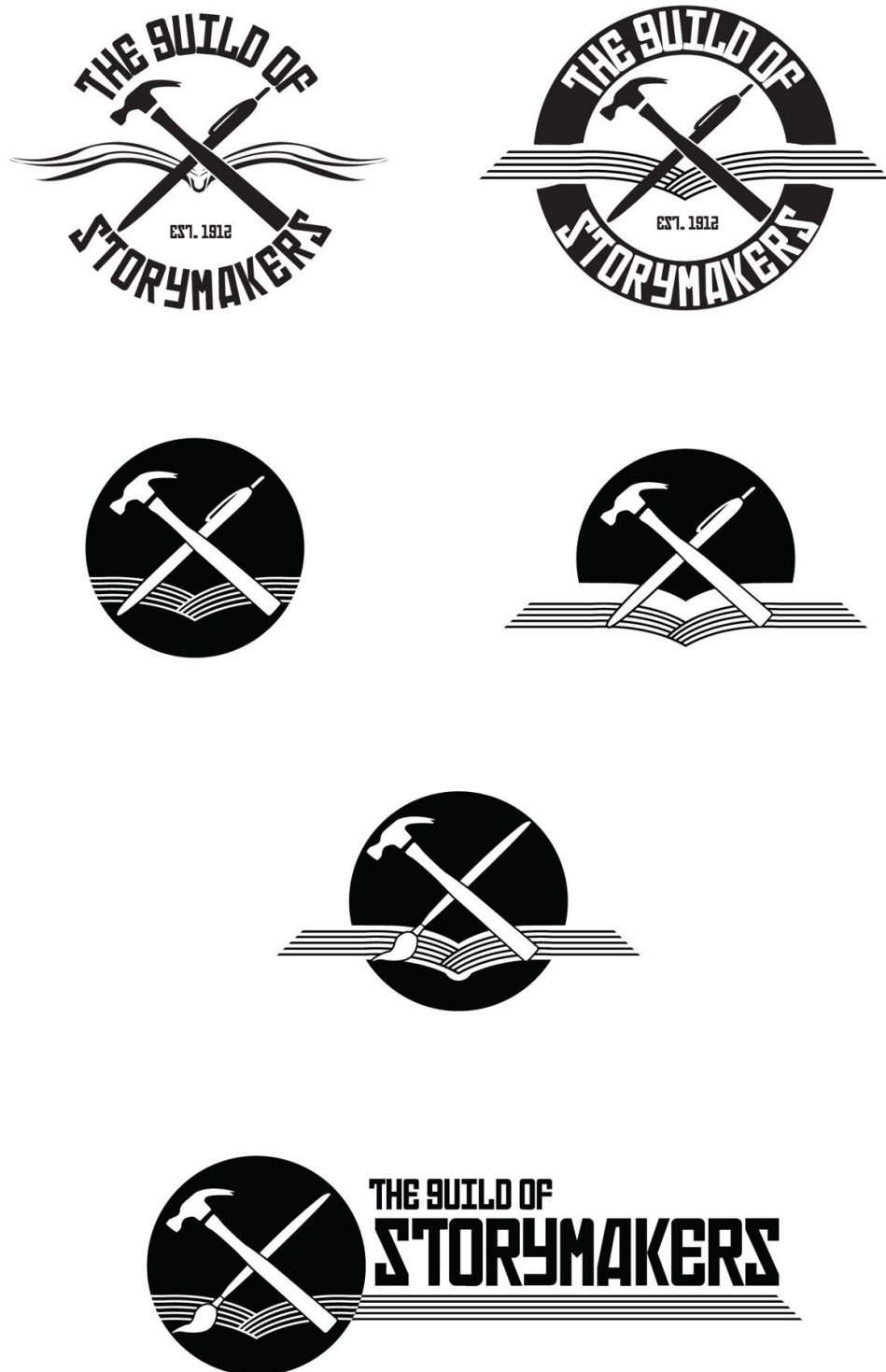


Figure 5.1: Development of *The Guild of Story-Makers* logo



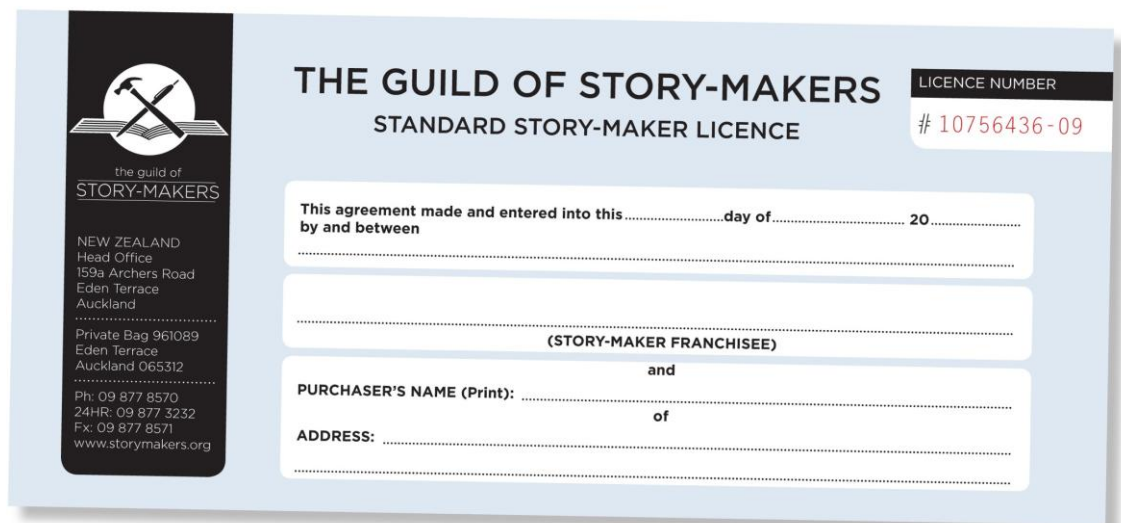


Figure 5.2: *The Guild of Story-Makers* – Story-Maker’s Licence

The furnishings, chattels and tools that physically constituted the story-maker’s studio were set-up in working mode. The artefacts (real and fabricated), the story elements/episodes in-the-making, and other case-study story-making project paraphernalia were visible in the installed environment, as resource materials for, and products of, the story-maker’s research and production of the *everyday story* being explored (made). Here, the conceptual goal was to provide all of these elements simultaneously in the installed space, making them both individually distinguishable (studio as entity, story-making project) and integrally connected through the story-making practice and processes. The colour palette and aesthetics of the story-maker’s constructed *studio* were relatively pared-back and mono-chromatic (timber, plywood and steel [raw or painted white], see Figures 5.3 – 5.6); whilst the rich ‘colour’, ‘texture’ and captivating details of artefacts and paraphernalia of the case-study story project (*Aporo 13*) were overlain on top of and within the story-maker’s working space. The success of this exhibition strategy hinged on two inter-dependent prerogatives: 1) my (developed) abilities to design and fabricate an installation artwork that would provide a compelling and receptive experience of the explored subject; 2) my ability to understand (grasp) and art direct the conceptual subject matter (*story-making practice in action*) that is central to this installation artwork.



Figure 5.3: Model of story-maker's studio furniture



Figures 5.4 – 5.6: Story-maker's studio furniture production

In a base sense, it was imperative that I was able to *practice* competently and proficiently as an artist/designer in making an installation artwork about a conceptual subject. The main ‘measurable’ here – in regard to my success – would be in relation to the quality of experience for viewers (reception and transmission values) of the central concepts that determined the aesthetics and spatial design of this installation artwork.

### **Making the Story-Maker’s Studio Kit**

This mock story-maker’s studio presented aesthetically and functionally as a flexible, self-contained and mobile *kit* of studio furniture elements. Through the design and the exhibited setting, a sense of temporariness was conveyed. The insinuation being that the studio was only sited here, so as to be proximal to the case-study story currently being explored and developed into a story-made installation.

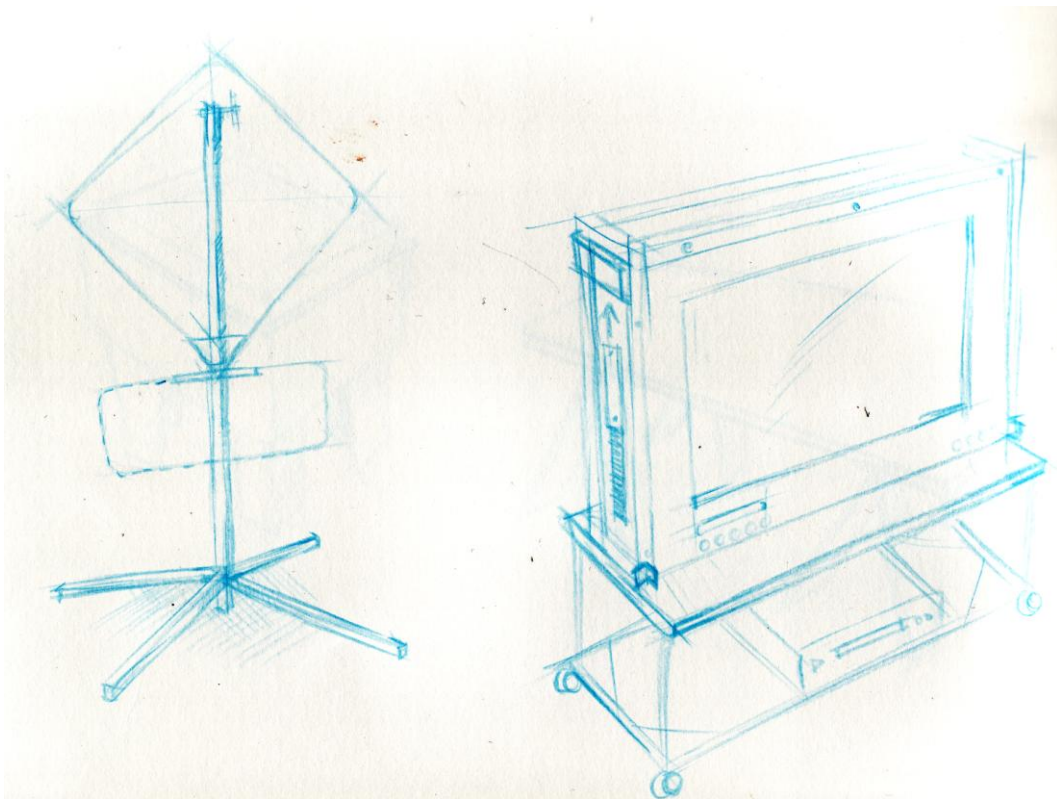


Figure 5.7: Story-Maker’s Studio Kit – Sign Stand and AV Unit designs

I fabricated a story-maker’s studio that performed as:

- a mobile studio (kit of parts) that ideally located itself at the geographic heart of any (everyday) story being explored (made).
- a functional and productive art practice environment for the development of conceptualised story-made installations.



- a place where physical art-making could be conducted – for the most part by the conceptualised story-maker, but sometimes through the involvement of characters/participants from the story being *made*.

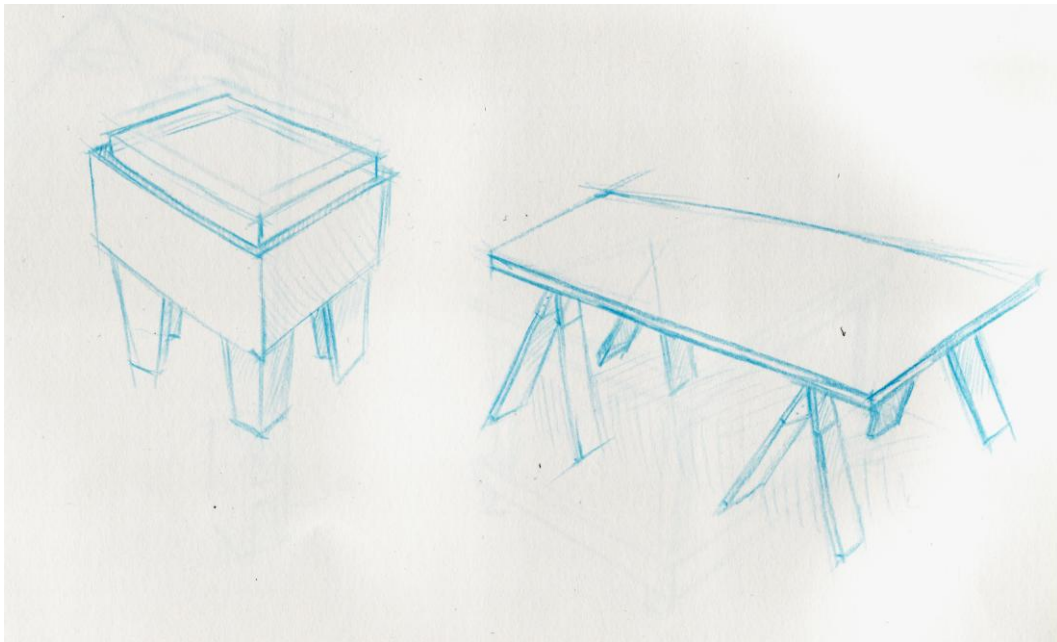


Figure 5.8: Story-Maker's Studio Kit – Work Table and Stool designs

My intension was that visitors encountered an installation art environment compellingly contrived as a working artist's studio – that revealed the story-making process, as an arts practice that steadily developed artefacts, elements and episodes in relation to explored stories through the use of multiple media and production processes, and that these would be seen to be coalescing into story-made installations. With in-depth scrutiny, the viewer would see the multi-faceted studio-made artefacts, elements and episodes as individual creations or 'made aspects' that – through their *spatial assembly* (arrangement/ association/ juxtaposition) – collectively establish the story narratives within this installation environment. Through the design of this studio kit and the evidence of practice processes, I wanted this installed studio to convey at some juncture, that the story being explored would be finally and fully 'made' and that the studio would pack-down and be withdrawn, leaving a story-made installation environment to speak for itself. (Problematically in this instance, I was producing a working studio environment that was installed in a gallery space within a tertiary institution, rather than being located at the geographic heart of the story that appeared to be being made. This ran counter to my conceptual attempt to 'engage an audience in believing' that they were encountering a story-maker's studio operating in a story-specific location.)

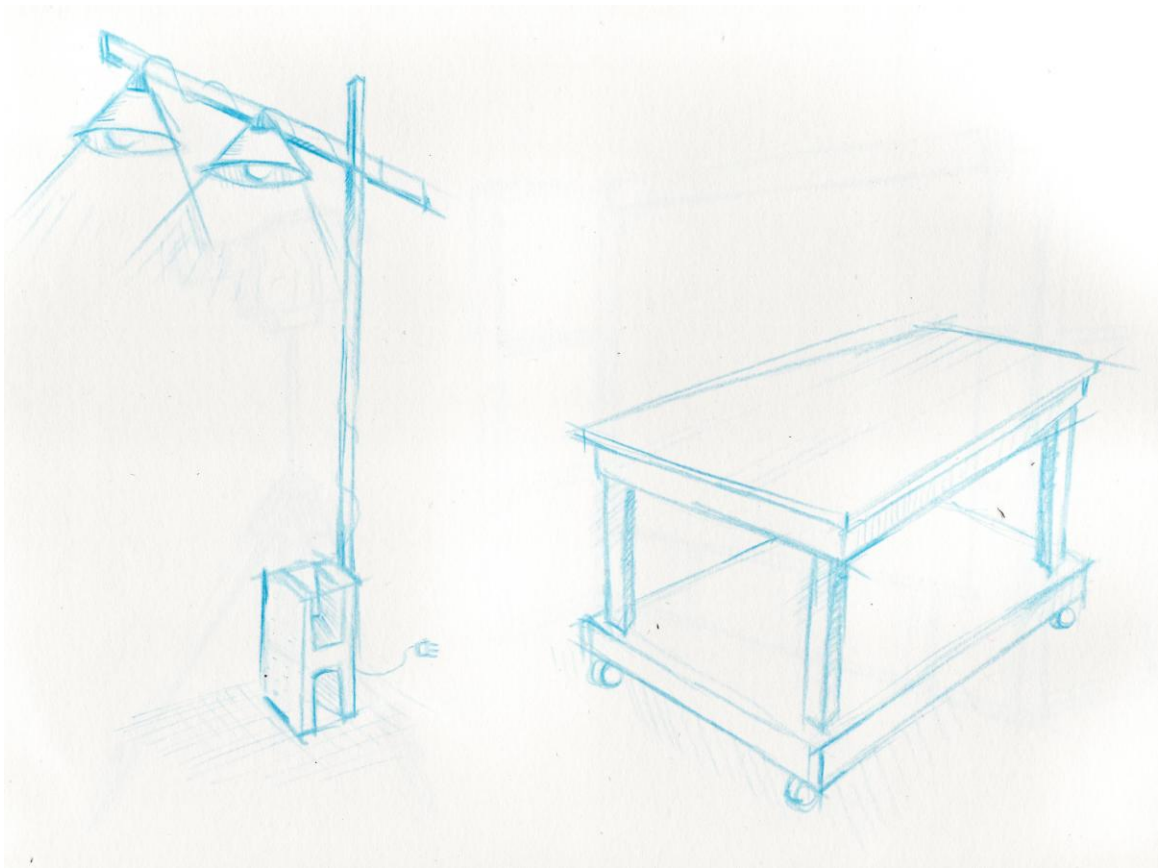


Figure 5.9: Story-Maker's Studio Kit – Light Stand and Workbench designs

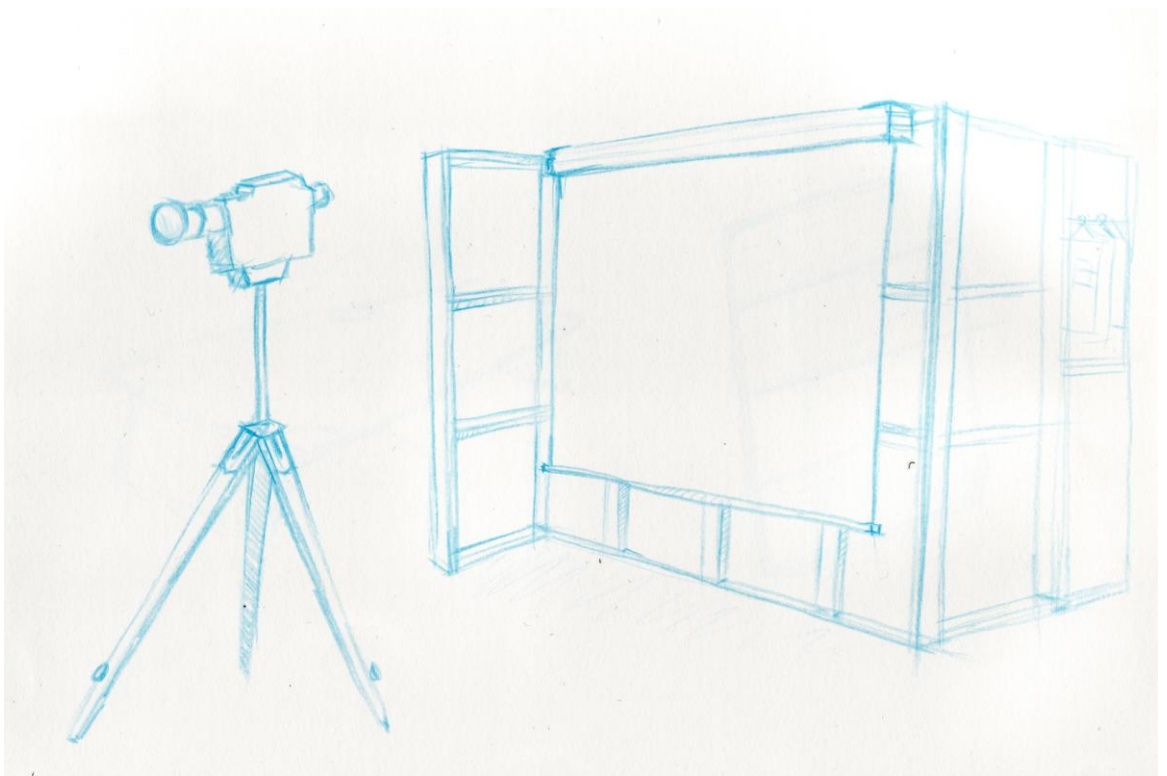


Figure 5.10: Story-Maker's Studio Kit – Episode Rehearsal Space (mock camera and back-drop screen designs)



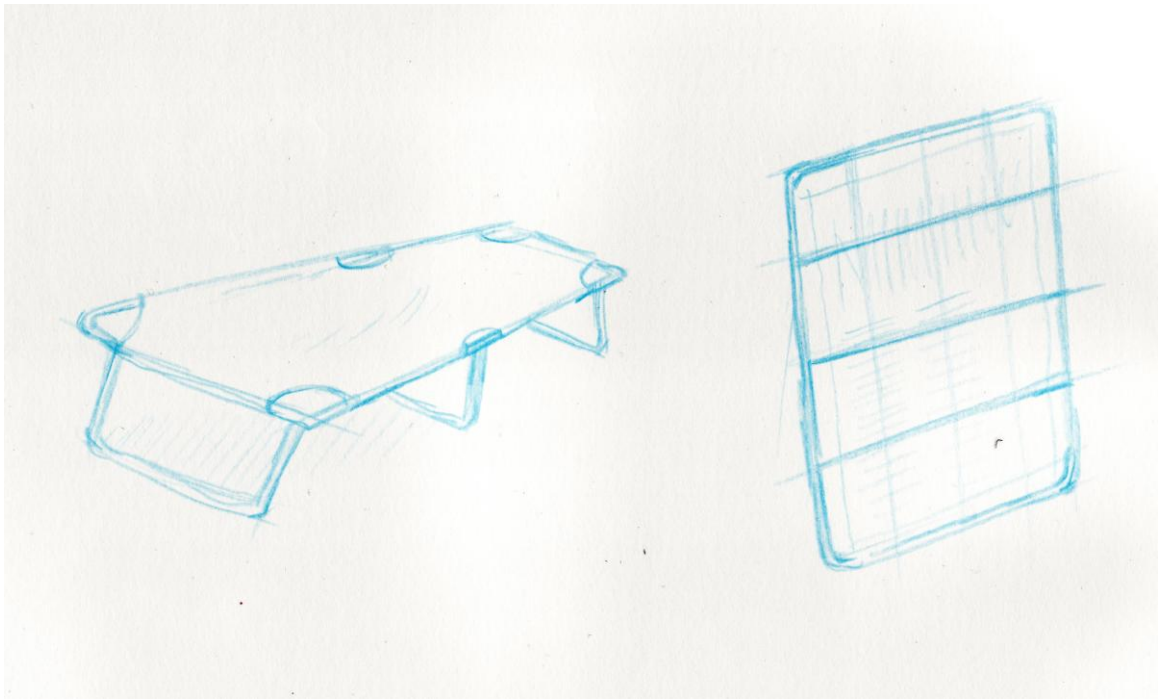


Figure 5.11: Story-Maker's Studio Kit – Stretcher (Private Space) and Newspaper Headline Frames (Action/Visualisation Space)

### **Establishing an Everyday Story in the Making: *Aporo 13***

*Aporo 13* was the moniker I gave to the *case-study story-making project* that the story-maker was (apparently) working on in the studio environment. *Aporo 13* as a project concept, examines the everyday story of a suburban neighbourhood initiative, to investigate and enhance localised food production for community benefit (Appendix 2 shows a series of photographic images from a survey of existing neighbourhood fruits trees – undertaken in researching this project).

This is a story of current social concern, from the domain of the everyday (e.g., see <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=17861222999>; <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=207962540374>; <http://www.indymedia.org.nz/article/77459/urban-foraging-auckland-and-christchurch>), but also one with a strong socio-political history (see Figures 5.12 and 5.13 for examples of World War II food production posters). As a case-story idea, it developed from an earlier exhibition project iteration, named *Marmalade* (from Design Thinking and Project-making in Public Space, see Figure 2.1) and from an earlier iteration of a *story for making* called “*An apple in your eye*” (see Figure 3.5: Apple diary: *Cameo 10 May 2009*, and Appendix 1).



Figures 5.12 & 5.13: World War II (WW2) home food production posters

(source: Aulich, 2007)

The name of this case-study story is heavy with meaning. In using the Maori term for 'apple,' it not only references food, but also emphasises local and localised identities and practices. In referencing, through rhyme, NASA's 1960s space programme to the moon (*Apollo 13*), it invokes both nostalgia/vintage aesthetics *and* the highest forms of technology (ironically, NASA-developed technologies are now used by apple growers in the UK to photograph apples [from 16 angles!] to determine whether or not each fruit is *aesthetically perfect enough* for the UK supermarket shelves). This project identity also bridges contemporary concerns that range from the local (e.g., the loss of the arts of home food production) to the global (e.g., CO2 reduction, food miles and the mapping of fruit trees using global-positioning satellite [GPS] technologies).

As noted earlier, the aesthetics of *Aporo 13* as a story-making project, within the story-maker's studio environment, were designed to be distinguishable from the aesthetics of the story-maker's kit-set studio. Within this [hypothetical] 'working studio', the *Aporo 13* project was seen to be productively developing and materialising a number of story elements, artefacts and episodes, which were deliberately situated around the studio space and the adjacent environment (see Figures 6.3 and 6.4, 6.9 – 6.14 and 6.20 – 6.30 for examples of these). These studio artefacts, in various media and of differing design

and scale, graphically invoked an image of an energetic story-maker, actively involved in the ‘making’ (research and production) of this story. The visitor that explored this temporarily unattended studio and picked up clues about the media and production methods employed by the story-maker. Ultimately, they got a sense of elements, artefacts and episodes – made or being made – that would collectively contribute to the installation artwork environment, that the story-maker was designing/devising to tell this particular story in a three-dimensional form.

As a story-making project seen in development (seemingly), within the story-maker’s studio, *Aporo 13* presented itself to visitors as a genuine, *socially-active* endeavour, engaged with relating a story about the development of suburban food production systems in the neighbourhood local to its current situation. The story-maker’s studio was seen to be ‘providing a temporary home’ for the story in development, while a semi-permanent spatial response (installation) was being evolved (made) that would persist after the departure of the story-maker and their studio from this site.



Figures 5.14 – 5.17: Neighbourhood fruit tree survey photographs

## Witnessing the Practice: story-making in action

I designed, fabricated and spatially arrayed the story-maker's studio kit and *Aporo 13* project artefacts in this installation artwork with the intension of suggesting the practice mode, methodologies and outcomes of the absent story-making practitioner.

Here, in the story-maker's studio two distinct aesthetic and tangible layers are presented: 1. a studio practice kit of furnishings and props; 2. the evidence (artefacts, episodes and elements) of the *Aporo 13* project in development. Between these two differentiated layers, viewers could perceive the methodological production processes and *conceptual drivers* of this story-maker – caught in the midst of their studio-based project making.

With the workings of this particular arts practice vividly illustrated and implied within this engaging studio environment, the viewer's imagination and thinking become engaged with the installation artwork that they find themselves immersed within.

Through my design of this installation environment – of a mock practitioner's studio – I attempted to imply through the visible project development processes within his/her studio that the story-maker would:

- thoroughly research aspects of the story, gathering data about persons, organisations, histories, artefacts and aesthetics for the story-making project.
- build relationships with persons connected to the story.
- conceptualise around the data to create and develop a story narrative(s) and art-making strategies, that would contribute to the recreation of the story in the form of an artefact-rich installation environment. (This would likely lead to developing a story-making project that would operate as a vehicle to 'drive' story-making processes).
- identify the key story-making elements, artefacts and episodes that could be conceptually devised through narrative(s) from a particular story, to ultimately contribute to a story-made installation.
- begin producing the elements, artefacts and episodes in various media and by various methods.
- determine a site for the story-made installation to effectively relate its story and to maximise the audience reception for the installation artwork.

- work primarily from their story-making studio and (re)locate this studio at appropriate times to appropriate places that would serve the story-making process (ideally at the geographic heart of the story).
- work toward creating a ‘made’ version of the explored story that connected and involved people associated with the project, relates a compelling narrative(s) about the story subject and provided a viewing audience with an enriching, multi-sensorial art experience.

As this installed studio environment purported to be real and ‘live’ I was interested in the potential for viewer’s imagining themselves as *participant collaborators* in a studio environment that functioned in this suggested manner. Through my design of this installed, mock practitioner’s studio I wanted to imply that the collaborative story-making studio experience for participants would:

- be democratic and communicative – sharing, fun, and open-minded.
- at times be serious, but at other times potentially absurd and humorous.
- involve direct participation at no direct cost and with no remuneration.
- involve free-will participation.
- involve both planned and spontaneous activities.
- be experimental and playful.





## Section 6: An Active Story-Maker's Studio as an Installation Artwork

### Discovering the Story-Maker's Studio

I established my installation artwork of the story-maker's studio in a room of approximately 300 m<sup>2</sup>. I had this relatively rectangular space entirely to myself and spatially designed my installation to effectively occupy the whole room. There was one entry/exit point from the room and the installation was partially lit by existing fluorescent lights and partially by devised lighting furniture.

Visitors entered the room to discover a working studio environment that was set up in such a way as to provide working/art-making areas, discussion areas, play areas and a private space for the practitioner. The studio had an industrious and cluttered aesthetic and appearance. Clearly activities and making programmes had taken place and were underway. On a workbench in one corner of the studio, fruits were being preserved. A pot quietly bubbled on a gas cooker and the smell of spices and stewing apples permeated the room.

Importantly here, this mock story-maker's studio – as a designed installation – needed to 'own' the room it was installed in. It needed to feel comfortably, efficiently and practically arranged throughout the available space in a manner best suited to its designed function and purpose. The generosity of the exhibition space allowed me to establish a reasonably compact working studio area, a studio gallery space, a private area for the story-making practitioner and large play/exploration areas, as integral parts of this practitioner's space. Through the considered arrangement of studio furnishings, tools and chattels and the artworks made or in production, I was able to delineate these separate but functionally related studio areas.

Visitors wandered about the story-maker's studio space exploring and chatting to one another. They encountered the mobile studio kit of an arts practitioner, which appeared to have been issued under license from *The Guild of Story-Makers*. This was a creative work environment, littered with made artefacts and others in fabrication – progressively being developed for a story-made installation drawn from a project called *Aporo 13*. A project which appeared to be about the exploration of an *everyday story* about a neighbourhood and its inhabitant's becoming involved the communal production of food.

Visitors to the installation commonly sat on studio furniture, tasted fruit preserves, rode around on a fruit-collection bicycle and curiously examined the miscellany of this studio environment for sustained periods of time. Very little explanation was supplied and self-exploration was encouraged. The story-maker seemed to currently be unavailable for questioning.

## **Installation – a designed experience**

Through design thinking and design processes I conceptualised and developed an intricate and stimulating environment with heightened reception values that sought to illustrate the arts practice of story-making. The installed studio acted as a kind of theatrical set. Though it purported to be a genuine (believable) functioning studio – interrupted in the midst of making – this was clearly undermined by its location in an art school amongst other artworks on show. I believe that this slippage of positioning and comprehension between *genuine studio environment* and *theatrically derived faux space* made this installed artwork more intriguing and curious for visitors.

With the design of this installation, I presented the actions and activities of an arts practitioner within a *function-specific space* to viewers, as a means to encourage them to ‘piece together’ their own understanding of the arts practice at play and its purpose. The story-maker is captured by the viewer, in the process of applying the same critical thinking (key questions) and story-making methods and processes discussed in Section 2 and Section 3, to develop this ‘story-made’ installation environment – about urban/communal food production. Translating the key critical questions outlined in Section 2 into the story-maker’s perspective – in regard to this project – he/she would have asked:

- *Through researching the Aporo 13 story-making project, what exciting and potent issues and ideas can I identify and extract for creative exploration through story-making processes?*
- *What narratives and concepts can I evolve from the ideas and issues that I find interesting in the Aporo 13 story? How might these lead my thinking and decision-making, in regard to material and media choices, making processes and spatial design for the production of a story-made installation (one that provides a 3-dimensionalised telling of a story from the Aporo 13 project endeavour)?*
- *What particular media and production methodologies do my ‘story-derived’ narratives’ and concepts encourage me to exploit, in the materialising of the*

*elements, artefacts and episodes – that will constitute a story-made installation environment for the Aporo 13 story?*

- *How can I best design a story-made installation space, to relate the ideas and issues from the Aporo 13 story that interest me (practitioner subjectivity) and ‘tell’ the story well? How can I best manage the making and spatial design processes, in order to produce a story-made installation environment that has high reception values for audiences?*

## INSTALLATION MAP

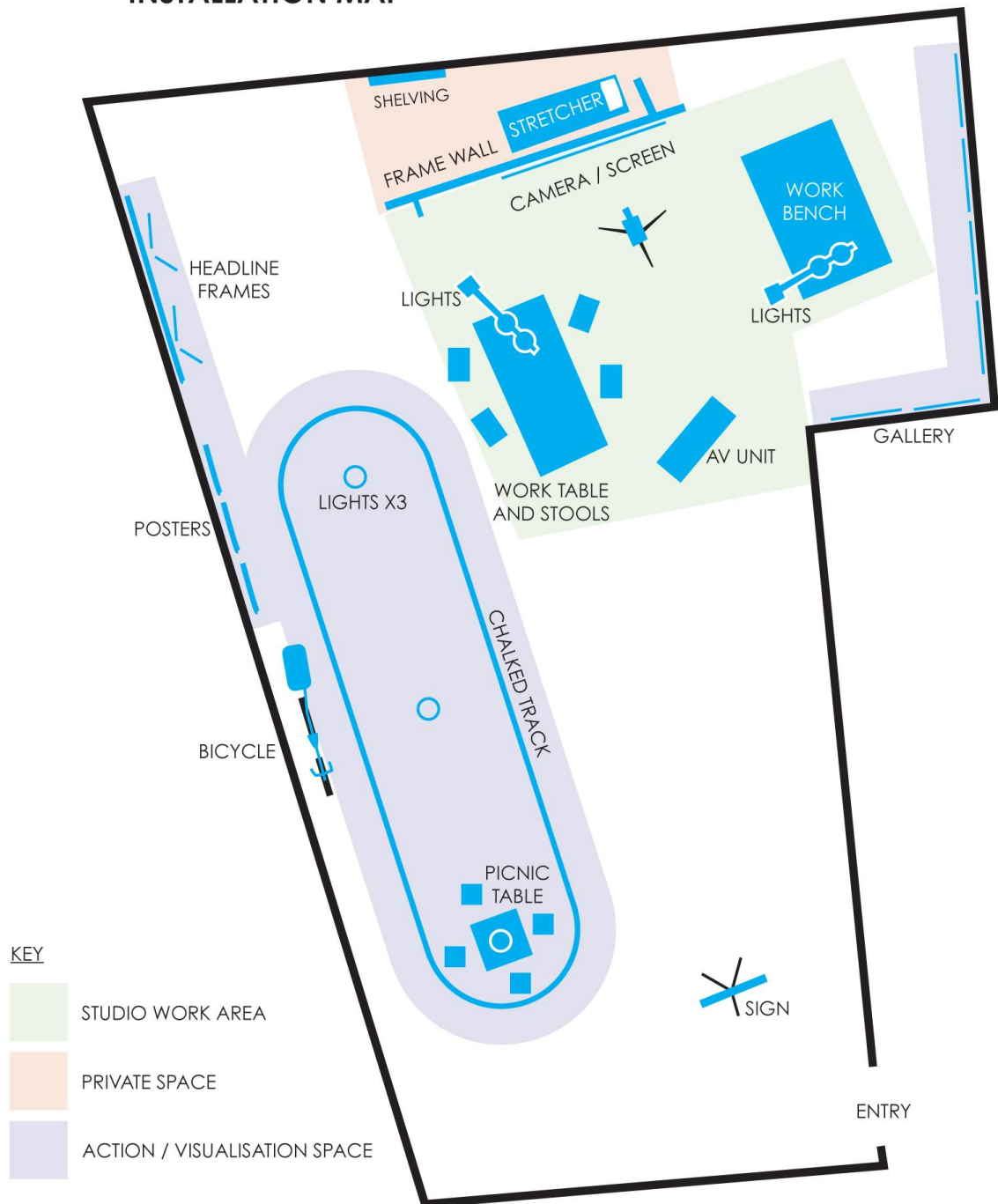


Figure 6.1: Story-Maker's Studio layout



## The Story-Maker's Studio

Visitors to the gallery entered one doorway in a corner of a large room and were then free to explore the installation as they saw fit. Essentially the installed studio environment offered three spatial zones for exploration: 1. a working study environment where intensive production process were taking place; 2. a private area reserved for the residing story-making practitioner; 3. an experimental/play areas where more expansive episode-making activities were taking place – occupying the remainder of the available space in the exhibition room.



Figures 6.2: Story-Maker's Studio



There were eight specific features/areas in the studio, which I will highlight:

**Sign Stand.** I designed an *Aporo13* project logo and had this produced as a mock sign in retro-reflective material. This sign was mounted on a road-works *sign stand* at the entrance to the exhibition/installation space. This sign announced the studio space project that was busily underway. Vegetable plants sprouted from sewn sacks that stabilised the sprawling feet of the sign stand and parodied the conventional use of sand bags (see Figures 6.3 and 6.4).



Figures 6.3 & 6.4: Sign Stand – Aporo 13 project

**Work Table and Stools.** This centrally positioned large table (see Figures 6.5 – 6.7) was purposed for supporting strategy planning activities, communal project discussions and clean studio processes. Images could be watched on the *audiovisual (AV) unit* from *stools* at this table setting.

At this time a photographic collage – in the manner of David Hockney – was being formatted on the table as part of the *Aporo 13* project. There was also evidence around the studio of other project activities that had taken place at this studio table such as: a contact letter addressed to local residents (see Figure 6.8); a poster used to locate fruiting trees and recruit participants (see Figure 6.9); and a draft map of existing fruit tree locations/types within the community at focus (see Figure 6.10).



Figures 6.5 – 6.7: Work Table and Stools

# aporo<sup>13</sup>

Resident  
16 Puriri Sreet  
Grey Lynn  
Auckland 1256

Dear Householder,

Currently we have a story-maker's studio in residence at the Grey Lynn Community Centre. We met the story-maker there and have kicked off a project called *Aporo13*. This project is about the growing of food in our own neighbourhoods for our own communities.

It has been noticed that you have a lemon tree in your front yard that is heavily set with fruit and what looks like a relatively overgrown fig tree poking around the side of your house.

We do not mean to pry, but *Aporo13* is very interested in locating trees around this neighbourhood. Indeed we are slowly identifying what amounts to a suburban orchard in our very neighbourhood. We have been surprised to find so many fruit trees in our local area, though I'm sure that the local birds and bees already know about this informal orchard that our hedges and fences divide.

Many of these trees - like your bountiful lemon - produce a great deal more fruit than one household can use, while some fruit trees aren't fruiting much at all as they desperately need fertilising, pruning or to be freed from choking vines etc.

If this is of interest to you, *Aporo13* would like to put your fruit trees on our neighbourhood orchard map. This would involve *Aporo13* visiting your trees to record a GPS (global positioning system) reference for them, and to give them some care and maintenance. If in the longer term you would like to contribute some of your fruit to *Aporo13* that would be fantastic.

We meet every Saturday morning at 9:00am at the story-maker's studio for jam, scones and planning. If you want to join us please come to the Grey Lynn Community Centre or get in contact with us at 0800 aporo13 or through our website at [www.aporo13.co.nz](http://www.aporo13.co.nz).

Thanks for your time.

  
**Terry Knowles**  
*Aporo 13*



the guild of  
**STORYMAKERS**

NEW ZEALAND  
Head Office  
159a Archers Road  
Eden Terrace  
Auckland

Ph: 09 877 8570  
24HR: 09 877 3232  
Fx: 09 877 8571  
[www.storymakers.org](http://www.storymakers.org)

Private Bag 961089  
Eden Terrace  
Auckland 065312

Figure 6.8: *Aporo 13*: letter to residents with visible fruit trees



# LOST

PLEASE HELP US  
LOCATE YOUR  
ORCHARD

aporo<sup>13</sup>

We're seeking out terrestrial fruits in your neighbourhood.  
[www.aporo13.co.nz](http://www.aporo13.co.nz) or 0800 aporo13

Figure 6.9: *Aporo 13*: community recruitment poster

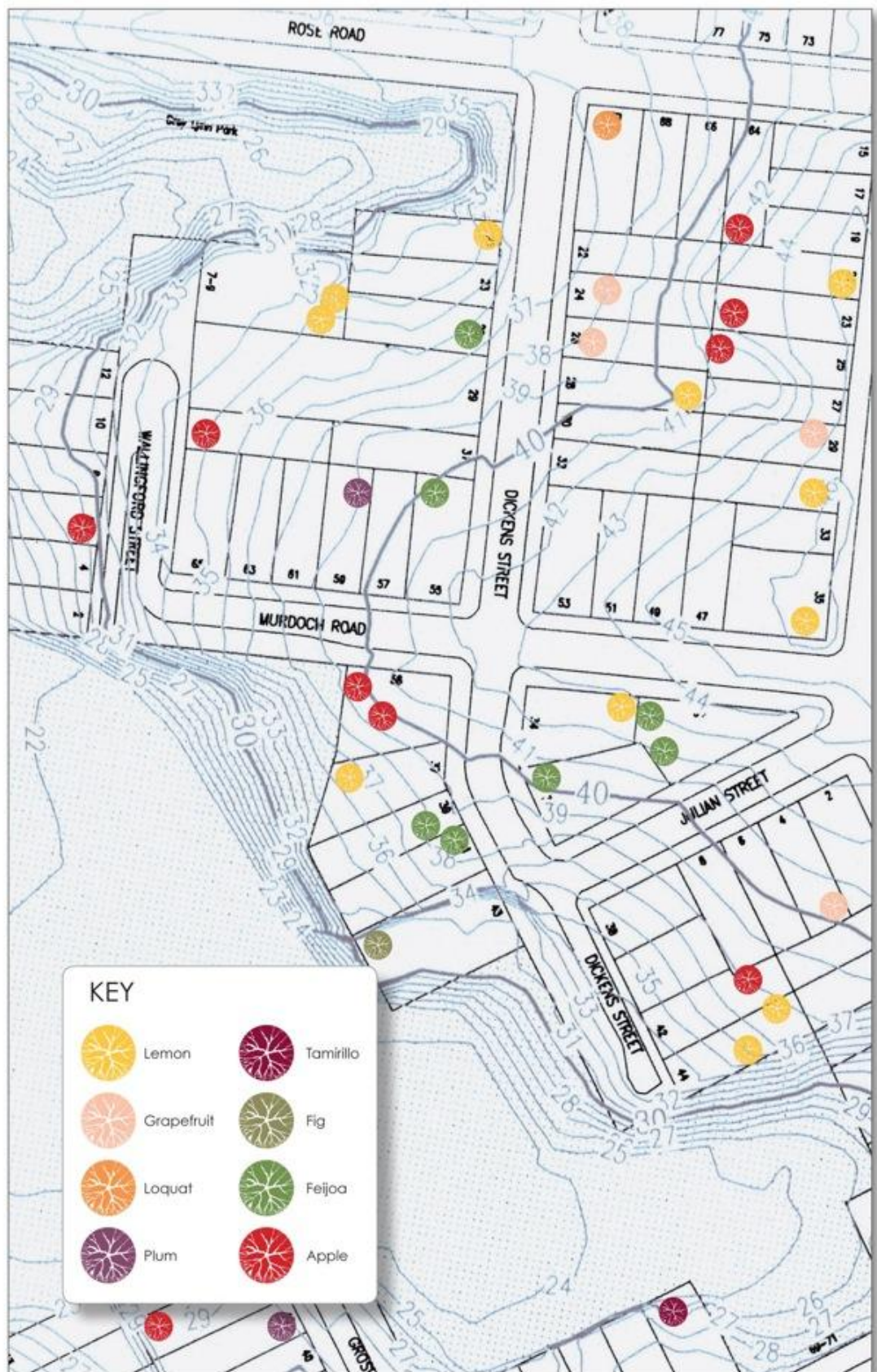


Figure 6.10: *Aporo 13*: mapping of community fruit trees



**Workbench.** This mobile *workbench* with built-in storage was designed to facilitate ‘dirty’ making processes (prototyping, model-making, fabrication) for any project that the story-maker’s studio would involve itself in. In the case of *Aporo 13* it was occupied with the preserving of fruits and vegetables collected from the local neighbourhood under focus with this project (see Figures 6.11 – 6.14).



Figures 6.11 – 6.14: Workbench with *Aporo 13* fruit preserving activity

**Audiovisual Unit.** The *audiovisual (AV) unit* consisted of a flat screen monitor and laptop computer on a mobile steel trolley (see Figure 6.15). This unit could be used to store, watch and replay any audio-visual/photographic materials collected through the project. Any ‘episodes’ that were developed as part of *making* an installation from an *everyday story* could be reviewed/played on this unit, which was positioned alongside the central *work table*.



Figures 6.15: Audiovisual Unit.

**Lighting Stands.** Two flexible and mobile studio *lighting stands* (see Figure 6.16) were developed to provide specific over-head lighting for the *work table* and *workbench* areas. These *lighting stands* were designed to have a versatile and practical appeal. The *warm* fluorescent lamps in these light fittings assisting with balancing the *cold* fluorescent light from the existing exhibition space light fittings.

With their specific positioning over the two most industrious studio work areas, visitors were pulled to these high-lighted sites.

These light stands were designed as an integral part of the story-maker's studio kit and were therefore fabricated from timber and white painted metal.



Figure 6.16: Lighting Stand

**Episode Rehearsal Space.** An *episode rehearsal/performance space* was defined here by a backdrop screen and mock camera and tripod (Figure 6.17). The backdrop screen was housed in a domestic timber pelmet and attached to the timber frame wall that divided the studio from the practitioner's private space. This was designed to represent an 'action space' in the studio where historic, imagined and/or devised moments (episodes) from the making of an everyday story could be played-out, rehearsed and performed.

In this case the backdrop screen was a life size photo image of a healthy lemon tree photographed over a suburban backyard fence. Here I wanted to talk about the



public/private spatial and territorial challenges of the *Aporo13* project where participants in the project try to create communally beneficial outcomes that rely on them gaining access to fruiting trees on private property (approval and/or involvement of the owners).



Figure 6.17: Episode Rehearsal Space (mock camera and back-drop screen)

***Private Space.*** A private space for the story-making practitioner was delineated by an open-framed wall. This space provided a sleeping stretcher and storage/shelving for the story-maker's personal belongings (Figure 6.18). The shelf in this *private space* carried an array of books and 'trophy' (*receptivity* and *diligence*) awarded for other successful story-making projects (Figure 6.19).

On the wall of this temporary dwelling space, hung a poster by artist Felix Gonzales-Torres. Nicolas Bourriaud wrote about Gonzalez-Torres as an artist working under the *relational aesthetics* banner. Artists of the relational aesthetics mould commonly make/made artworks that socially and interactively engaged audiences within the gallery environment (Bourriaud, 1998). I gathered this poster from a Gonzalez-Torres artwork called *Untitled* (1992/1993) which was on display at SFMoMA in San Francisco. The poster's purpose in this installation, was to suggest that the story-making practitioner had a genuine and personal interest in artmaking and in relational aesthetics as a not-too-dissimilar arts practice mode.

I designed this space to have the appearance of being simple, spartan and semi-private, with a permeable frame wall separating this more private area from the working studio area. There was an inference here – with the semi-privateness and aesthetics of this space – that a significant ‘devotion to practice’ was expected of the story-making practitioner.



Figures 6.18 & 6.19: Private Space (frame wall divider, stretcher, shelving)



**Action/Visualisation spaces.** Adjacent to the *intensive making areas* and the *practitioner's private area* of the studio were large open areas which had the appearance of being variously used for story-related element, artefact and episode development. Specifically these were experimental spaces where concepts and actions in regard to fruit tree/orchard mapping, the development of communication strategies and the conscription of project participants could be trialled, recorded and visualised. These areas of the installed studio indicated to the viewer, that a function of the studio was to experimentally trial actions that outreached into the project community – to develop and gather materials for the making of this *everyday story installation*.

With the *Aporo 13* project, these *action/visualisation spaces* took the aesthetic, form and function of:

- an area where a large photo image of a dairy frontage was mounted on a wall with 6 wire framed posters leaning against it. Within these archetypal *news headline frames* (part of the story-maker's kit) were a series of graphic prints that parodied the conventional newspaper posters – usually found outside grocery stores. These posters carried such headline titles as *Aporo 13 Finds New Apple Variety*, *Record Feijoa Crop* and *Supermarkets Yield To Local Products* (Figures 6.20 – 6.24).



Figures 6.20 & 6.21: Communications experiments with Newspaper Headline Frames





Figures 6.22 – 6.24: Communications/media experiments with Newspaper Headline Frames in the neighbourhood environment

- a *gallery space* featuring a series of photographs of people posing with fruit trees (e.g., Figures 6.25 – 6.27). Called the *family tree series*, these photo images played on those words, depicting groups of house dwellers posing in family portrait compositions, with fruiting/edible plants from their gardens.



Figure 6.25: Family Tree Series – Nicola, Flynn, Ben and Lemon Tree





Figure 6.26: Family Tree Series – Helava, Sofia and Taro



Figure 6.27: Family Tree Series – Jamie, Lucia, Anne, Aria, Tinker and Guava



- a *cycle track* chalked onto the concrete floor – around which a specially designed fruit collection bicycle, coupled with a trailer, could be ridden (Figures 6.28 and 6.29). The bicycle was a restored seventies model and was fitted with *Aporo 13* decals and a global positioning satellite (GPS) device for the locating of fruit trees in the explored neighbourhood.



Figure 6.28: Fruit collection bicycle with GPS device on chalked cycle track



Figure 6.29: Fruit-laden *Aporo 13* trailer



A foldable picnic table and chair set was located within the 40-metre long lozenge-shaped cycle track. The table top was laminated with a graphic map, devised from an aerial photograph of a neighbourhood and sprinkled with iconic symbols representing individual fruit trees that had been located in the project neighbourhood. Visitors to the gallery space could sit at this table and eat scones and sample jams made from the fruits of neighbourhood trees (Figure 6.30).



Figure 6.30: Picnic table with *Aporo 13* jams and scones

Samples of *fruit tree search posters* (e.g., Figure 6.9) were taped to the wall alongside the cycle track.

## Summary

Visitors to the story-maker's studio were enthusiastic about their experiences and many of them remained exploring and/or socialising within this installation environment for a sustained period of time.

The central thrust with the design of this artwork had been to create an installation environment with high reception values – to enable it to captivate and hold an audience. The story-maker's studio – busy with the *Aporo 13* project – was designed to provide a

tactile experience of ideas, holding its audience through the immediateness of the accumulating content within the studio environment, and to illuminate the broader principles of the theorised story-making practice.

The principles of the conceptualised arts practice (story-making) were fully applied here in the development and fabrication of an installation artwork that purported to be a story-maker's studio in the throes of story-making practice activities (installation making). These principles – primarily 'design-thinking' processes and approaches – were applied here in developing and materialising a compelling example of applied principles in the form of this mock studio environment.

The story-maker's studio as a devised/fictional environment was designed to sit at an intriguing counter-point between being an authentic working studio and a theatrical folly. I believe that this tension was useful for engaging the installation's audience in a critical appraisal of this installed environment.

## Section 7. Concluding Commentary

*We are now in a material environment where earlier 20<sup>th</sup>-century models of spectatorship, contemplation and experience are inadequate for understanding the conditions of cultural creation and reception [...] it is a recognition of this shift and a realization that art must reconfigure itself in relation to transformed modes of cognition and experience (de Oliveira et al., 2003, p. 6).*

Ultimately this Master's project has been an exercise in identifying my practice interests, clustering them cohesively (and usefully) into something I could name as a theorised arts practice model (story-making), comparing this model of practice against those of other artists, and testing this model of practice through studio work and an exhibition project. The overall development of this project has been guided by key critical questions that I have used to assess both my own artmaking, and that of other artists (in this case, the six artists whose work I examined in some depth). This project – through both research and exhibition development phases – has essentially been a design-led process of arts practice appraisal, critique and experimentation.

Reflecting back at the conclusion of this Master's project, my interest at the outset was in smart art about important ideas, rendered in appropriate media and delivered with energy and eloquence into the public domain. This interest remains. These critical and analytical explorations – of what were instinctive practice interests – have allowed me to playfully hone them within a conceptualised theoretical and methodological framework. The Master's project concept of *Creative Reportage* captured this process and allowed me – most importantly through the Master's exhibition – to work as a designer/artist in creating a captivating and complex installation artwork.

The *story-making studio* concept (and made product) gave these ideas and notions of practice a place to reside and function. My aim was to provide the viewer with a beguiling installation artwork posing as a genuine working space and with heightened reception values – that tested my skills as an artist/designer. The story-maker's studio as I designed it, provided layered insights into a theorised practice, and showed by example and suggestion, rather than by direct telling. It was an evocation of a named arts practice that encompasses my interests – identified through self-analysis of practice and the critique of other practitioners – and an expression of my love for installation medium, making processes, materials, and the experience of art as a viewer.

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## Appendix 1: A Story for Story-Making?

After conceiving of the idea of making a *story-maker's studio* I set about looking for a story 'from the social terrain of the everyday', that I could research and use as a *case-study story* for story-making within this exhibited environment. The 80-year trade ban imposed by Australia on NZ apples caught my attention. It was interesting in that it was about food, orcharding families growing apples for export, politics, economics, science, bluster and a fair amount of *bullshit*. I researched this story in detail and conceptually explored some story-making approaches around this story. Then around May 2009 I decided to let this story go after chatting to NZ orchardists. The story turned out to be less cohesive than I imagined and very complex and fractured. Perhaps in the end it wasn't small enough as a story to 'make' from. Nevertheless it generated some valuable thinking around *narrative approaches* and *element, artefact and episode* production.

### Story background: "An apple in your eye" (project working title)

In 1921 apple exports from New Zealand to Australia were banned because of the outbreak of the fire-blight plant pathogen, which caused apple and pear trees to die. Although New Zealand horticultural scientists, politicians, fruit marketing boards and apple growers have diligently worked for decades to lift this export ban, they have not been successful. NZ is currently presenting its case to the World Trade Organisation for a second time. Trade ambassadors hope to lift the ban on the grounds that is continuing to be upheld without scientific merit and is an anti-free trade measure.

Described by Kathy Marks (2000) in the Independent newspaper as "one of the world's oldest trade wars", the issue has always been very heated and emotional and will likely be vociferously contested by Australian apple growers, unions and politicians for some time, even if the WTO finds in favour of New Zealand's case.

In recent years especially, an extraordinary amount of energy, creativity and resource has been applied by NZ fruit growers, developers of varietal apples, plant scientists and government officials in trying to find a resolution to this trade issue. Despite NZ developing scientific safeguards and disease control programmes to control fire-blight, the issue strikes against a wall of emotion and fear in Australia (especially in rural areas). With scientific flair, marketing ingenuity and enthusiasm, NZ keeps developing new apple varieties in order to win favour with local and world markets. Fruit grower's collectives, scientists and politicians work successfully side-by-side on this 'backbone

industry' issue. Ministers and agencies of trade and agriculture, associated with successive governments, have come and gone, as have many varieties of apple.

Interestingly enough one of the new commercially developed apple varieties – bred in the hope of tempting new customers – was given the name 'Eve'. Reportedly the 'Eve apple' is very delicious.

### **Why pick a story like this as a case-study project for the hypothetical *story-maker's studio*?**

On the surface this might look like a fairly mundane story, however I believed that it had an exciting complexity and held all the necessary ingredients that could have made it a great candidate story for the *story-maker's studio*. Some facets of the '*An apple in your eye*' that I think make it a great case-study story:

- the lengthy/complex historical detail of this story and the prominent persons that have been involved and are currently engaged in it.
- the dogged resourcefulness of NZ fruit grower organisations (grower collectives) in contesting the export ban (sharing aspirations about fruit growing and fair access to the Australian market).
- the history/connectedness of NZ government departments and officials (trade, plant sciences, agriculture) in pursuing the end of this trade ban. (The story crosses economic, political, scientific, social and agricultural boundaries).
- NZ's continued economic reliance on agricultural exports for prosperity.
- the competitive nature of the relationship between NZ and Australia.
- emotionally driven actions of Australian fruit growers and politicians steering Australian policy-making and quarantine control guidelines. (Consequently thorough scientific research regarding the likelihood of fire-blight being introduced to Australia through the export of NZ apples is therefore disregarded [science/reason vs. emotions/propaganda]).
- the current status of the case as NZ makes its second appeal (2007) to the World Trade Organisation. (The previous case was put forward in 2005).
- the history and significance of home-grown food traditions in NZ.

- the current economic climate that has governments acting to protect their own markets rather than seek to further open trade between nations (protectionism vs. open/fair-trade, CER).
- the regional nature of the story – especially to growers and communities in the Nelson and the Hawke's Bay areas.
- the current emphasis being placed on the issue of food security.
- the development and marketing of the new 'Eve' apple variety.
- the aesthetic and material (artefacts) richness of the story (apples, personages, newspaper/media stories and paraphernalia of apple growing, exporting, orcharding, laboratory science etc.)

### **A selection of newspaper articles in regard to this story:**

- **Blight out of control**, (The Press, 23 May 1997).
- **Smith apologises to Australia**, (The Press, 16 May 1997).
- **Hope for apple crumble**, (Sunday Star-Times, 13 December 1998).
- **US scientist 'friend' of accused fire-blight smuggler**, (The Press, 9 March 1998).
- **Victoria: Kiwis can "keep their lousy apples" says Nats leader**, (AAP General News (Aus), 20 December 2000).
- **After 75 years, oldest trade war erupts again**, (The Independent (U.K.), 1 December 2000).
- **Shepparton to shut down in protest on apples**, (AAP General News, 28 November 2000).
- **Fight looms over fire-blight fear**, (ABC (Aus), 11 November 2000).
- **Apple growers say NZ decision based on free trade**, (AAP General News, 17 October 2000).
- **Radiation plan to kill NZ apple disease**, (AAP General News (Aus), 6 February 2001).
- **Queensland: NZ fruit protest tomorrow**, (AAP General News (Aus), 13 March 2001).
- **Rotten core of apple ban plan: Australians tipped to continue blockade of forbidden New Zealand fruit**, (Sunday Star-Times, 14 December 2003).



- **NZ welcomes WTO appeal ruling on fire-blight**, ([www.beehive.govt.nz](http://www.beehive.govt.nz), 27 November 2003).
- **Fire-blight like a gun to Australian apple industry**, (AAP General News, 30 August 2004).
- **Queensland: New Zealand apple time bomb**, (AAP General News (Aus), 1 June 2004).
- **Rotten apple plot, says New Zealand**, (Australasian Business Intelligence, 14 December 2005).
- **NZ pushes Aussies over apple dispute at WTO**, (Xinhua News Agency, 3 February 2006).
- **Kiwis say it's time for Aussies to eat NZ apples**, (AAP General News (Aus), 30 March 2006).
- **Crunch time for New Zealand apples**, (Australasian Business Intelligence, 21 June 2007).

## Appendix 2: Fruit Tree Survey – Select Images

