

**Kim Newall**

**Sketching**  
**as a**  
**Methodology**  
**for**  
**Creative Practice**

**2012**  
**Interdisciplinary Unit**

An exegesis submitted to the Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Creative Technologies

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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.”

*January 2012*

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# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors for their assistance in generating this exegesis. I would also like to thank those who assisted in me in various ways during this year.

# Abstract

This exegesis is a reflection and classification of work produced as part of a creative practice-based research thesis. It also draws on knowledge gained over 25 years of practice. Thus, the research documented here can be considered as part of a larger research project to develop a new understanding of using sketching as a methodology for creative practice in the post-digital age. Outcomes will be presented through exhibition and a reflective critique of my own hybrid, interactive, public performance-based practice. In the first section, I describe my background and development of my work. In the second section, I introduce several different properties of sketching that are used to contextualize, classify and analyse the research process and the works that have emerged from this. The third section provides the background for 'Bathing with Elephants', an exhibition sketch that will be executed near the end of the thesis year. This work is considered to be 'in formation' – it is part of a continuous and ongoing inquiry to make sense of my practice.

# Introduction

In this section I define sketch through a reading review. In the second part I define sketching in relation to my creative practice

# Defining Sketching

Definitions and descriptions of sketching have remained relatively constant throughout history and have emphasized its “speedy, exploratory, spontaneous, abbreviated, unfinished, indeterminate, fiery, contingent and/or disordered qualities often characterized by loss of control or openness to the unexpected” (Petherbridge, 2010, p.27). Stjernfelt (2007) notes that elements within modern art can also be seen to have focused on certain features of the sketch, “to isolate them, cultivate them and see them as just as essential – or even more so – than the finished work of art” (p.321).

Fish & Scrivener (1990) note that the sketch has also been widely understood as an interim stage in the design process in different disciplines. In design-based or visuo-spatial processes, such as architecture and product design, sketching is frequently defined as “the making of images used to assist....in the design of something else” (p.120). It is important to note here that, in such domains, the terms ‘drawing’ and ‘sketching’ can overlap in meaning and sometimes can be interchangeable. For example, Eames(2008), suggests that “The thinking space that you move to during the working process is drawing” (p. 127).

Yet, while Eames(2008), also suggests that “drawing provides an essential means of prodding and probing, doing and undoing, glimpsing and maybe seeing and experiencing reality and virtuality”, he also makes a distinction between the “high and low focus thinking” that drawing facilitates (p.139). High focus relates to logical and analytical thinking. However, according to Eames, low-focus thinking is characterized by “loss of control, creative fancy and the ability to be receptive to the unexpected or fantastic”(p. 139) – a description that suggests an activity that others would recognize as sketching.

A review of current literature on the subject has also highlighted how some of key concepts and practices of sketching have recently been adopted by or transferred to different media.

Petheridge (2010), for example, notes that while sketches are often characterized

by medium: “a musical, literary, a clay, or an oil paint”(p. 25). other disciplines such as mathematics, philosophy and science have also appropriated the idea of the sketch. In recent years sketching has also been of particular interest in the field of cognitive psychology, in as much as mental states and sketching “share certain properties which are imprecise, ambiguous, fluid, amorphous, indeterminate, etc and can reveal the thought process or externalize the cognitive”(p. 28). Thus linking the concepts of looking and thinking

Others have also used the concept of the duality of internality (i.e. mental) and externality (i.e. physical) in studies of creative practices or processes (Bertel, Jupp, Barkowsky, & Bilda, 2006). Eames (2008) similarly sees the sketch as a way of externalizing the thinking process “.... [putting] down an idea before it floats away – or materializing an idea” (p. 127). Bilda, Gero, & Purcell (2006) have suggested that, for the expert artist, ‘externalizing’ the idea may not be necessary and that the process happens internally. Scientific studies on sketching (for example Bhattacharya & Petsche, 2005) have compared differences between the EEG brain signals of trained and non-trained artists. Anderson & Helstrup (1993) have studied the effectiveness of mental imagery with and without drawing support (perceptual assistance) in the visual synthesis.

For Downs (2007), such activity is a “two way process” that “oscillates between seeing, thinking, remembering and imagining, controlling and being controlled as the image emerges” (p. xii).

This suggests that process and product may continuously and simultaneously shift in the course of making.

# Defining Practice

This thesis considers sketching as the essence of my current practice. In reflecting upon my own work, I identified various forms of sketching that have recurred as a way of allowing ideas and/or work to emerge.

Frequently, this involves rapidly producing work - often without an end result - to 'see what will happen'. The particular form that sketches take will vary depending on my contextualized response to the available/appropriate materials and media. This method can sometimes be related to the surrealist notion of 'automatic drawing'. In the Surrealist Manifesto, Breton (1924) defines *Surrealism* as...

Pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express, verbally, in writing, or by other means, the real process of thought. Thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations.

Automatic drawing is a way of accessing the unconscious through drawing, allowing there to be freedom away from rational control. At other times, however, the sketches are very conscious; with decisions being made to achieve a specific end result- this is a more rational approach. And then, there is another area between conscious and unconscious decision-making.

This practice-led study will explore the concept and nature of sketching as a methodology for my contemporary creative practice. It employs a variety of media and operates across normative disciplinary boundaries. The research involves the critical conception, development, application, execution and performance of sketching in the context of my own creative practice.

Reflecting on the practice, sketching is an underlining repeating principle for investigating and developing both the concepts and content of the work. My proposition is that anything can be sketched in any media, both digital and analogue.

What is important is the ability to work fast and make responsive decisions to the work itself and the surrounding environment at key steps in the process. For me, this is a form of conversation between creator, creation and surroundings. While I use traditional ways of sketching with art materials, including water-colours, pens or pencils, I also use not-so-traditional methods such as sketching with computer software, with programming, or with models, which can themselves be sketched in real materials such as cardboard, or created virtually.

A sketch can also be the finished product and not a just part of the developmental process for achieving a final product. Sketching is a way of exploring and searching for new possibilities.

In the following sections, I highlight four key properties that have emerged out of my creative practice. These properties form into a kind of methodology for my creative practice generally and allow sketching to be a way of being instead of simply a method or tool.

The creative practice is a complex creature, and I do not attempt to simplify or demystify it with this exegesis. However I will attempt to put forward a structure that makes sense of my own practice as an artist.

# **Evolution and Reflection**

In this section I will situate my research within an autobiographical framework, noting key background influences and themes, which inform my work.



# **My Creative Practice**

My practice originated in traditional or analogue media and evolved into using new media or digital practice. While originally seen as separate, the media types have, over the years, emerged into a new hybrid space. Sketching has played a pivotal role in the emergence of this space.

From a very young age I have drawn, doodled and sketched using paper, pencils and very traditional physical materials. I used to make drawing books in order to share drawing with other people or try to understand or communicate some fundamental principles underlying the practice. Drawing was something that I really enjoyed but unfortunately my teachers did not classify me as being ‘talented’ (I always received poor marks for art at primary school). This was mainly because the drawings were clunky and clumsy.

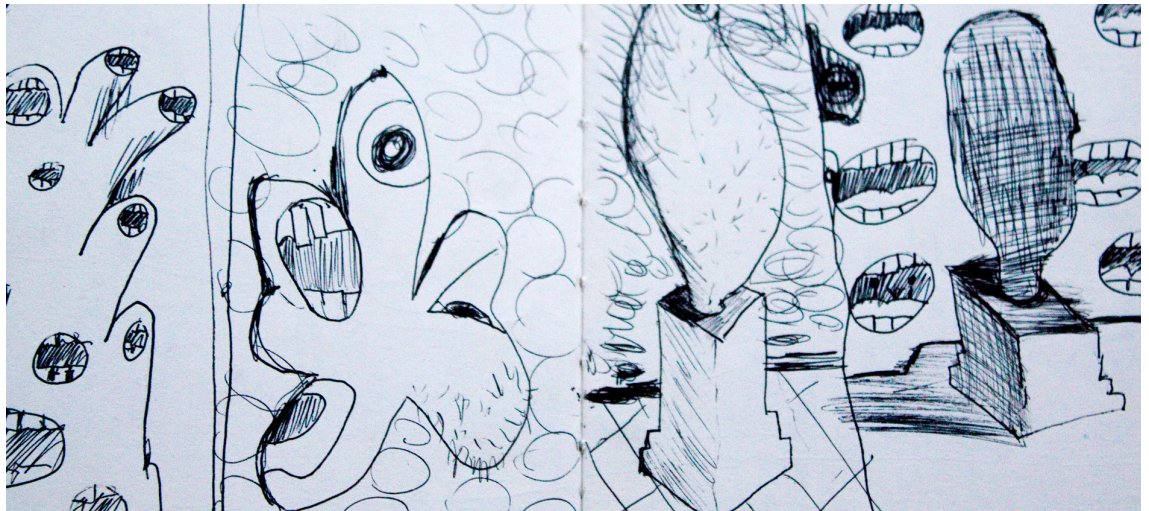
In the 1980s, the advent of the microcomputer and the availability of the home computer for the non-professional provided the opportunity for anyone to become a ‘programmer’. Access to computers was no longer restricted to university research projects or large corporate bodies, enabling a wider audience to experiment with computers and programming.

The low storage capabilities of the first computers forced me to develop programming skills as a ‘work-around’. At the age of 6, I used what was available, together with the skills and knowledge I had at the time, to explore possibilities and to experiment with sketching in digital spaces.

By following examples from manuals, my practice developed into producing original, very simple programs that created drawings on green and black screens. However, when the computer was turned off, the drawings were no longer there. They could only be reproduced from memory and did not always come out in the same way each time.

These sets of commands and instructions were executed in a linear fashion, and had a visual, graphic outcome. This made the process more accessible and enjoyable with a visual, rather than a text, outcome. The simplicity and naivety of these sketches were important because they could be achieved without the practitioner necessarily being an expert.

This relates to the idea of bricolage where one uses available resources, including one's knowledge, to get things done. As Turkle (1995) notes: "...arranging and rearranging material a set of well-known material can be seen as bricolage" (p. 51). Often bricolage relates to non-experts who work with materials at hand in a pragmatic way. Levi-Strauss (1962) notes that: "...in our own time the 'bricoleur' is [...] someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman' (p. 11). For me 'devious' activities are things you are not supposed to do; things that break the rules. The dictionary defines 'deviant' activity as 'departing from the proper or accepted way' (dictionary.com) For me, it is about trying different things without knowing the outcome.



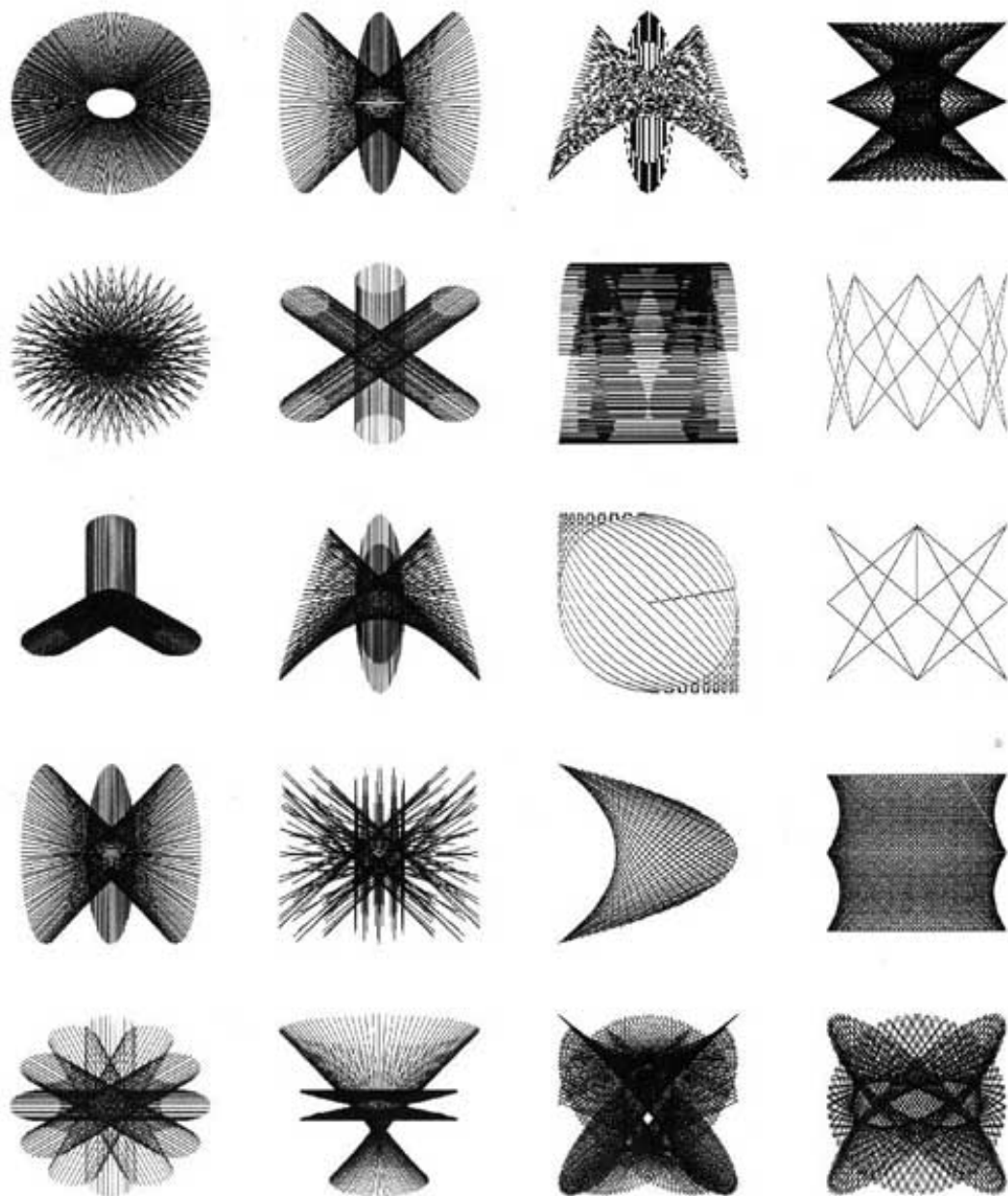
**Figure 1.** Early sketchbook drawing

# Hacking

Over the next few years, I began to explore what I call ‘circle hacking’ which I discovered and utilised as another form of digital sketching. Hacking can be applied to any type of code or data which includes different types of media and disciplines, Wark (2004) defines hacking as: “Whatever code we hack, be it programming language, poetic language, math or music, curves or colorings, we are the abstracters of new worlds.” (para. 2).

My experience of hacking involved computer manuals. Using examples from the manuals, I first drew a circle in the middle of the screen. Then, by changing the numbers in the equations, I created different Spirograph-like images without knowing what was happening mathematically. The process of iteratively changing small bits of the code enabled the discovery of different, but related, patterns. Other programmers and artists have been experimenting with these same ideas. Graham (2004) has written that he “tended to just spew out code that was hopelessly broken, and gradually beat it into shape” (p. 22). Graham concluded that if he had looked over at other work he would have concluded that what he was doing was sketching.

This was the start of exploring what would happen if things were changed without a preset plan or idea. Hacking is one of the central ideas that has also lead me into being applying this to the traditional media. This was a fundamental way of thinking by beginning to change things to explore the possibilities with the media that was being used. I would draw and keep drawing to see how characters evolved and to find out what was possible. Pages in sketchbooks were iterations of sketches that were done – sketchbooks ended up being very much like programmes and this iterative method of drawing was very similar to my work in early programming. This relationship between hacking and sketching would become quite central to my practice in later years.



**Figure 2.** Example of hacking a circle program

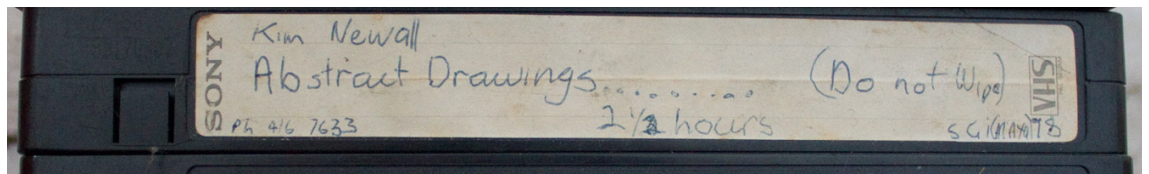
# Graphic interfaces

In the 1990s, the Graphic User Interface (GUI) allowed computers to be used more efficiently by non-programmers, thus creating the potential for new environments in which to explore and play. Turkle (1995) noted, speaking from the perspective of the computer: “play with me, experiment with me, there is no one correct path” (p. 60). During this phase, I began to explore commercial software such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe After Effects and Macromedia Freehand that allowed me to sketch without programming.

Later, with the advent of Alias/Wavefront Maya I began experimenting with real-time 3D computer graphics, recording results on VHS and also labeling this process as ‘sketching’. It was at this time that I began to have awareness that sketching was not just an outcome-oriented process in one media, but a dynamic mode of operating that can traverse physical and digital spaces. During this time, I produced a handful of videotapes that I came to think of as an equivalent to sketchbooks of drawings.

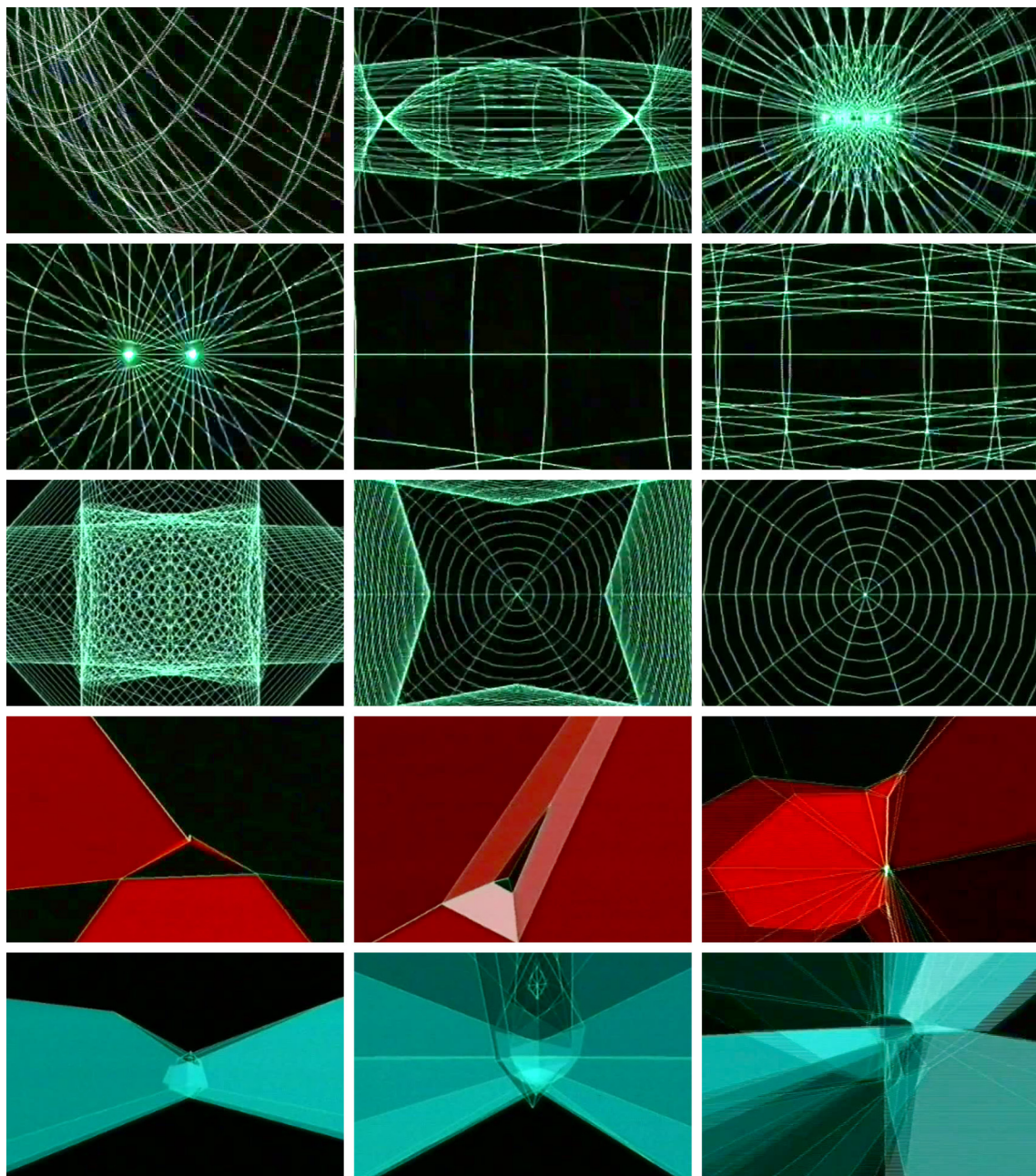
At this time a few notable influences were artists who made abstract films including Larry Cuba, Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye, Harry Smith and John Whitney. These artists explored the properties of their mediums experimentally. I related to this as I was exploring the properties of using my tool Maya for producing real time 3D abstract animations. This process of experimenting is also a form of sketching.

Also I am interested in the relationship between music and moving image, which forms visual music. Looking at movement, colour and rhythm as a form of communication. The act of manipulation of the images formed by physical actions led to the idea that this could be seen as a form of performance.



**Figure 3.** VHS Tapes used for Vjing





**Figure 4.** *SGL Drawings 1998*

# Performing

The idea of 'performing' came out of the act of manipulating some of these videotapes by mixing them together. In the late 1990's, many hours were spent exploring possibilities as a VJ; responding to music in real-time in clubs. Through this process, I came to the realization that sketching is inherently based around some kind of performance, whether it be public or private.

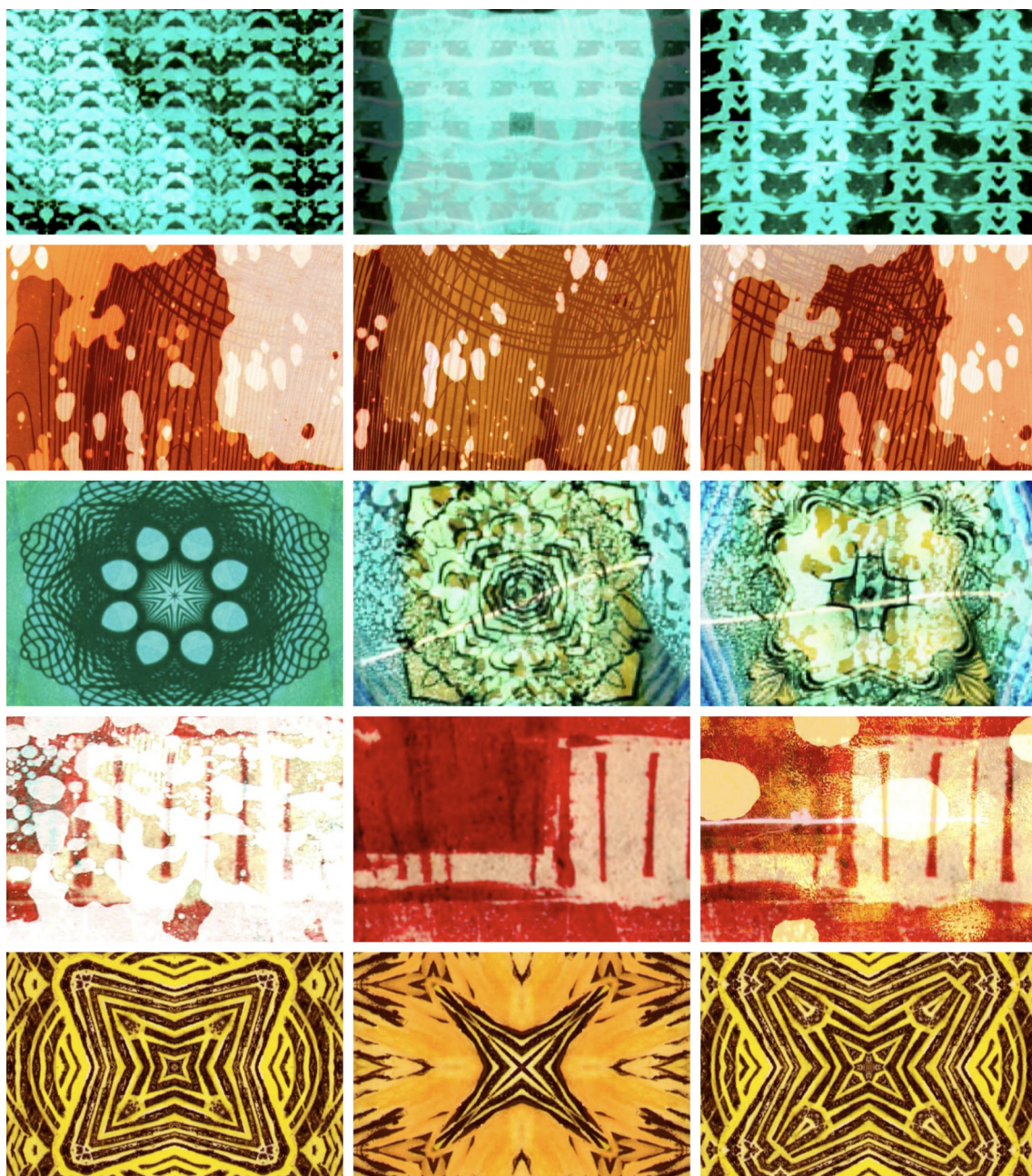
During this time, a collection of sketches was developed by drawing on digital printouts. This brought together analogue and digital media approaches. From here, animations were made from the sketchbooks and drawings. The animations then were performed live by mixing different content together in a similar way that a music DJ/producer might mix songs and sounds. This reinforced the idea that the performance itself is a form of sketch. Indeed, in the field of performance, the term 'sketch' and related ideas about 'improvisation' could be used to refer to a quality of sketching in terms of exploring the possible in real time.

At this time, my creative practice began to develop a conversation between different modes of artistic expression. I came to realize that an original language was emerging from my search for further possibilities for interaction. The process of mixing analog and digital together across virtual and real media raised the possibility that I was inherently engaged in a process of evolving new forms and making new things.

At this time I was researching into visual music. At the turn of the 20th century a few people were developing colour organs (Peacock, 1988). Instruments that played colour and image instead of sound. They build tools that experimented with the properties of light and electricity. This links the idea that the visual can be performed. And tools that can be built with technologies to explore this idea.

In summary my current practice has been informed by a number of key developments and influences in my life. In the next section I will outline properties that underpin my practice as it exists today.





**Figure 5.** Videos used at performance at Gathering 1999



# **Sketching as a Methodology for Creative Practice**

As I reflect on my past and present work I notice that a cohesive sketching practice has emerged, supported by a number of interrelated properties, which are still in the process of formation.

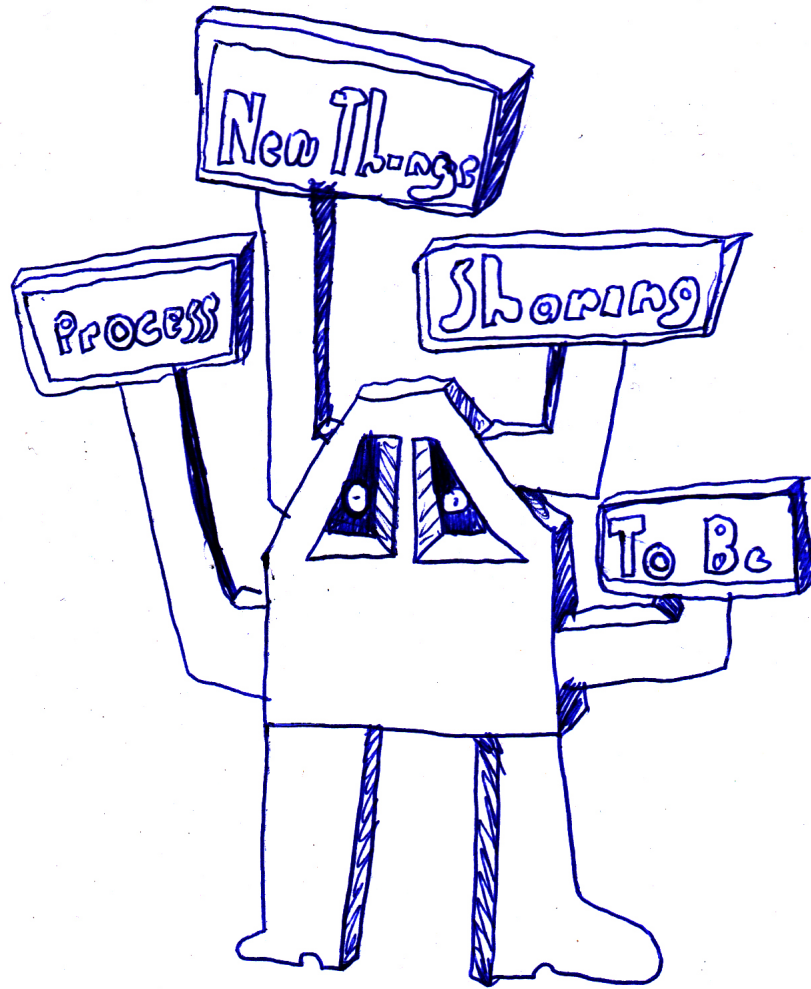
**Process:** My sketching is an exploration of the possible and does not always need a predicted or fixed outcome. It is based around the idea that the process of creating is as important as the eventual product and that the steps along the way form, in themselves, key aspects of the artistic practice.

Sketching is about making **new things**. It is about exploring technologies both old and new. It is also about what is created with these tools, not just about showing what the technologies can do. It is beyond just a tech demo. It is not about using the latest or best technologies or just about following trends. It is about pushing the boundaries. It is not about a clever idea, being smart or a one hit wonder. It is about the exploration of the possible. Some of the results will not be successful or resolved; they might lead to other creations or be a dead end.

There is an underpinning principle of my practice related to **sharing**. Sketching exists in different places - it can range from a commercial project to a piece of guerrilla art; it could be in a fine art gallery or a child's bedroom. It can morph, change, and evolve as it wants or needs to. My practice often involves sharing my work with the public although some of my work remains private.

A final principle relates to the idea that sketching needs to be allowed **to 'be'**. It is a hybrid form that is not inhibited by preconceived ideas as it sits between mindsets and realities – it is therefore an artefact in of itself that needs to 'be' just as it is. This sense of 'being' allows the creative practice to be alive, allowing it to evolve, adapt and change over time.

In the following section I outline each of these properties in more detail, interweaving them with theory and current examples of practice. In this way I hope to present a type of methodology of practice that is both a reflection, and potentially a manifesto for future action and development. The example projects that are presented incorporate all of the principles in some way, but are placed in different sections to illustrate particular aspects of each property. Each project presented was completed during the thesis year.



**Figure 6.** Creative practice creature

# Process

As mentioned previously, sketching assists me to explore what is possible in my creative practice and does not always necessitate an outcome. Ideas may turn into artifacts but this is not always the case. In essence, process is about experimentation, which can occur either in private and/or public.

These experiments are, in turn, a search for new processes; they are not limited by the need to illustrate an already formed idea or concept but are in fact a concept in and of themselves. I am not consciously forcing an idea upon the sketch, the sketch in this state is an emergent force of its own where the media drives the direction and the end result is not known.

## Private processes

Private work is that which is done away from the gaze of the public. This assists me to have fewer expectations and less commitment to outcomes. This lack of pressure feeds a sense of freedom. This is a safe zone; to find out what might happen, making a 'stab in the dark', looking for the happy accident. Often, the results may be unsatisfying. Yet, such 'results' can lead into other things that may trigger new ideas or techniques. This property of sketching allows for mistakes to happen as risks are taken in the search for new ways to do things. This means that there is a high failure rate. But that said there are no strong expectations, only general aesthetic standards and practical considerations. There is also no accountability or responsibility – because of this the work is free to be itself – to emerge into what it wishes to become.

As noted in my autobiographical reflection, I have found a number of commonalities between hacking and sketching. For example the sense of freedom as Wark (2004) notes: "Hacking as a pure, free experimental activity must be free from any constraint that is not self imposed." (para 197)

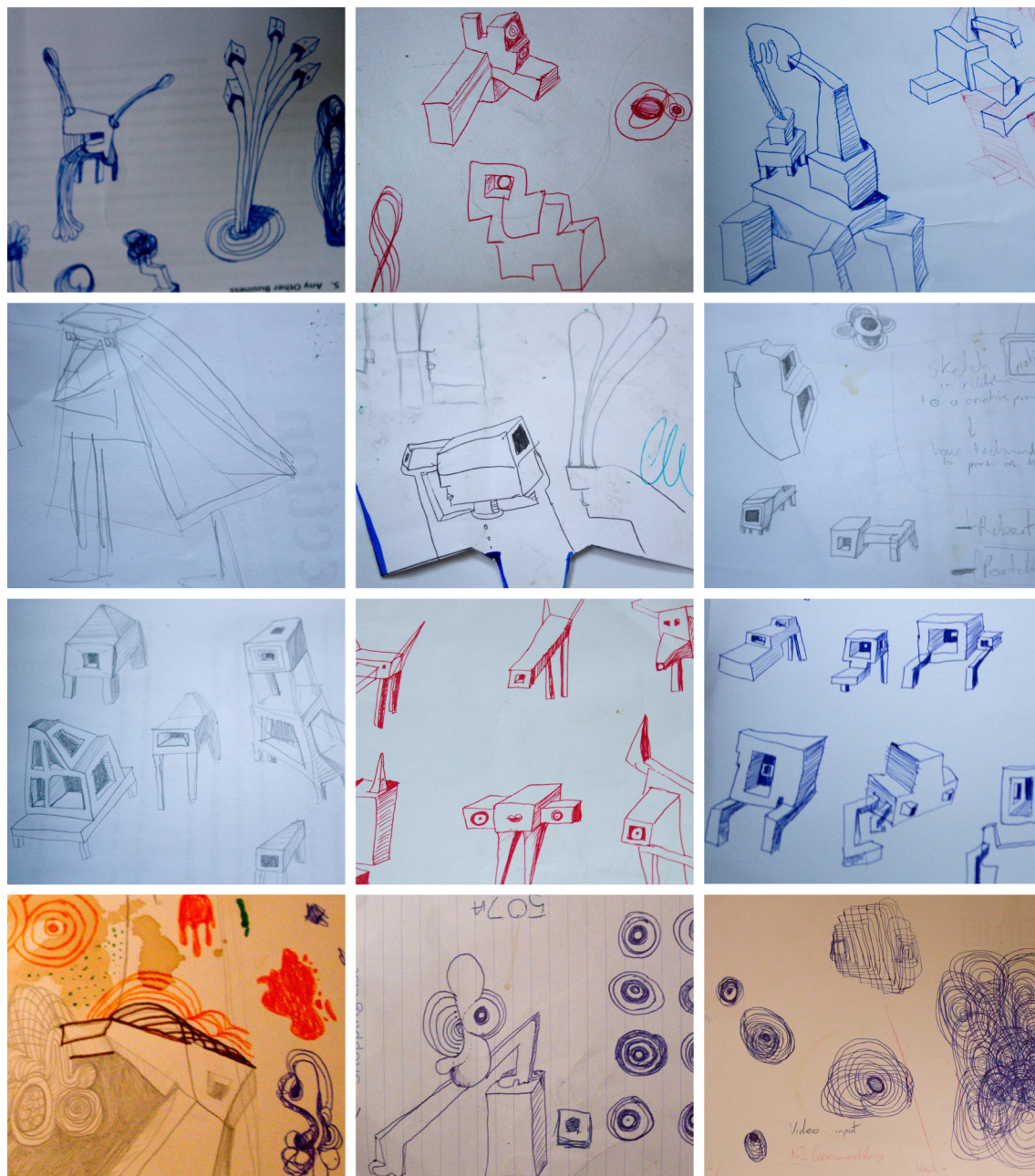
There is often no artifact in private processes, and this work is often random, open ended and singular. The work is therefore inherently unresolved. It can be used to test out sketching processes that then can be executed.

An example of this in practice is the use of 'test sheets', which are small sheets of paper where I draw lines or simple shading to see how materials behave. There is not an artifact produced that is seen as a finished work. There is often a high failure rate, with them not working technically, aesthetically and conceptually but risks are important here. I am constantly looking for the happy accident with the expectation that many ideas won't work but hoping that something will emerge from the process.

These results are unfinished and are approximate. They can also be thought of as 'proof of concepts' (a term also used in relation to computer programming). This is an area for testing out different media and concepts and can be understood in relation to both the traditional sketch as a preliminary study - and to hacking. As Wark (2004) notes:

The hack produces a production of a new kind, which has as its result a singular and unique product, and a singular and unique producer. Every hacker is at one and the same time producer and product of the hack, and emerges in its singularity as the memory of the hack as process. (para. 158)

Most of my experimentation is non-linear, unplanned and intuitive. It allows for the free flow of consciousness from self, through the media into semi-manifested form. No value is placed on the end results – they are free from commodification and free from identification or attachment. But this also means that they are disposable – able to be discarded easily and perhaps inadvertently lost.



**Figure 7.** Examples of private sketches

As this practice often produces more sketches – it is a generative process. It emerges into a body of work rather than random items. The process is often iterative, building on work previously completed to form a body or a more obvious whole. This larger whole emerges as an artifact and is often then something offered up to the gaze of the public.

While outcomes here are not always known they often sequential and related, in that they emerge to form a type of sketchbook. Traditional sketchbooks are bound paper with images drawn onto the pages. They can exist on paper or digitally as collections of animation in edited video clips stored in folders. A collection of photos can also be thought of as a sketchbook. Because they are produced sequentially in an iterative process (similar to how a computer program would produce results), the sequences vary in length and the time that they are produced.

## **Public processes**

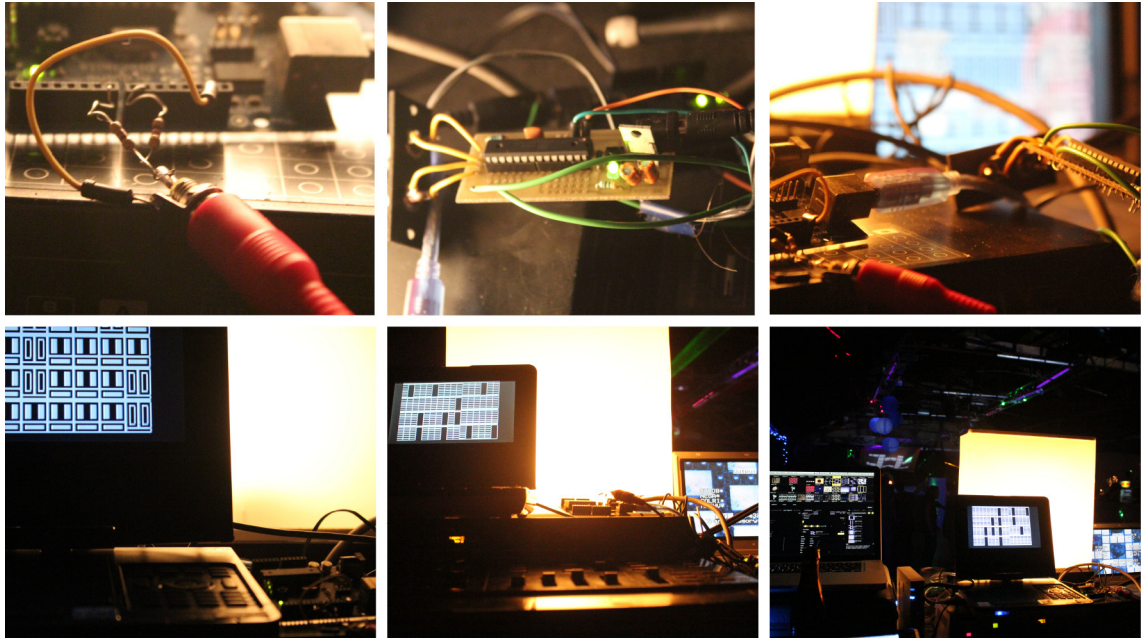
In public there is still a degree of experimentation but this is joined by an emphasis on sharing which will be discussed later. Here the act of sketching more clearly becomes an artifact as the public are invited to gaze, evaluate sometimes participate in the process. Through the act of showing it to the public the work becomes more tangible, as it is opened up to evaluation, conversation and feedback. On the occasions where the public actively participate with the work they are empowered to be active in their engagement with the practice, rather than simply passive recipients.



## Video Glitches

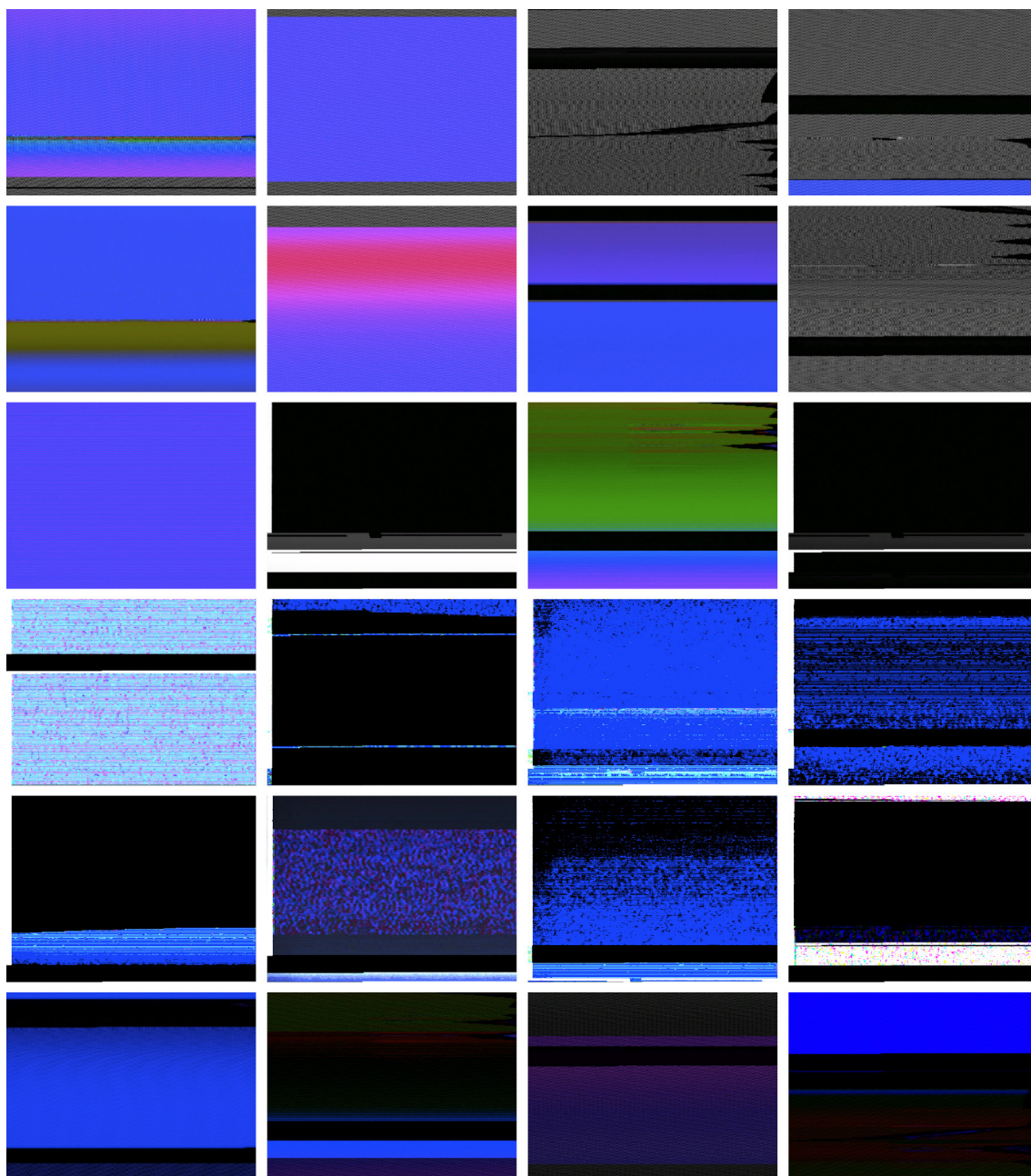
This is an example of work that was a private practice but became something viewed by the public. It involved using a micro controller to generate analogue pixelated black and white videos inspired by a recipe online that were then recorded and documented as video files. Through experimentation and hacking I discovered that the video screen would ‘glitch’. These ‘glitches’ were sampled and captured as ‘sketches’ or micro experiments. These glitches were originally part of a private documentation process but became public work, when they were shown to the public as part of VJ-ing.

These video glitches are examples of where I noticed accidents and transformed them into usable work. In this case I used the material live in front of an audience at a dance party in September 2011. In future, I hope to explore this combination of micro controller graphics and glitches in other arenas, using this earlier experiment to build both my confidence and that of the work itself.



**Figure 8.** *Performing arduino video glitches*





**Figure 9.** Examples of video glitches

## Moppy

This was a range of live audio-visual shows around Auckland (eg. Whammy Bar, Audio Foundation). These performances were a series of collaborations between myself and a musician. Using a combination of projector, computer, software, pre-prepared content and a projector I mixed material live, performing this together with the music produced by the other artist.

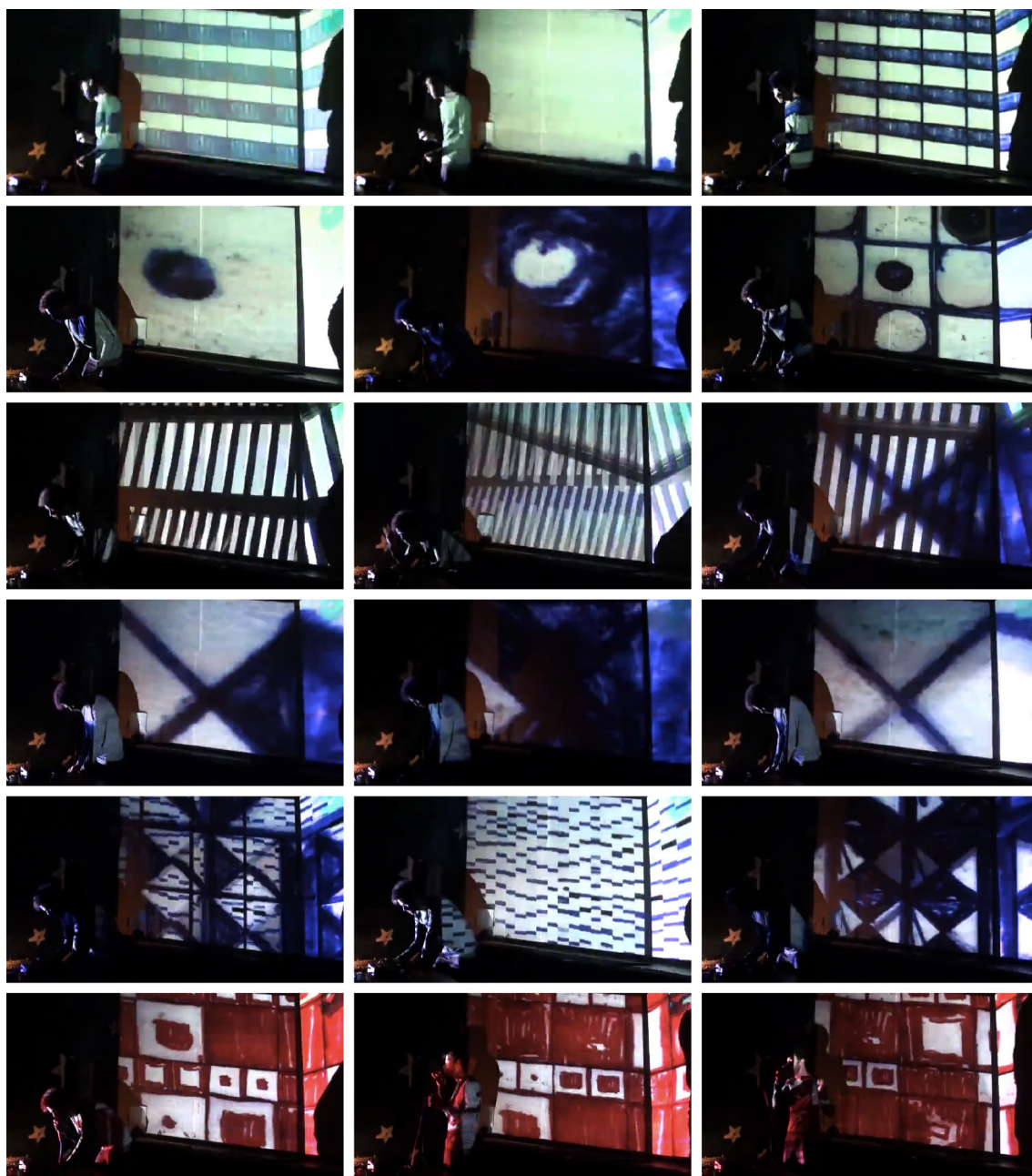
The pre-prepared content (created with traditional materials such as ball point pens, pencils) was drawn onto 3x4 grids that fitted onto the width of an A4 sheet of paper. This material was then scanned into a computer where the images were cropped and adjusted in various ways and then 'processed' again into an animation using a programme I had created myself. This programme allowed the sketch to turn into a 12 frame animation.

A number of different grids were processed in this way. The process involved constantly tweaking a number of elements in order to see what possibilities emerged. Other than the eventual show there were no clear outcomes aesthetically from the start.



**Figure 10.** *Moppy performance*





**Figure 11.** *Moppy performing at Audio Foundation*

# New Things

New things are the result of process. They are the resulting artifacts. The reason for choosing the words 'new things' is that this idea also emphasises affinities with hacking: "Hackers create the possibility of new things entering the world. Not always great things, or even good things, but new things." (Wark, 2004, p. 004)

This property reflects the idea that sketching is about creating or capturing possibilities rather than copying, sampling or illustrating. The sketch always produces a different product; there is no need for it to repeat itself. While traditional sketching is most often associated with representation, my work is focused on exploring and creating new things.

In design disciplines, sketching is commonly seen as an interim activity; making images to assist in the creation of something more real. The sketch enables technologies, both analog and digital, to merge. The sketch is not limited or restrained as a method. It is adaptable; it can operate at different levels and in different ways. Sketching can be done in any media with any technologies with many different outcomes. As Turkle (1995) notes: "Entering into a relationship with the materials is a conversation not a monologue" (p. 51).

I have an on-going inquiry as to whether my creations are being discovered or created. Sometimes I wonder if the sketches are either a way of recording the exploration of a world that exists in-between the digital and the real; or they are being created through the fusion of the digital and real.

The methods produce content that I have classified into two broad categories of 'creatures' and 'environments'.

Creatures are beings that have some form of identity and are loosely figurative and animate in nature. The forms produced throughout the history of the creative practice have varied from being very human-like through to being very abstract. Each creature that has been created is unique.

The environment is the space that the creatures emerge from. Their environment

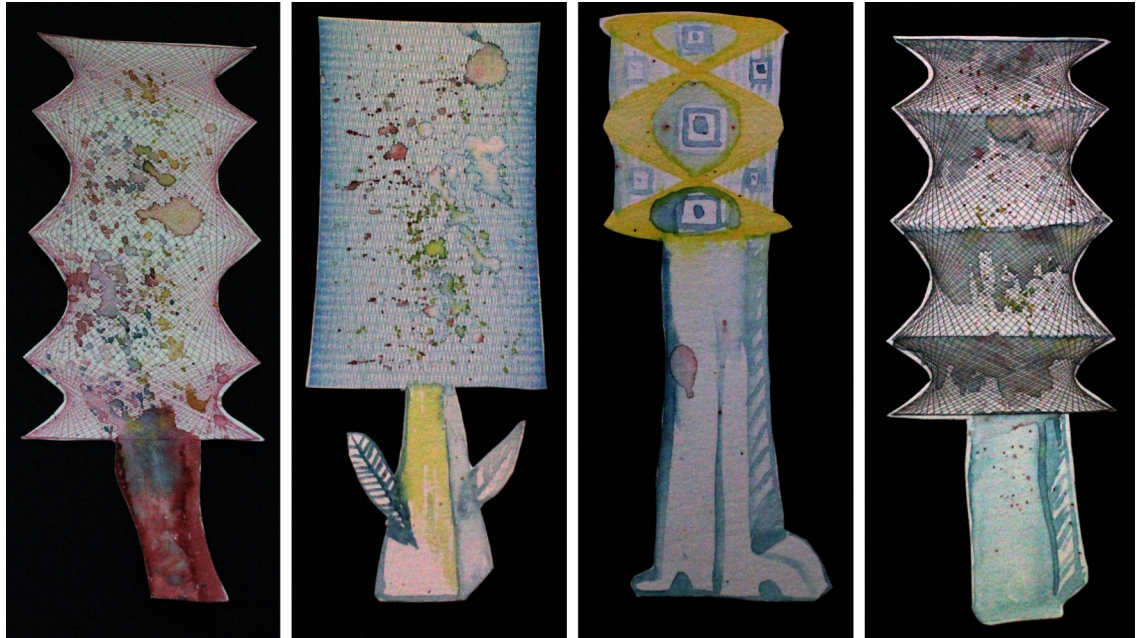
can be abstract in nature and is often very textural. It is a space that the creatures have inhabited or have explored. The line between creatures and environments can be blurred, with some environments becoming (a)live, and environments made from creatures.

These creatures and their environments are digital and analogue in nature (in so far as they exist both on paper and in various digital formats). They are created (or discovered) and begin as private experimentation and may then form into public artifacts.

The intersection of digital and analogue is critical to bringing forth new things. The contrast between the hard cold geometric shapes of the digital and the random, organic shapes of the analogue provides an interesting interaction. New creatures are formed from this process that would not be possible without this mix.

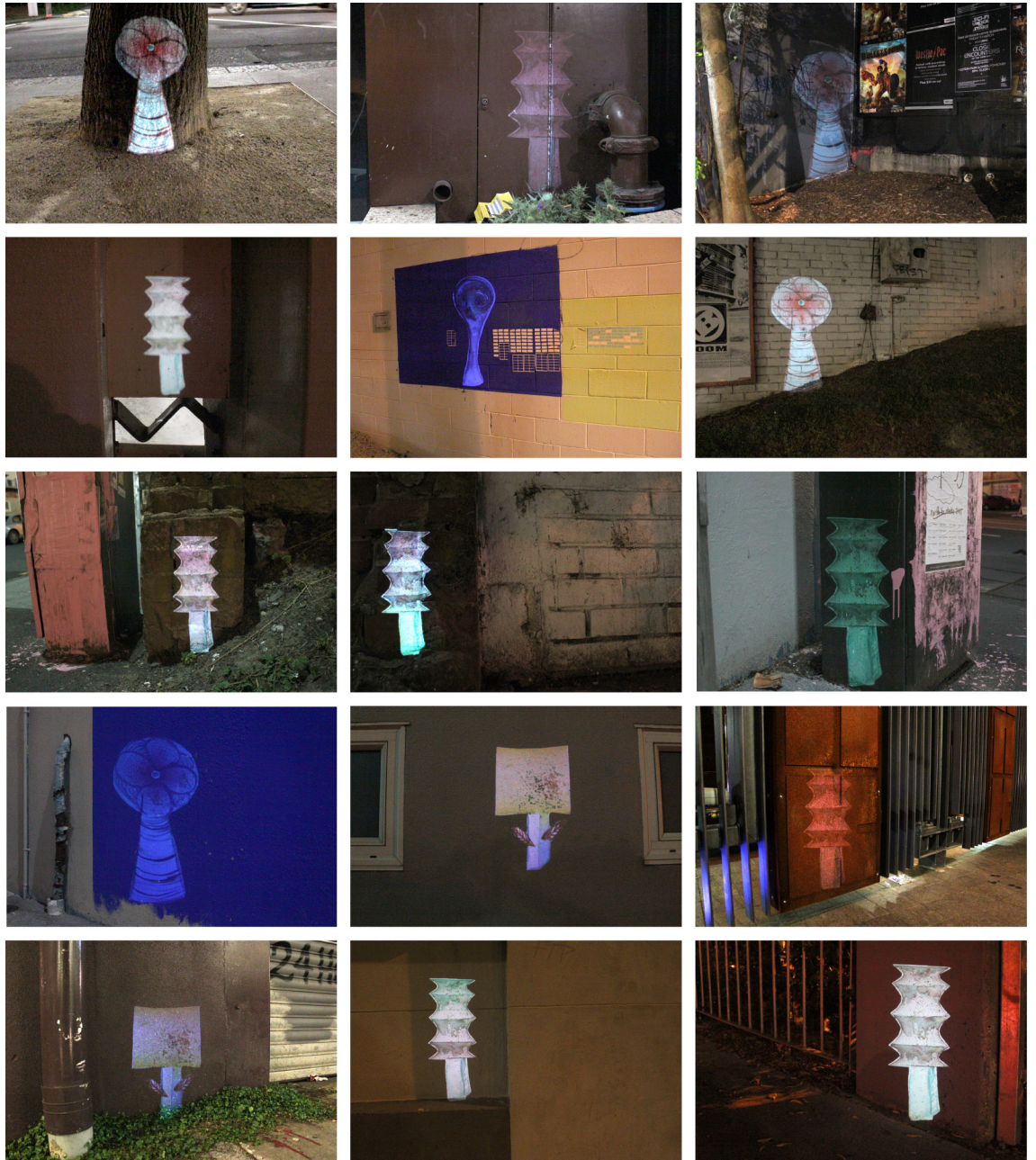
## Flower Spotting

This was a series of drawings of flower creatures produced by a combination of traditional and digital media. The works involved printouts of patterns created through programming, which were then printed and added to using traditional media (pencils and watercolour). The images were digitized and formatted and then transferred to a portable projector. They were then projected into spaces along Queen Street, Auckland. As each flower creature was projected I sensed whether this was a space they wanted to inhabit. The creatures were exploring the spaces and communicating their preferences. Many of the spaces they chose to occupy were marginal - i.e. neglected areas or areas that were gaps or places between buildings (e.g. walkways). At different times I documented this process, which in itself encapsulated them as a sketch. These photo documentations then appeared on a blog (which was visible to the public) and the collection of the sketches formed a sketchbook.



**Figure 12.** Flower drawings



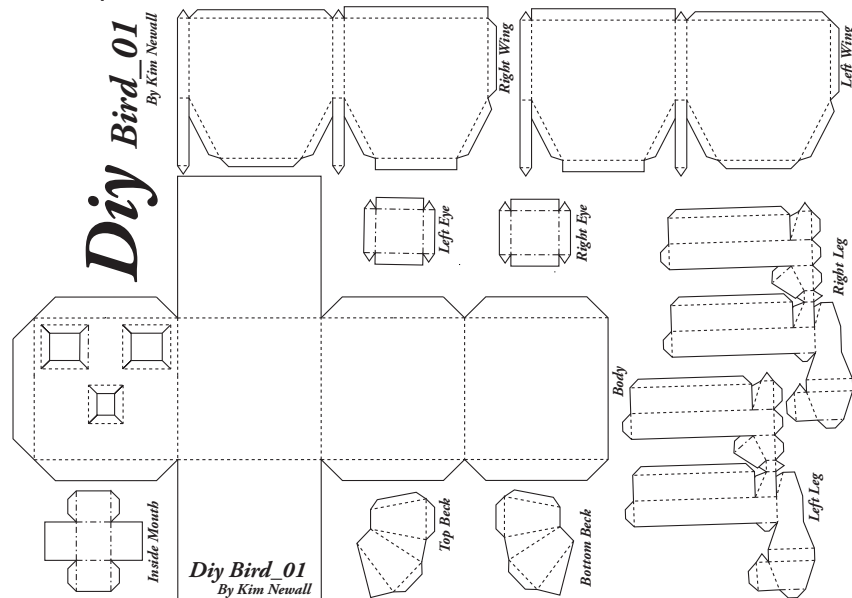


**Figure 13.** Examples of Flower Spotting

## Bird Watching

In this project physical 3D birds were created from templates initially generated in a virtual 3D programme. It was part of a process of making virtual objects more physically tangible. These physical creatures explored the CBD of Auckland, their journeys captured by photos and recorded on a blog. Journeys occurred during the day and at night, allowing the creatures to explore the urban environment in different ways. The series forming sketchbooks.

The work as in the other works that explore the urban spaces can be thought of as a form a street art or graffiti. Works that have not be approved or commissioned by the property owners or property caretakers such as the Auckland City Council. There is a feeling of doing something you should not be doing or that you are not expected to do. These works are temporary and only exist will the event is being captured. This is very similar to the works of Slinkachu(2012) who uses miniature models of people in different settings in urban environments and captures the scenes with photos.



**Figure 14.** Cardboard template of birds





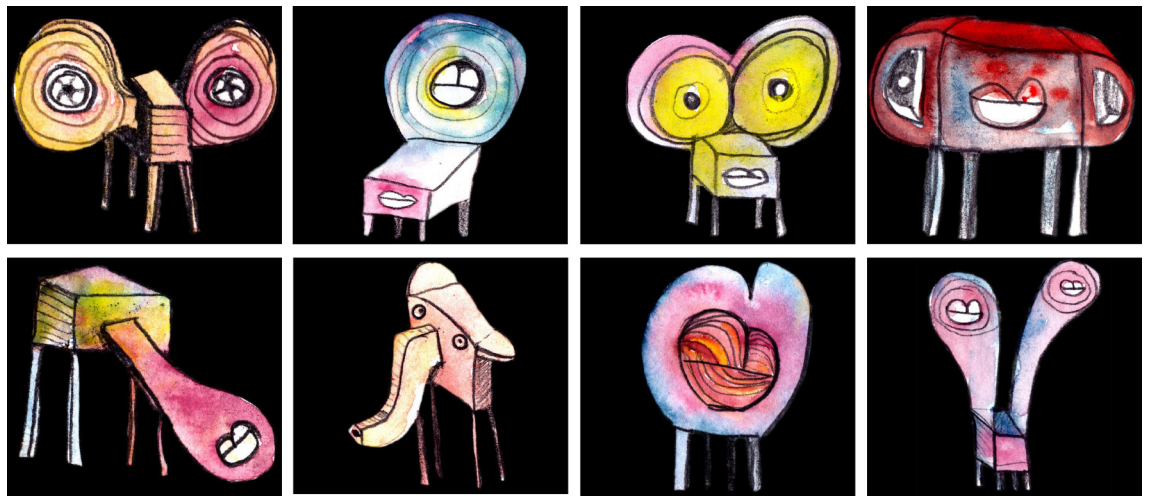
**Figure 15.** Examples Bird Watching

## Urban Explorations

Similar to the Flower Spotting project in technical and conceptual aspects, these creatures were created and then projected in commercial and industrial environments around my community in Kingsland, Auckland. At this time I was also becoming aware of the movement of Urban Exploration (Garrett, 2010). This influenced my decision of what environments the creatures were to be recorded in.

The creatures were projected through fences into other spaces, into holes in buildings, and on walls by uncared urban gardens. This process form of sketching with space and the environment, it is also a conversation between the creator, creation and the environment. Wandering around with creatures experiencing the different space, trying out different environments that they sometimes liked or disliked.

The photos that are a record of this journey were edited and the selection was uploaded to Facebook. This formed a digital sketchbook that is shared with friends who have the opportunity to provide feedback.



**Figure 16.** Creature drawings





**Figure 17.** *Examples of creature urban explorations*

## Bush Journeys

Here the creatures from the Urban Explorations project journeyed to South Auckland and explored the bush behind the Regional Botanic Gardens. The idea of urban exploration was expanded to a natural environment where the creatures were projected into dark, organic spaces. These were natural spaces that are often unnoticed and forgotten about or spaces that we would rather forget about.

Some physical (template generated) characters came as a part of the journey – these creatures were from a number of different projects and occupied many of the same environments as their digital cousins. As with all projects this project has triggered new ideas that will inform sketches that are executed in the future. The ideas in some ways are underdeveloped but have a great deal of potential.



**Figure 18.** Creature group bush walk





**Figure 19.** Creature bush walk use projector

# Sharing

The presentation of these creatures and their environments is where the process and the new things are shared with the public. Sharing occurs in the form of interactive exhibitions with a public audience in person or online.

Here sketching relates to performance as in the realm of music, so even though the public views these items, they are not specifically commissioned or planned. For example, a sketchbook is something that is viewed and experienced but not necessarily commercial in the traditional sense. Some projects just pop up and are executed over a short period - sometimes a few days – while others are longer, more deliberate pieces. They occupy a wide range of public spaces (e.g. urban and rural). Sometimes these occupations are not permitted or illegal and so performance can be seen also as a form of guerrilla action. The events are often recorded and this record too can be thought of as a sketch. The records are often photos, appearing on the Internet in digital sketchbooks and blog entries.

Sharing allows the creatures to be accepted as part of the physical world. They take on forms with which people can associate. As the creatures are projections of aspects of me, I am, in a sense, sharing myself with the world. This is a gift, but it is also a risk in so far as there may be rejection. Their confidence reflects how they respond to different environments, as they are shared in marginal, informal spaces as well as formal, mainstream venues.

Sharing in a formal exhibition space is noticeably different than sharing within an informal public space. There are expectations and set outcomes that dictate how the work is executed in a formal setting. In an informal setting there are often few exceptions so the creation can show its true identity. There is closure and completeness when work is shown in formal settings and a lack of closure and incompleteness in informal settings.



## Café Sketches

Sketching in cafes is a well established part of my creative practice, with the loud and busy environment helping to inform the drawings. The action of sketching in cafes is also a form of sharing as the action is happening in the eyes of the public and the public sometimes interacts with the sketchbooks and myself. These sparking conversations can influence the content of the work. There are two types of sketching that happen. Firstly the private sketches when I avoided anyone seeing the work; these are the unfinished working out sketches. Secondly the public sketches where the works becoming an artifact, and where I did not avoid people looking at the images.



**Figure 20.** Pages from a sketchbook

## Vjing

This is the performance of images in real time, responding intimately and dynamically to the environment – and particularly to the music performer. Each performance creates a new experience as every performance is different and completely context-dependent. As you sketch out a picture or movie to discover what will happen, this can be applied to the performance of images that unfold in time - new sketches existing in a moment of time, and only sometimes recorded.

A common way of working is to use pre-existing content in the form of movie clips and mix them together to make new compositions. The movies are generated by me and not sampled from other sources - a kind of self-sampling. These collected movie clips make a form of sketchbook. Live performance of puppets and drawing are also incorporated into mix allowing for the work to unfold differently each time it is performed. Each performance has been informed by previous performances and other related work. Each performance uses sketches to make more sketches in so far as sketchbooks of different media accessed in new ways during the performance.

I see Vjing as a form of “bricolage” that uses different media found and/or created to purpose. Some of the puppets and general props are sourced from cheap import retail outlets (\$2 shops), found objects and created objects. It is still sketching as the VJ performance recontextualises the objects into new things.

A key aspect of Vjing is the high degree of flexibility and improvised responsiveness to the environment. The performances often happen in entertainment venues such as Bars and Clubs (Wammy Bar, Wine Cellar, Northcote Social Club, Galatos) and Festivals (Rhythm and Vines). They often occur through relationships with key performers and spaces, and for specific purposes. Sometimes the work supports social causes such as Earthquake Relief as in the case of the One Foundation – Christchurch Quake Relief at Galatos. The work is sometimes performed in public spaces rather than specific venues. This occurred in the case of the Occupy protest camp at Aotea Square, where I contributed my work to support their cause.



The audience plays a key role in the work with size and type of audience playing as much of a role as the music that is being responded to. In the case of bars the audience often small, but I have also played to audiences of up to 20,000 people (as in the case of Rhythm and Vines 2011).

The creatures and their environments appear in my work, occupying the various venues, exploring and responding to the various environments. The creatures fly, crawl, wobble and sneak in and around environments popping up at various times during the set.



**Figure 21.** *Vjing at Galatos*



**Figure 22.** *Vjing for Mirika and JJ Symon at Wine Cellar*





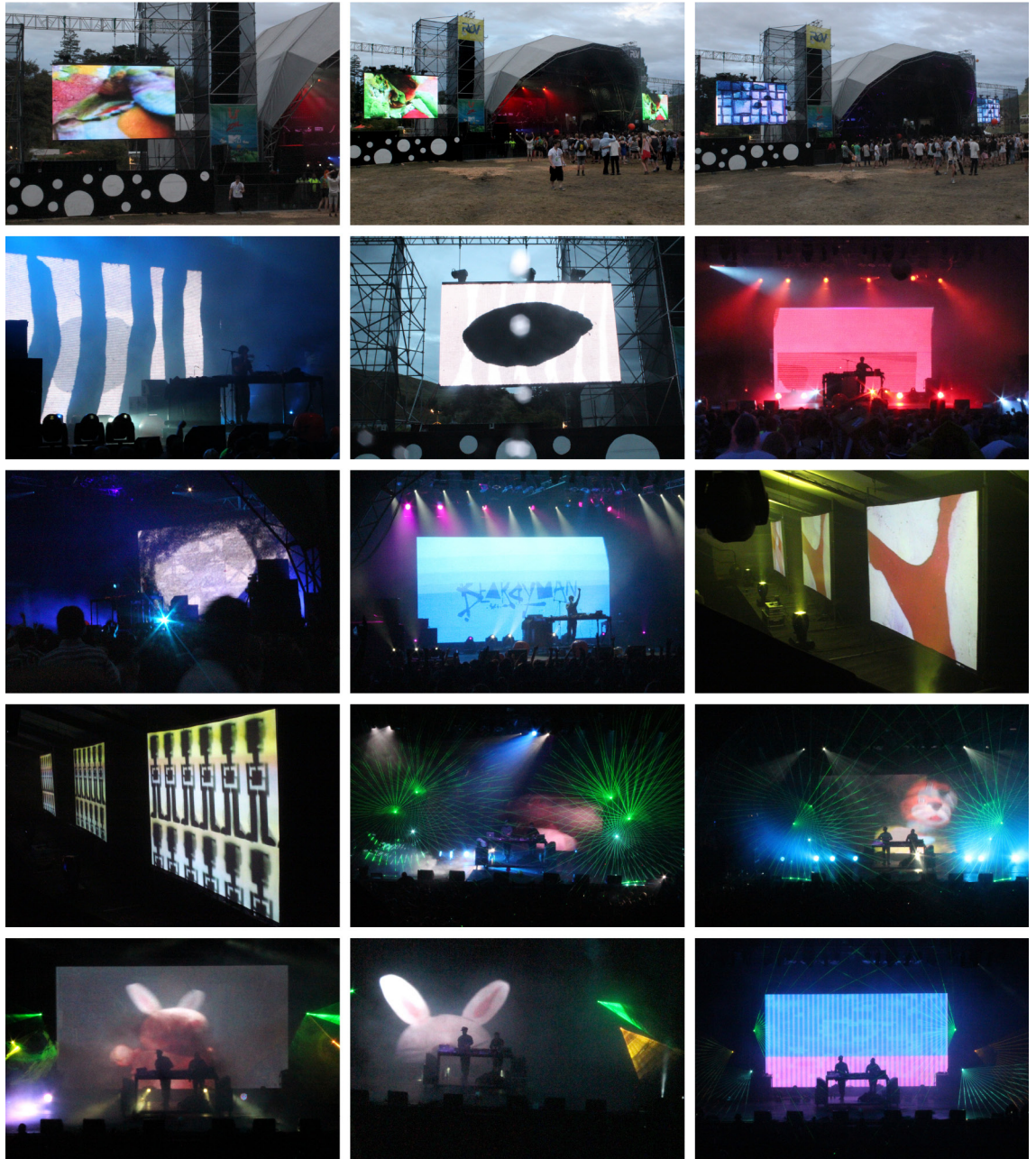
**Figure 23.** *Vjing for Kit and Con at Northcote Social Club Melbourne*





**Figure 24.** Vjing at Occupy at Aotea Square Auckland





**Figure 25.** *Vjing at Rhythm and Vines Gisborne*

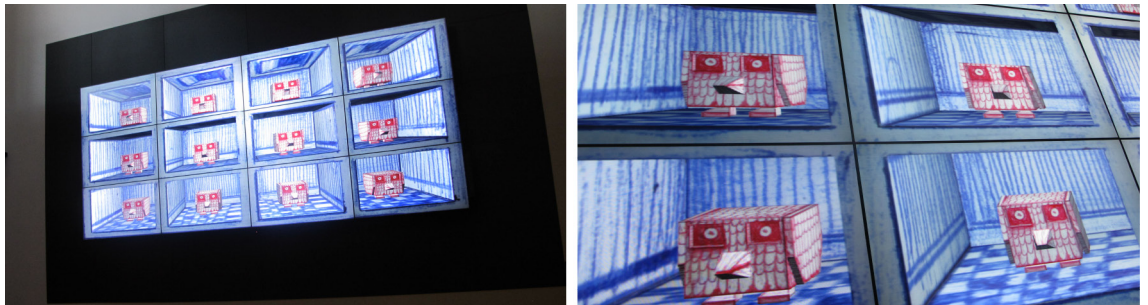
## ‘Roosting’

‘Roosting’ occurred in a public space within the Aotea Centre, Auckland. It was an interactive digital screen-based installation in which twelve virtual birds roosted in virtual boxes, responding to passers by with bird calls and actions. The creatures were a hybrid of real and virtual and developed their own identity as they craved to be liked and accepted by the world. A large range of people came through the space, including children, they would stop and mimic the birds by flapping their arms, jumping and squeaking but this only happened when no-one else was around. When there were larger crowds the level of interaction was much less.

This installation was executed from a predetermined concept, rather than the result of an emergent experiment. A proposal was submitted and once accepted, there was little deviation possible. Sketching was involved but it was more like a traditional design process.

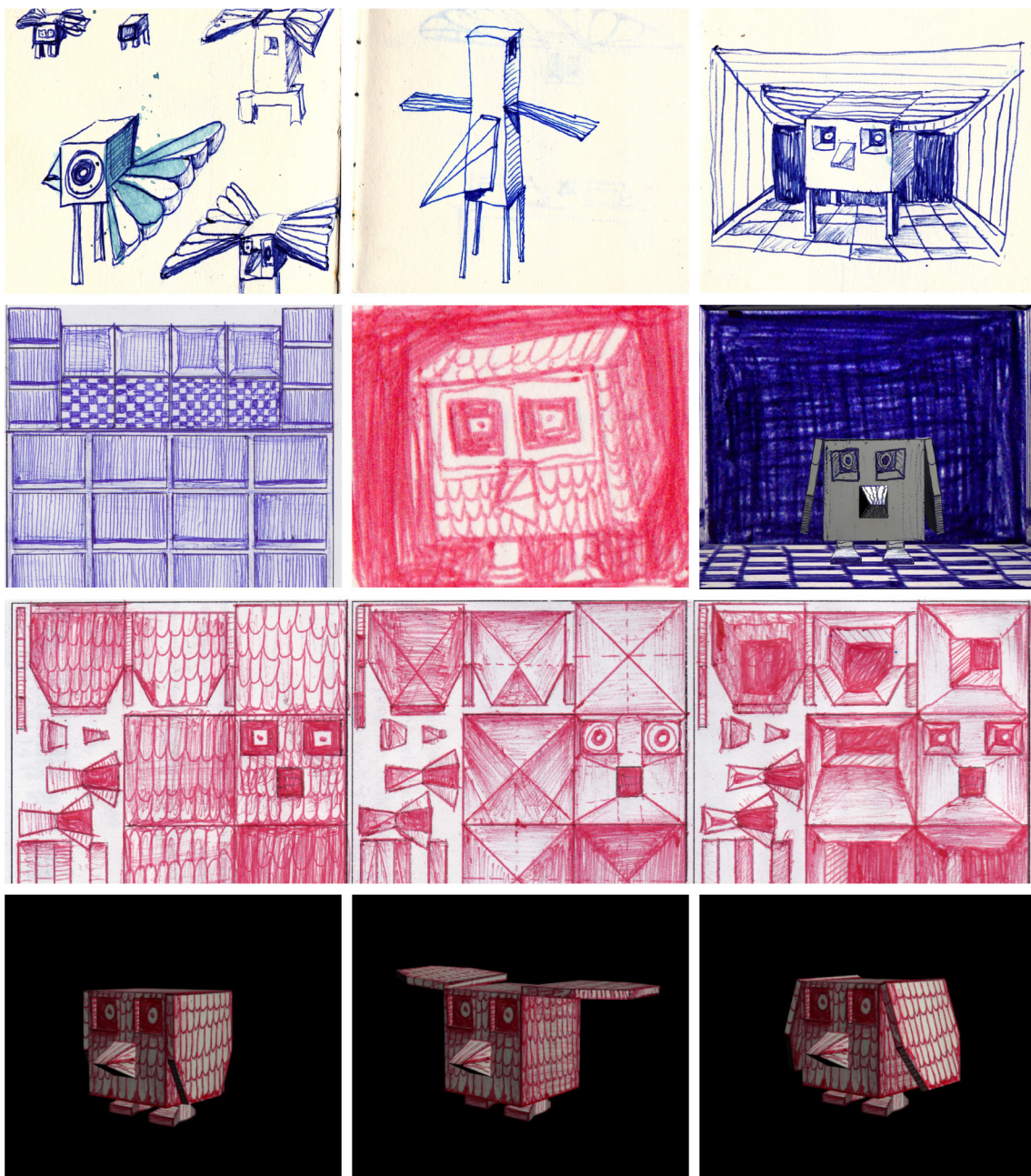
Working out the technical aspects is a form of sketching also, as mentioned in the section on process. I propose that audience interaction with the birds on screen is also form of sketching as it is a form of improvisation. The audiences are reacting to the birds, mimicking their actions and discovering new behaviours and aspects of themselves.

An influence for this work was Levin(2008) *Double-Taker*, an eye that sits on top of a building looking at people. Its physical in nature and is not a screen this has also influenced works to be in physical objects



**Figure 26.** ‘Roosting’ Aotea Center Auckland





**Figure 27.** *Developing 'Roosting'*



## **Cheeky Critters**

This was an interactive exhibition where the audience constructed little creatures from a shared, sketched template. The exhibition was part of 'First Thursdays' a K'Rd Business Association sponsored initiative to promote the local area. My exhibition was located in the foyer of the Iron Bank Building of K'Rd – and was advertised and open to the general public. There were other performances and exhibitions happening along K'Rd at the same time with my exhibition/event occurring as part of this larger context.

The work was a collaboration with Creative Coalition, a body promoting cohesiveness, promotion, communication and influence of the arts, culture and creative sectors in the Auckland region.

During the event, the audiences were given 2D preprinted critter templates and assisted to bring these creatures to life in 3D physical form using scissors, glue and felt tip pens. In this process the audience was encouraged to form a bond with the creation, as they become the creator. Designs have been released under creative commons, which technically allows others to use the work in ways they wish but acknowledge original creative rights. The way that I use the creative commons is to share in the creatures' ownership and responsibilities, this enables the public to connect to the work more deeply than if it was simply on exhibit.

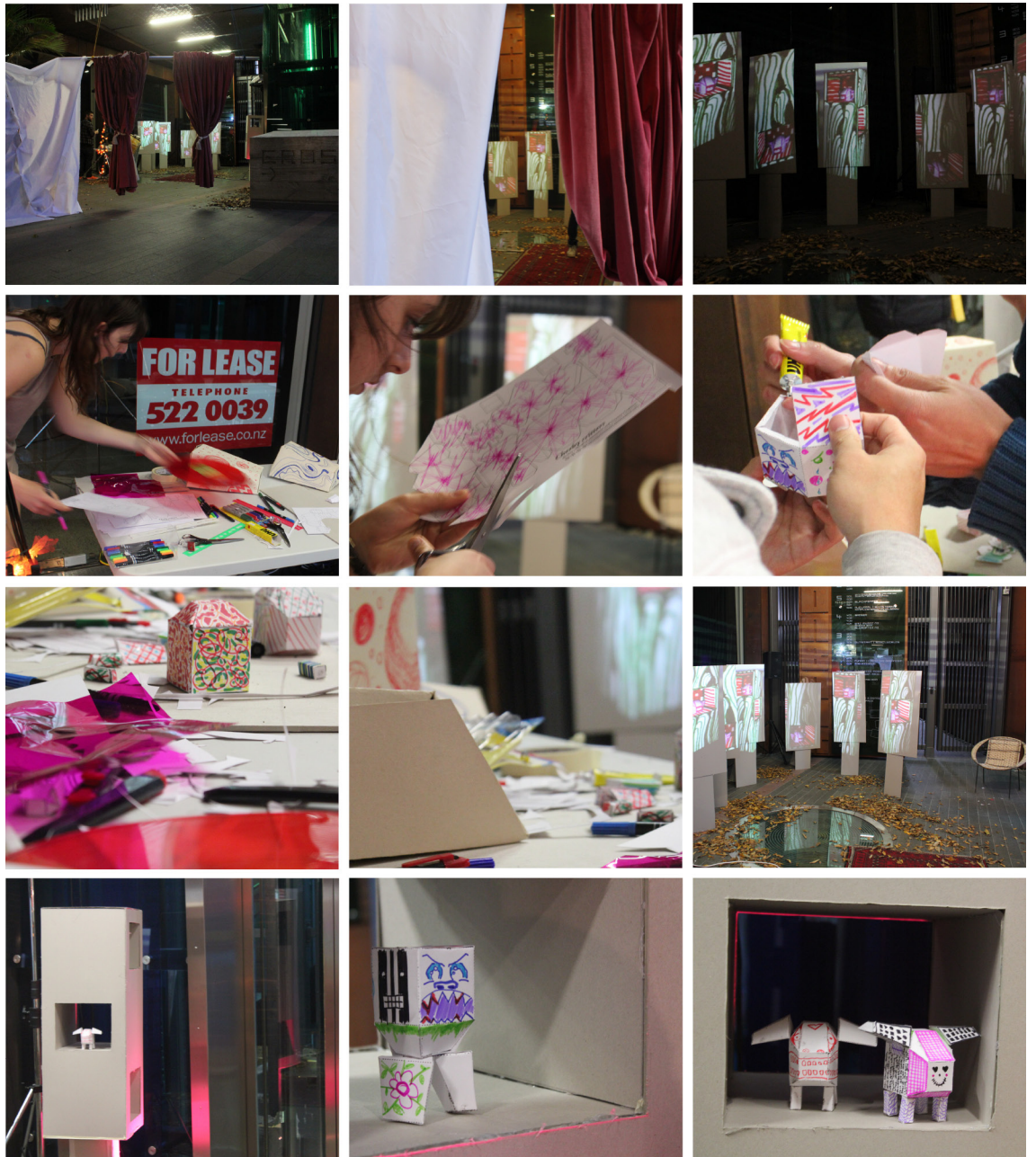
Through the act of sharing the component parts there is a connection with the audience where the skills of creation are transferred to the public. They then construct the creatures, gaining a relationship with the critters by making them; but then they have the responsibility of caring for them. This responsibility potentially changes their engagement with the work.

During the exhibition digitally projected creatures occupied the space. These creatures were created in a game engine, animated and then projected onto cardboard trees and shrub shapes. By adding textural background as part of the projection, and placing the trees and shrubs around the building, the creatures and their natural environment augmented the space digitally and physically. The

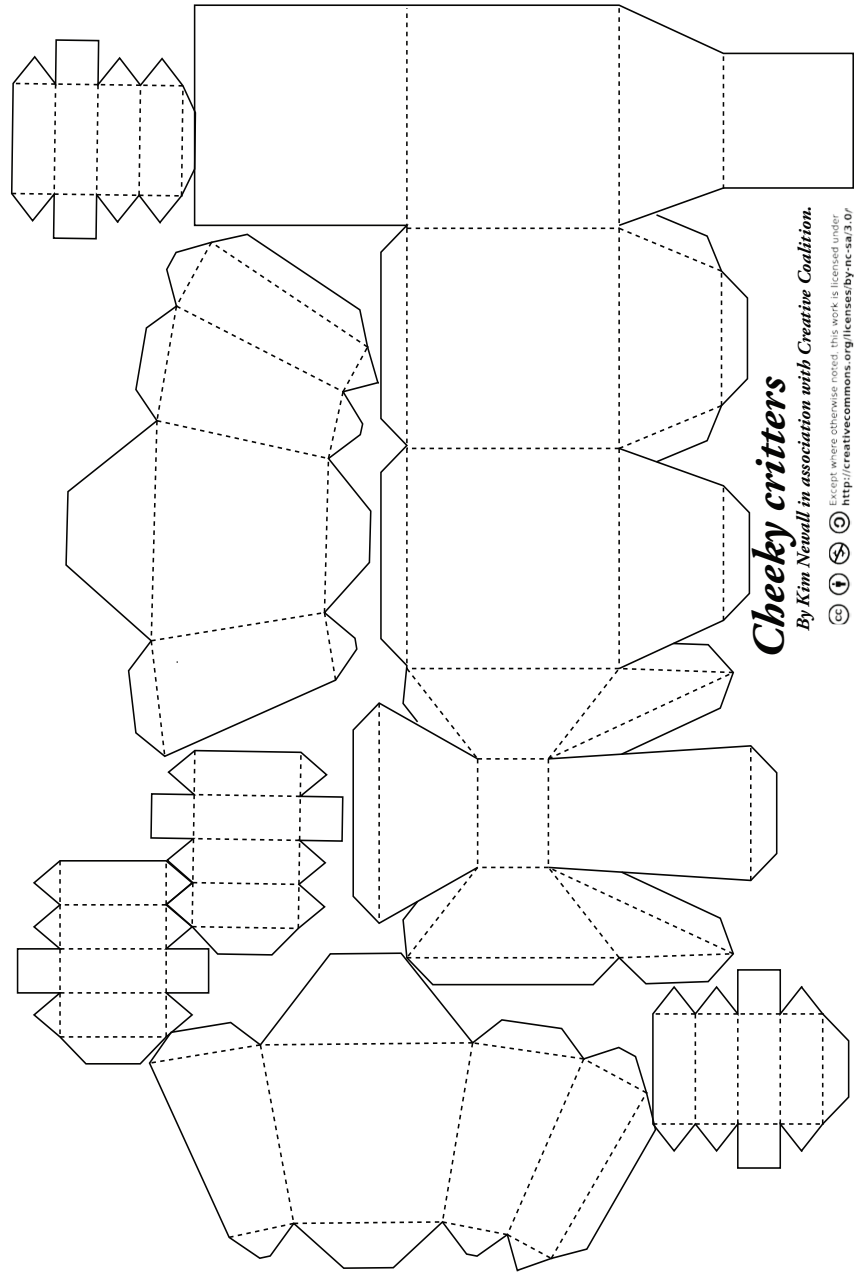
intention was for the public to interact with these creatures and this environment while they were constructing the critters, however in practice this element did not work due to technical issues. These ‘failures’ provided useful material for the future both conceptually and technically – pointing to many ways in which the work could evolve.



**Figure 28.** Cheeky Critters Flyer and photos



**Figure 29.** Cheeky Critters part of first Thursdays in Iron Bank K'd



**Figure 30.** Template of Cheeky Critters

# Being

The final property, which encompasses all of the other properties, is the idea that sketching needs to be allowed to 'be'. The practice of sketching is alive. It is a creature that evolves and grows and demands nurturing. It is fundamentally interconnected with everything that exists around it and at the same time emerges into its own identity:

...emergence refers to something novel or unanticipated, something extra; what makes a-life systems striking is the fact that, made as they are from common-place components, they yet manifest complex, subtle, unpredictable in behavior. Put simply, they seem to deliver something more than the sum of their computational parts. (Whitelaw, 2004, p 207)

This idea of emerging into being interrelates with the property of the process where the freedom from constraint allows forms to evolve naturally.

Sketching likes attention and needs acceptance in order for it to flourish. Sketches are explorations of other spaces and mindsets and documentations of the interface between the digital world and physical world. My sketching practice also exists in a fluid space between the cognitive and concrete and inhabits a realm that is formed from memories, emotions, impulses, attractions, stories and unformed dreams.

The work is not designed, or to be controlled or conquered. It is not forced or manipulated into pleasing other people but it still wants to be accepted for who and what it is and to find a way to be. The practice is bottom-up, in that it is generated from self rather than others and there is no predetermined outcome. The outcome is a conversation between process, the new things that eventuate, and the places where they are shared.



So the focus is on process and allowance of what 'is'. As Watts (1958) notes: "When the artist handles his material, perfection consists in knowing how to follow it's nature" (p. 73). In relation to the creatures, the act of sketching is almost a release of their nature into the world – and definitely not a thought-through controlled process. As the creatures enter the world they need nurturing, feeding, discipline and a friend.

# **Current Practice: Bathing with Elephants**



# Background

Bathing with Elephants and other Exotic Reveries' will be a one hour multidisciplinary show to be held the Safari and Taj Mahal rooms of 'The Civic' on Queen Street, Auckland. The show will be directed by Andrew McMillan, a musician who directs 'Vitamin S'; a regular night of improvised experimental music and performance.

The show's participants are actors, musicians, visual artists and dancers. Each artist produces their own work in what could be a show/performance of up to 20 minutes. Artists can also create an installation which will run for the duration of the show – which is what I have been commissioned to undertake.

The Civic is one of the last standing Atmospheric Theatres in the world. This kind of theatre gives the impression of being in a foreign setting with the ceiling giving an illusion of an open sky (The Mighty Civic Cinema, n.d). The theatre was opened in 1929, just before the great depression. The interior is based on Rococo design and depicts aspects of Orientalism - including sculptures of gold coloured Buddhas and elephants. With the link to India, there is an allusion to the theme of colonization and empire.

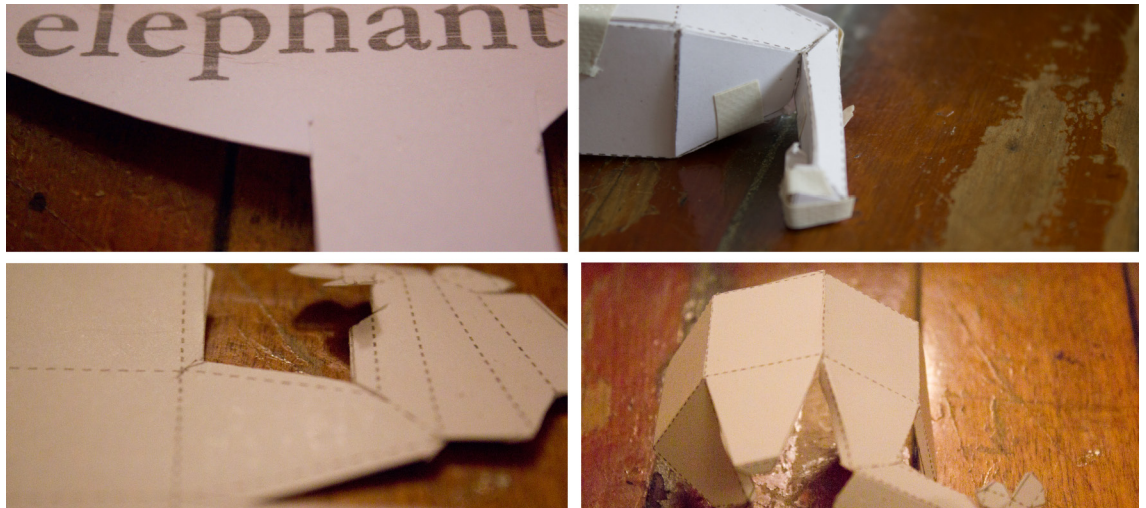


**Figure 3I.** Interior of The Mighty Civic

# The Work

The work will respond to the environment and the expectations of the show. Influenced by orientalism and colonisation the work will explore the idea of digital colonization where real world interacts with the digital world. This will form a hybrid space of the real and digital. This space will be romanticized and exoticised with a herd of creatures emerging that existed neither in the real or the digital world. The creatures will literally respond to the title of the show at the start of the private sketching stage of the project, the creations will start off being elephants. Throughout the process they will emerge into what they want to be which will involve a conversation between them and myself.

The physical and technical parameters that have been setup as a catalyst to act or react to. There will be three video projectors for video projection mapping onto physical made objects in the space. The process will use hacking that can be defined as a form of Bricolage, as available resources will be rearranged into something new. This includes the mediums and tools being used on the project. Also the knowledge that has been gained throughout the history of the creative practice will be used.



**Figure 32.** Private sketches for *Bathing with Elephants*

The project will be allowed to evolve from the original concepts and parameters through the process of exploring and searching for New Things. This will be a private sketch where accidents and errors are allowed to happen away from the gaze of the public. Allowing for the freedom of New Things to show their faces without any expectations. This is a bottom up approach of discovering rather than designing the outcome.

The performance will be the public sketch that will share the outcomes of private sketches with the audience. Possibly the audience will be part of the process to help generate New Things in some form that will be shared. This could happen through the work being interactive such as roosting or through the audience creating an artefact as in Cheeky Critters. We will have to wait to see what will emerge for the project to be.

The New Things will not be as cute roosting or Cheeky Critters as the other performances in the show will be experimental. The creatures strive to be accepted into this world they will be aiming at manifesting into a form that this audience will accept and love but will still try to challenge the audience by delivering something they might not expect

As stated above, there are expectations, which could hinder the freedom and sketchiness of the project. Part of the experience will be to find a way to manage this to allow the project to be. A way of doing this is to remember that the end result could be anything and that it is not preconceived. The process will always go forward and learn from any errors that occur on the way. If technical problems happen do not spent days resolve, like for a different solution.

It is an exploration/search using the process to generate new things that will be shared in the space allowing the creations to be.

The project will use the process to generate new things that will be shared in the space allowing the creations to be.

# Conclusion

The exegesis is purposing that sketching as a methodology of creative practice by creating a system that has properties of process, new things, sharing, to be. This system is like an evolving creature that needs nurture and space to find out what it is.

The process allows for the freedom of searching and exploration of new things. Sketching allows new things to come into being with out a purpose or a client, this allow the freedom for the creations to not have predefined expectations on then Sharing the new things others and allowing others to take part in the process. Sketching allows the new things to become what they are rather than have expectation forced onto then evolves from the bottom up those allowing them to be.

The Creative practice will evolve thought the process of creating new things that will be shared with others, allowing the creative practice to be

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