

K GIRL VACANT: Ethnic identity manufactured



This exegesis is submitted to the Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts [Art and Design] in the year 2006.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work, and that to my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published, written by another person, nor material that to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my darling wife Jennifer and my thesis supervisor Ian Jervis for his unstinting help and invaluable advice.

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Abstract

K GIRL VACANT is an exploration of the nature of culture, identity, and ethnicity. The project sets out to create a virtual ethnic entity and to develop a set of visual associations operating as signs of a proto-ethnic identity, implemented through painting and digital media. This ethnic invention will be projected out into the world as art media, and will suggest its own substantial, authentic ethnicity. The project will investigate aspects of making this proto-ethnicity and the potential of manifesting an ethnic identity as a media-generated abstraction. This exegesis will discuss aspects of approach and method, in particular issues and strategies around constructing a notional entity through identification of a set of collective codes and conventions. The interrelationship between components of the artwork generated within the project: painting, animation, sound and site [including the virtual world these characters inhabit] will also be discussed.

Peter McIntyre, K GIRL
VACANT installation 2005
[above].

Toothpaste Girl
development drawing,
2002, [below].



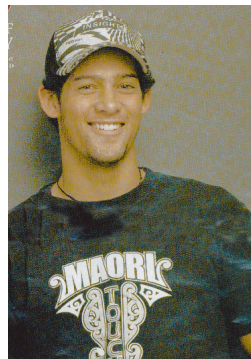
Introduction

This exegesis accompanies an installation exhibition of paintings, animation, video and music, which is the material substance of this new ethnic or proto-ethnic identity. The word 'Progenitor' is used throughout this document to denote the monumental oil-on-wood panels signifying the original ancestors of the K GIRL VACANT ethnic group. Discussion around ethnic identity often uses Maori examples, the ethnicity I am most familiar with. The project is inspired in part by the condition of being Maori in New Zealand society but the issues of ethnicity that are raised are of wider relevance. This exegesis constitutes 20% of the total thesis.

1.0 Context

Canterbury University,
Marketing campaign,
2006.

Race in New Zealand increasingly becomes less and less an indicator of ethnic origin. The Canterbury University marketing campaign in spring 2006 used a model on the cover of their advertising brochure, whose Maori ethnicity is signalled by his T-shirt (University of Canterbury, 2006).



1.1 Constructing Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a major motivating force in society and is often how people understand who they are. The idea of ethnicity is a fundamental precept for locating people, the perennial political and social boundaries that ethnicity demarcates are a consistent concern for human society.

Ethnicity is a multifarious and complicated subject to deal with and one that K GIRL VACANT as a project attempts to open up discussions around. The title K GIRL VACANT is the name of the new ethnicity created in this project. This paper will discuss some acknowledged concepts of ethnicity and in later chapters shows how the K GIRL VACANT ethnicity interlaces itself within these concepts.

Definitions of ethnicity are vigorous and changeable. On one hand ethnicity is described as a stable entity with solid connections through genealogy and history, on the other it is defined as a variable, imagined, socially constructed and politically motivated grouping.

A number of major sociologists such as Benedict Anderson and Max Weber (Anderson, 1983; Weber, 1968. as cited in Verkuyten, 2005) suggest the idea that ethnicity, community and nationhood are essentially imagined entities. By imagined they mean a community will often use collectively assumed or putative historical connections, myth-making and other devices to cement continuity and cohesion. Ethnicity, though subjective, is commonly perceived as something concrete, real and timeless.

1.1.1 Plausibility

How an ethnicity is imagined may differentiate and identify a particular ethnic group (Verkuyten, 2005). Weber stresses that ethnicity is based upon a subjective belief or claim of shared descent and history, subject to reinventions that

... are plausible and acceptable in different ways ... ethnicity is dynamic, changeable, and socially constructed (Verkuyten, 2005).

There are many varied criteria for delineating what is an ethnic identity, but plausibility of the criteria to both the in-group [the ethnicity] and for outsiders is what is of consequence. For example racial characteristics are typically a criteria used to identify ethnicity through its connection with the past over the course of time. But as time and intermarriage dilute the old genetic markers, other markers such as dress or rituals are used and the plausibility of these markers is often in dispute.

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For a particular group to claim ethnicity, membership needs to be agreed and credible. To make the ethnic identity meaningful it needs some kind of authentication or general acceptance (Verkuyten, 2005).

Maykel Verkuyten, a social psychologist, determines that despite the theoretical opportunities for inventing ethnic identity the ethnic invention needs to be “*intellectually plausible and morally acceptable*” (Verkuyten (2005). And Anthropologists Peel (2000) and Eriksen (2001 Peel, Eriksen, 2001. as cited Verkuyten 2005) state that the

... story of your own ethnicity needs to be within the boundaries of the ‘peoples’ experience to be convincing and emotionally satisfying. (Peel, 2000; Eriksen, 2001. as cited Verkuyten 2005).

The question of who defines or mediates these boundaries is left undetermined, and this underlines the vagaries in defining ethnicity that Weber talked about. Ethnicity is changeable, and socially constructed; it is invented and imagined in the minds and the hearts of the interested parties. Verkuyten states “... *An imagined community is not an imaginary one.*” (Verkuyten, 2005).

This statement assumes that these two distinctions are mutually exclusive [which they can be for the sake of his argument], but this leaves the subject of ethnicity open to further probing and indeterminacy. The imagined community is tangible and real and the imaginary community is a fiction. Verkuyten here seems to want to get something stable from a rather complex situation. But ethnicity is not a stable, easily considered phenomenon.

This is where an artist can bring some insight into this subject, where the understanding and creation of the world [ethnicity] is achieved by exploring various representations of reality.

Artists often deal with indeterminacy and inconsistency and open up these areas of sensibility.

There is nothing between reality and fiction. What we call fiction is what we identify as narrative constructions, but reality is something shaped by scripts. The word ‘fiction’ is not an appropriate term to oppose ‘reality’ (Hughye, 2006 as quoted in Morton 2006).

French artist Pierre Hughye puts forward the idea that fiction and reality is the same thing. Hughye investigates how to dissemble the ‘real’ and make fictions into reality. In one recent project he dissembles the ‘real’ by embarking on a scientific expedition to the Antarctic, but the expedition was in search of something that does not exist – a mythical albino penguin. In his cultural invention Streamside Day project Hughye makes fiction

1.0 Context

a reality in the form of tradition. In a new town development called Streamside Knolls, Hughye invented tradition in the shape of a manufactured public holiday for this history and tradition-less, suburban new town. Hughye's role here as artist is to present, expose and destabilise the perception of how we create social rituals and traditions and how these constructions come to be considered real and tangible things in our lives.

1.2 Genealogical Dimension: Origin, kinship, family

Having connection through time with common ancestry, or the imagining of common origin is a primary factor that makes up what can be called an ethnicity (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998, p.18. as cited in Verkuyten, 2005). Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth, who in 1969 expounded boundary definitions of ethnicity, like the 'we over here and you over there' type of dialogue that defines who are what ethnicity (Barth, 1969. as cited in Verkuyten, 2005) has been criticised for downplaying kinship by Verkuyten. Verkuyten says that ethnicity is not created in the schoolyard, rather it is the belief in common ancestry that expresses continuity through the ages that makes an ethnicity.

The incontrovertibility of genetics is on the face of it a hard fact to dispute but Verkuyten is looking for what he sees to be the most cohesive picture to define ethnicity. One role of the K GIRL VACANT project is to try and find some traction in these distinctions and to unknot this tight characterization of ethnicity, which is by its nature a fluid definition open to different interpretations.

1.3 Culture vs. Ethnicity

There is a question of demarcation between the terms culture and ethnicity. Culture is the ingredient that binds societies because culture is about shared values and practices. An ethnicity has wider bounds than the intimate psychological connections of shared culture.

A culture is made up of a group of people whose shared values, practices and modes of behaviour distinguishes it from other groups and identifies that specific group as belonging to a particular time or socio-economic group (Dictionary.com, 2006).

Ethnicity is a broader term than culture, for example within the Maori ethnicity there are a number of widely differing cultures, based on socio-economic factors, language, regional tribalism as well as urban sub-cultural manifestations. These cultures may be [and often are] integrated and range across other ethnic groups, for example socio-economic structures encompass multiple ethnicities (Verkuyten, 2005).

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1.3.1 The cultural definition of ethnicity

Barth also said cultures are not bounded entities within ethnic groups. Because ethnicity is a flexible concept it is possible to have a cultural definition of ethnicity. This means that any group that does distinguish itself as culturally independent could be considered an ethnic group.

Anthropologist A. Cohen (1974. as cited in Verkuyten, 2005) points this out when he describes the City of London stockbrokers as forming an ethnicity because they share common patterns of behaviour [enough patterns to constitute an ethnic group]. And Barth, while at the same time acknowledging a belief in common descent, opened the classification of ethnic groups up to one where people could be an ethnic group if they are named and defined by themselves or by others (Verkuyten, 2005).

1.4 Circumstantialism

Anthropologists use the circumstantialism model to determine and define the meaning of ethnicity. It explains how it is shaped by external circumstances and conditions such as ideological and political strategies. Ethnic groups become interest groups and perform ideological functions.

It is obvious that circumstances and interests often play a central and strategic role in ethnic identity processes. Ethnic groups can be studied as interest groups, and the ethnic identity of these groups will remain stable as long as the circumstances remain the same. Changing circumstances alter opportunities and the utility of particular ethnic (self) determinations. The circumstantialist account argues that people and groups emphasize their ethnicity or present different forms when it is advantageous. It is the circumstances that locate people in particular situations and encourage them to define themselves in such a way that their interests are met. This perspective is successfully used in analysing processes of identity politics. Nowadays, an identity that is constructed around the idea of origin and kinship has important political and juridical implications (Verkuyten. 2005).

Ethnicity provides political and economic currency. A new ethnicity like K GIRL VACANT signifies from new areas of existence that it may interact politically with established ethnicities or other ethnicities seeking political leverage.

1.5 The diaspora

The role of the diaspora, or the changing nature of ethnic populations through migration or economic growth and upward mobility, also has an effect on ethnic definitions. Finding new spaces from which to signify is a natural progression to developing identity. Post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha called the in-between spaces 'interstices', spaces that offer an opportunity to establish identity.

It is in the emergence of the interstices [the overlap and displacement of domains of difference] that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated (Bhabha, 1994).

Bhabha is saying that what is culture or ethnicity is up for negotiation rather than something prescribed by previous generations. Martinican psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon (Fanon, 1967. cited in Bhabha 1994), also a major writer on the post-colonial condition, doubted the validity of romancing with the past and making it the present. To assert traditions and reclaim history otherwise repressed is necessary according to Fanon, but he warns against what he terms "*homogenising the present*" (Bhabha, 1994) with the past.

1.0 Context

1.6 Constructing Ethnic Identity

Hal Levine (1991) a New Zealand anthropologist, studied the urban confluence of ethnicities in Papua New Guinea and identity inventions found in PNG cities, e.g. the 'Hagener' ethnic group adopted the name of the city, Mt. Hagen. The Hagener ethnicity is an urban alliance of people who moved to the city and have assumed an umbrella ethnicity incorporating many different and smaller ethnic groups.

In the 1990s, in Kosovo and Macedonia, a group of Gypsies for political reasons began to define themselves as Egyptians. Although it wasn't completely pure invention and had some basis in historical fact and oral tradition, it was a self-defined political action (Verkuyten, 2005).

In 1989 American anthropologist Allen Hanson wrote an article for American Anthropologist called 'The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic' (1989) where he analyses the role of the anthropologist in Maori history and how that role constructs culture effects. 'The Making of the Maori' is interesting in that it describes how culture and ethnicity are fluid and created out of different sources including academia. The Dominion newspaper used the article to undermine contemporary Maori legitimacy with headlines such as "U.S. Expert Says Maori Culture Invented" *. The legitimacy of Maori as an ethnicity is often called into question from interest groups who want to dis-empower a resurgent ethnic minority and points out the polarities surrounding definitions of ethnicity. K GIRL VACANT is a new way of thinking about ethnicity that dodges or circumvents the usual definitions. I would like to give K GIRL VACANT the value of an ethnicity and the value implied by the designation: 'ethnicity', and I confer this 'value' and status to K GIRL VACANT.

* The Dominion, February 24, 1990.

2.0 Methodology



Peter McIntyre, K GIRL VACANT, installation, 2005.

2.1 Approach

K GIRL VACANT endeavours to impose itself into the world of ethnic identities. K GIRL VACANT is inchoate, it is a barely formed entity. The conventions of defining ethnicity need hardly apply. It is an ethnicity as abstraction. It is not an image of an ethnicity, it is the actual ethnicity. K GIRL VACANT is an ethnic group that doesn't have any of the usual determining criteria for an ethnic group. Its insouciance has a destabilising effect on the word ethnicity. K GIRL VACANT sets the conditions by which we understand the word 'ethnicity'. Ethnicity doesn't just mean race, genealogy, or custom passed down from generation to generation anymore. The old moral imperatives are out and K GIRL VACANT looks at ethnicity in a new way. K GIRL VACANT exposes the inherent conservatism of the way ethnicity is commonly perceived. K GIRL VACANT creates new signs of ethnicity, it displaces the old values that ethnicity implies and replaces them with new ones. Profoundness and deep rooted-ness are replaced by shallowness and lightness [shallow as a term has a new value, a virtue in lightness and not used pejoratively. See 2.3.5 The notion of lightness ...]. The diversity of K GIRL VACANT eludes definition in a conventional sense and at the same time claims the cohesion of ethnicity, cohesion in diversity holding the value ethnicity implies.

K GIRL VACANT positions the spectator on the outside of the in-group. The intention is to disarm and disempower the spectator attached to the old moral imperatives. Someone looking at K GIRL VACANT does not immediately have the knowledge of the new ethnic imperatives without immersion in the group and K GIRL VACANT does not respond to the old imperatives. The new imperative may imply fluctuation and instability and not the permanence and constancy that is attached to traditional definitions of ethnicity. K GIRL VACANT has no investment in the old imperatives, they [the old imperatives] imply conservative perspectives and the conservative here is the disempowered party.

Some observers may want to find the ethnicity implausible, demoting K GIRL VACANT to a street culture. However this does not change the fact that K GIRL VACANT claims the status of ethnicity. A sceptical outsider may not find K GIRL VACANT "*intellectually plausible or morally acceptable*" (Verkuten, 2005, p.76) as an ethnic identity, but K GIRL VACANT as a hermetic entity does not need nor seek authorisation or acceptance from outside itself.

K GIRL VACANT as an ethnic group have a plausibility unto themselves, which is all an ethnic group requires to exist. Who is it that decides whether they are a plausible ethnic entity or not? In this case it is the in-group, K GIRL VACANT. Again this is part of the dis-empowering effect of K GIRL VACANT.

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K GIRL VACANT defies the urge to categorise and the insouciance and indistinct nature of the ethnicity underpin the approach to this project.

K GIRL VACANT is an imagined community that is being manufactured. Verkuyten's assertion that ethnicities are not complete fabrications (Verkuyten, 2005) is disregarded and an expository course is taken where an ethnicity does develop out of a complete fabrication. It is a collection of styles and media that have an ephemeral co-dependence and are not overtly integrated. There is actually no obvious story of their history and they do not necessarily have one. But, although it may not be overly apparent, K GIRL VACANT does have an arcane equivalent to a myth in the meta-narrative. This is an obscure narrative that can be perceived on the edge of comprehension and which can be considered the equivalent of myth.

2.1.1 Myth making

K GIRL VACANT does not adhere to anything age-old in its approach to myth making, rather it constructs a meta-narrative intended to resonate as its own ethnic myth-narrative.

K GIRL VACANT has hints of narrative that work in and around the Progenitors. A meta-narrative is being constructed around them and in the periphery of comprehension. A story is built consciously or sub-consciously around each Progenitor, but this is not necessarily a linear one, rather it is a narrative of feel. The meta-narrative is the glue that binds the group together, all but imperceptible to the outsider.

Joseph Campbell, the American professor and writer on comparative mythology and comparative religion theorized that all myths are fabricated out of the unconsciousness and that artists today are society's mythmakers. He also writes on how mythologies elucidate collective psychological, communal, cosmological, and spiritual realities (Joseph Campbell foundation, 2006).

2.1.2 Te Poupou

The artwork of K GIRL VACANT forms the nucleus of the identity. The colossal panels are monumental works analogous to 'Te Poupou' in Maori art and cultural practises, which are the large carved or painted ancestor figures. These are both a depiction of the ancestor and an existing entity at the same time. The K GIRL VACANT panels are called the Progenitors of the K GIRL VACANT identity. The word 'Progenitor' is used instead of 'ancestor' to distinguish this ethnic/cultural practice from Maori and other forms of ancestor worship and to make a more sci-fi sounding myth-narrative of the original ancestors, of whom these panels are depicting and which, like in the Maori tradition, these are both depiction and entity.

Rongopai Waitahi,
1887.

A portrait of Wi Pere.
The poupou is Wi Pere,
Rangatira and Member
of Parliament.

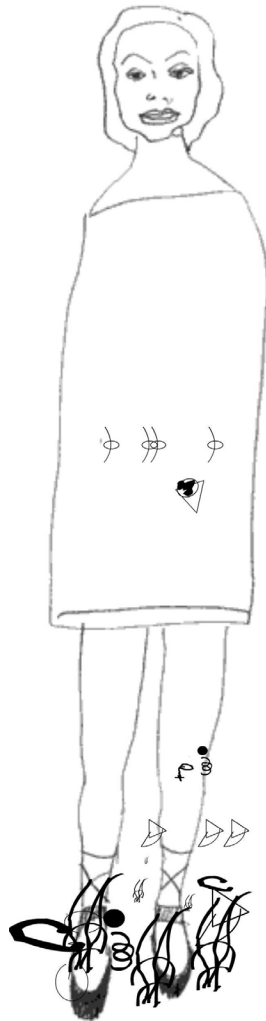


Peter McIntyre, Stray
Pig, (detail), 60cm x
240 cm, 2005.



2.0 Methodology

Peter McIntyre,
Toothpaste Girl,
animation, 2005,
200 x 620 pixels.



The panels of the Progenitors are completed after varnishing, and this was done about six months after they were painted. The varnish changed the character of the Progenitors by altering the relationship the viewer has with the work by making them a little distant, setting the image behind the surface. But more importantly the completion of the works creates a set of memory relationships I have to the Wharenui, Maori ancestral art and also the old National Museum in Wellington. I used to visit the backrooms where carvings were leaning against walls and stored randomly. The carvings were sometimes painted green and had a very silent potency that the Progenitors here took on after the varnish was applied.

2.1.3 Animation

The animated characters perform the culture of K GIRL VACANT, its language and its music. They form another different dimension from the painted statuesque figures of the Progenitors and are part of a realm where they are like angels or nymphs, but articulated in a much more popular-culture like manner.

A mainstay K GIRL VACANT animated character is the 'Toothpaste Girl' who is part human, part toothpaste tube and is made of light and sound. The critters and the blobs that jig around at her feet are amorphous and have an intangible substance. They are small, alive, cute and integral to the cultural dialogue [see section 3.13 The Animation Process: Blobs and Scribbles, for details].

2.1.4 Music

Music forms a significant part of the K GIRL VACANT project. Music generates the mood of the K GIRL VACANT culture, and centres it within some ethereal unsubstantiated ethnic world. The music of K GIRL VACANT is a concoction of styles that started out as a Hawaiian/Thrash/Velvet Underground mix and progressed more towards the noise band style of My Bloody Valentine.

Post-punk bands My Bloody Valentine and The Cocteau Twins and more recently the Icelandic band Sigur Ros also use nominally invented languages as a device to craft a haze of half-grasped meanings, constructing a subliminal listening experience where the listener is continually filling in missing literal meaning for subconscious dreamlike meaning.

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2.1.5 Language

Language is a primary cultural and ethnic marker that I have been considering for a long time. In the K GIRL VACANT project I have looked at various language elements, such as sound scripts and the hidden meanings around language that could be rendered practically within K GIRL VACANT.

The K GIRL VACANT language is a collection of sounds that refers to a language and gives the impression of an arcane language that no one quite understands. The idea is similar to that in Luc Besson's sci-fi film 'The Fifth Element' (Besson, 1997) where the 'perfect' being spoke in a 'perfect' language that was quite obviously a silly baby talk, but nevertheless stood up well as a language within the film.

Umberto Eco's essay 'Languages of Paradise' (Eco, 1998) discusses the concept of the first divine language spoken by Adam and this in some ways echoed the theme of a language that is revered but not necessarily widely understood, like the Maori language is to the many non-speakers in New Zealand, or Sanskrit is to Buddhists. This is the nominal relationship that the audience could have with the language in K GIRL VACANT.

2.1.6 Video and the dreamscape

Video is used to situate K GIRL VACANT and locate them within the meta-narrative. K GIRL VACANT is the new ethnicity that finds some kind of fulcrum in a convergent identity and this is the germ of the K GIRL VACANT meta-narrative. The location of the meta-narrative is the dreamscape. The dreamscape is a projection of a futuristic world in flux and its attendant visions of abjection, urban decay and alienation. This world is articulated through video, which adds a narrative content that aims to be indeterminate rather than precise.

Urban architecture and the way in which some architects draw the world were also an influence and the starting point from where I created the dreamscape. Constant Nieuwenhuy's architectural model 'New Babylon' (Nieuwenhuy, 1974) forms a ready-made backdrop for the K GIRL VACANT dreamscape. Known widely by his first name, Constant was the Situationist's architect and also a member of the Dutch art radical group Cobra (Stokvis, 1987). Constant's vision for New Babylon was a labyrinth play-space for a world population freed from the drudge of production work by automation. A network of raised cities covered the entire earth where a new world of innocents wanders endlessly. The idea was that they could be artists and nothing else.

Peter McIntyre, Still
from installation video.
Projected at approx:
150cm x 40cm.



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The K GIRL VACANT reading of New Babylon is responsive to the sentiment of utopia, but it has a somewhat distorted view of it, reading the labyrinth city as sci-fi urban-collapse. The architectural utopia model has helped K GIRL VACANT develop themes around their location. It is the anti-utopian [anti' as in 'opposite'] dreamscape of a world in flux where the divergent realities of the Progenitors come together.

2.1.7 Socially constructing K GIRL VACANT

K GIRL VACANT is a wilful act of social construction, which intercedes in the established social order. It has no direct political motivation but it has profound political implications. It is in itself a hermetic entity because it exists without any other *raison d'être* other than to be, but the implication of its existence is that it should not really exist as an ethnic identity at all.

Vivian Burr in 'An Introduction to Social Construction' (Burr, 1995) explains how the process of social construction occurs in three main stages: externalisation, objectification and internalisation. These stages define how ideas and concepts evolve into perceived reality (Burr, 1995). A typical example of social construction could be that someone has a theory or an idea which is externalised by the writing of a book or the making of an artwork. The theory or idea then becomes objectified as the idea evolves into an "*object of consciousness*" (Burr, 1995) and becomes perceived as a truth. This 'truth' seems to come from the nature of things rather than from a human undertaking. The objectified ideas in turn become internalised by future generations born into a world where the objectified idea exists.

The idea of creating an ethnicity is externalised by calling the artwork K GIRL VACANT an ethnic identity. By talking about K GIRL VACANT as a ethnic identity, writing about them and referring to them as a real entity and exhibiting K GIRL VACANT installations, the K GIRL VACANT ethnic identity becomes objectified. The persistent use of K GIRL VACANT in caps and always referring to them as a entity rather than a collection of images is also part of objectifying K GIRL VACANT as real in the world.

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2.1.8 Duration

The internalisation of K GIRL VACANT and its absorption into the world as a truth is of course only a distant objective at this stage. But K GIRL VACANT is intended have a long duration in which it will play out its reality and where persistence will be a key to its longevity and acceptance [see 4.0 Concluding commentary].

2.2 Approach Overview

K GIRL VACANT is not a proposal for an ethnic identity, it is an actual entity – albeit a virtual entity by virtue of not having flesh and blood reality. It is an abstraction, but this abstraction need not be denied the social status of ethnicity. Setting in motion, moving forward and impelling K GIRL VACANT to exist is the central approach to this project.

K GIRL VACANT contravenes hierarchies and ignores the conventions of how an ethnic identity is usually defined or applies conventions in a different way. Nevertheless it deserves value and the value placed on ethnicity is what K GIRL VACANT aspires to realize.

2.0 Methodology

2.3 The neighbourhood

2.3.1 Methodological model 'The Great Rock and Roll Swindle'

One determining influence for K GIRL VACANT was 'The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle', a film directed by Julian Temple (Temple, 1980). Punk rock has been a major cultural influence in the late twentieth century and the film's assertion is that punk rock was the invention of Malcolm McLaren. Punk rock's origin lies in a deliberate manipulation of fashion-driven rock and roll precedents and media shock tactics.

As a methodological model 'The Great Rock and Roll Swindle' outlines in very clear, analytical terms [and in sequential order] how to create and affect a new cultural phenomenon and reap the resulting pecuniary gains. Malcolm McLaren could be called an impresario/artist in the way he led, organised and manipulated the various players in a life/drama narrative. As a model for the K GIRL VACANT process, K GIRL VACANT is an intrusion into the world of ethnicities much as punk rock was to the music world in the late seventies. But K GIRL VACANT is a tranquil and immobile entity, very different from the cataclysmically active Sex Pistols, and while the rock and roll rags-to-riches story held some sway when K GIRL VACANT was conceived, it is not the definitive scheme for the project.

2003 Austronesian festival, held in Taipei. The designation defines a cultural ethnic unity amongst a hugely disparate grouping of people (Austronesian festival, 2003).



2.3.2 The Australoid Invention

The vision of an Austronesian science-fictionalised mega-civilization also inspired K GIRL VACANT and was part of a creative act engendering utopia [see 2.3.7 The Utopian Impulse ...]. K GIRL VACANT was intended to become a facet of the Australoid concept and take possession of this obscure, unfashionable term, and embody the idea of the Austral conglomerate ethnicity.

'Austral': Of, relating to, or coming from the south (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 2006).

I wanted to manipulate the meaning of the word 'Australoid', which is a general term for the indigenous people of the South Pacific (including Indonesia, Australia and Madagascar). Austronesia has already been constructed into an academic umbrella ethnic entity encompassing Austro-speaking language groups. The designation of this group was engineered to develop connections between a widely disparate set of cultures.

2.0 Methodology

2.3.3 Kaupapa Maori Methodologies

This section will discuss Kaupapa Maori methodologies. K GIRL VACANT does not belong within the Kaupapa Maori methodology. K GIRL VACANT is separate from and does not seek any entrance to the Maori ethnicity, although there has been a lot of interaction. This interaction has reflected the fabric surrounding the construction of ethnicity. Interestingly, this fabric concerns myself [the artist] not the work. Although initially I located this project within the Kaupapa Maori methodologies, I realised that it was I who was seeking entry, whereas K GIRL VACANT didn't want or seek it. I think that this reflects some insight into the deeper motivations in creating a self-contained ethnic entity unaffected by identity politics. In wider terms K GIRL VACANT also remains aloof to any struggles of control over their humanity because they already possess it. These struggles are therefore acknowledged in this section but are not part of the K GIRL VACANT meta-narrative.

In 1998 Linda Tuhiwai-Smith published 'Decolonising Methodologies', (Tuhiwai Smith 1998) a seminal work that relates the history of anthropology as white on black tyranny, and advocates insider research over interloper-coloniser academic research by using Kaupapa Maori methodologies. K GIRL VACANT was intended to operate as insider research into the notion of ethnicity from my own insider perspective as a Maori.

One aspect of this research hypothesises is about a growing media constructed Maori culture increasingly shaping visions of the Maori world. My concern was viewer vulnerability and that media constructed Maori culture could be another trick of the Spectacle.

The Spectacle not being a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people as mediated by images (Debord, 1967).

At the beginning of my thesis I located the K GIRL VACANT project within Kaupapa Maori methodologies, but it shifted to the outside over the course of the first year because of the academic application of the term 'Kaupapa Maori' as defined by Graham Smith (Smith 1988. as cited in Tuhiwai Smith 1998). Part of his definition states that

Kaupapa Maori takes for granted the value and legitimacy of Maori, the importance of Maori language and culture (Smith 1988. as cited in Tuhiwai Smith 1998).

This insider/outsider dialogue ended up interestingly placing me, a Maori, on the outside of Kaupapa Maori research. I was going to use Kaupapa Maori as a framework for this project because I had sensed a gap between my own experience and contemporary constructed Maori culture and began to wonder what and who is driving it (see 6.1 Appendix 1).

2.0 Methodology

K GIRL VACANT is a product of observing ethnic constructions and disputing their validity and also being alienated by some of these media constructed ethnic images. It is also a product of feeling free to construct my own ethnic images to compose and have possession of one's own contemporary sense of existence.

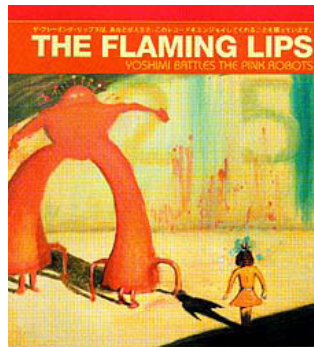
There is a social dynamic evident in the relationship with myself, the artist of K GIRL VACANT, and the hierarchies of an ethnic identity [albeit an academic hierarchy]. The K GIRL VACANT Progenitors don't need permission to be their own identity but their creator does. K GIRL VACANT is a break from the process of seeking consent to express ethnic culture.

2.3.4 The Rise of the Machines

Guy Debord's (Hussey, 2001) idea is that people are spectators of their own lives and that their lives are being represented to them through the media, like the Matrix zombies from the Wachowski brothers' film, who are incognisant of their own imprisonment and obviously live out their daily lives (Wachowski Brothers, 1999). The themes expressed in the Matrix movies relates to one of K GIRL VACANT's underlying tropes, that is the freedom to compose your own reality rather than having it composed for you by corporate media machines.

The band The Flaming Lips lionize and celebrate a Japanese girl 'Yoshimi' who is a robot-fighting hero. In a set of three songs on the CD 'Yoshimi and the Pink Robots' (The Flaming Lips, 2003) they narrate her victory on behalf of all humans against the threat of annihilation by robots. The Progenitors would historically identify with the Situationist ethic of negation and avant garde-ism albeit in a *kawaii* kind of way [*kawaii* is a nebulous Japanese term encompassing cute, fashionable, cool, groovy]. The cute but gritty attitude of the robot-fighting Yoshimi is a good example of *kawaii*.

THE FLAMING LIPS,
Yoshimi Battles the PINK
Robots, CD cover, 2003.

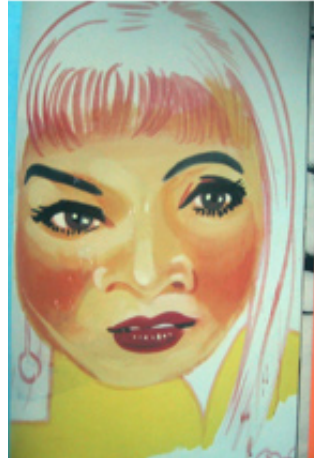


2.0 Methodology

Tomoo Gokita, Thirteen Intimate Portraits, from Thirteen Intimate Portraits, Idea Magazine 2001.

This image by Tomoo Gokita is painted in a formal but naïve looking style conveying the overall effect of nimble lightness of spirit and cool 'with-itness'.

The painting is raw and immature looking, but is laced with veiled sophistications that are apparent in the technical ability required to achieve this look (Gokita, 2001).



Raymond Pettibon, The Statue of Liberty, ink on paper, 1995 (Pettibon, 1995).



2.3.5 The notion of lightness [*kawaii* as a methodological framework]

Using the notion of *kawaii* is an underlying methodological approach aimed at realizing the amorphous and disparate unity that the K GIRL VACANT figures have. The tenuous concept of *kawaii* and throwing together disparities and chance associations is also part of the method used in creating this identity.

Kawaii is a mode of thinking and a critical perspective, it is one where school-age simplicity and lightness of spirit and action have supremacy. This blithe spirit and deep whimsy form the critical viewpoint by which the K GIRL VACANT artwork is produced. Another term 'Superflat' has been used to define lightness in Japanese art. It was a phrase coined by Takashi Murakami signifying his desire to develop an intellectual ferment around his work by codifying the eroticism of Japanese manga art. It is a documented form of a particularly Japanese light and whimsical oeuvre (Drohojowska-Philp, 2005).

2.3.6 Crossover: An example of *kawaii* in western art

Tomoyuki Sugiyama in his book 'Cool Japan' discusses *kawaii* in depth but seems to focus primarily on *kawaii* as a cultural/economic commodity to edify and enrich Japan. *Kawaii* in K GIRL VACANT is used as a universal frame of reference rather than a purely Japanese approach (Alt, 2006).

Though heavily laden with a background of anxiety Raymond Pettibon's work is *kawaii* by default, because his technique exudes lightness and a blithe spirit. His background lexicon dignifies *kawaii* into American gothic seriousness meets off-the-cuff weightlessness (Matsui, 2002).

2.0 Methodology



Peter McIntre, TrashAsia eat dolphin, cooking show pilot program titles, 2001.

2.3.7 The Utopian Impulse and the New Human

The Modernist desire to create a new human is apparent in the K GIRL VACANT project. Dada, as a Modernist movement, sought to smash what was before it and to create a new human existence in its place. K GIRL VACANT on the other hand is more a reflection of this revolutionary Modernist imperative. K GIRL VACANT is not revolutionary because it does not set out to proselytise or convert.

Referring to the human urge to live in an advanced society, K GIRL VACANT is utopian. The utopian world K GIRL VACANT inhabits is primarily romantic and visionary because that is how they want it. This comes as a result of the desire and aspiration of the artist for a consummate halcyon world for the Progenitors to be located in, and it is also a means to define the group, as they don't have the usual signifiers of ethnicity such as history and genealogy.

Initially K GIRL VACANT was initiated to act as a similarly galvanising social movement along the lines of a precursor project TrashAsia, but right from the start the nature of this project was altogether different. TrashAsia involved people as the central locus of activity rather than artworks, as K GIRL VACANT does. TrashAsia also involved producing, organising and curating events and working with other people as well as making art.

2.3.8 The Others

In post-colonial dialogue the 'other' has customarily been described as belonging to the province of indigenous dialogue and colonised peoples (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). In playing around with the notions of ethnic markers K GIRL VACANT has produced a new 'other', occupying a marginalised position identifying an existence in the space in-between ethnic identity and western culture.

3.0 Development process

Peter McIntyre,
Surf City Ho
Chi Min, digital
media, 1999,
1200 x 450 pixels.



3.1 1999

The work 'Surf City, Ho Chi Min' (1999) experimented with the homonym as a device to extract meanings from the space between other meanings. 'Space is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra', a biography of the visionary avant garde composer, Sun Ra (Szwed, 1997) discussed how Sun Ra spoke in homonyms and how it was his way of looking in between meaning. Honolulu, the surf city, is juxtaposed and intertwined with Ho Chi Min City, a kind of post-communist/capitalist embraced city. The two separate locations, indicated by the different cities, once mixed up together seek to reveal a new state in between. I looked at this work again recently in relation to the making language in K GIRL VACANT. The in between meaning was of particular interest.

3.2 2002, TrashAsia

TrashAsia was a cultural rather than ethnic invention and a notional sub-class, formed in Tokyo 2002. In 2002 I started what was to be a new urban class of a new type of proletarianism, based on the concept of euro-trash rather than the working class. TrashAsia was made in the model of a radical art movement and also functioned as a production company. The radical nature of TrashAsia was at most pretence at the revolutionary language of the manifesto, but the TrashAsia group cast themselves socially low in the upwardly mobile Tokyo society to fill a void particular to Tokyo, where everyone ostensibly is middle class. TrashAsia signified themselves from the position of the lower class and formed an active society around this cultural invention.



TrashAsia 2002.

Peter McIntyre,
Tok Pisen, website
2004, 800 x 600
pixels.



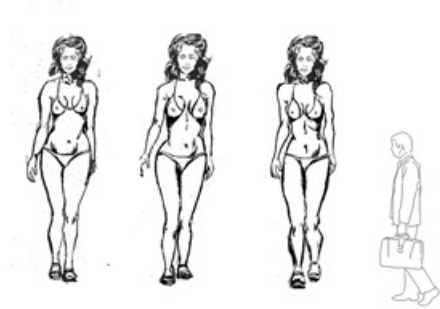
3.3 November 2004, Tok Pisen

Previously I had investigated the pidgin languages in the West Pacific and the Creole languages of the West Indies, and I considered using them as prototypes for a new language to fit this new ethnic identity. I had made the tentative steps toward using Papua New Guinean pidgin, Tok Pisen, in the K GIRL VACANT project. Tok Pisen has interesting inversions and a 'despoiling' of the English language that I thought would be useful for K GIRL VACANT.

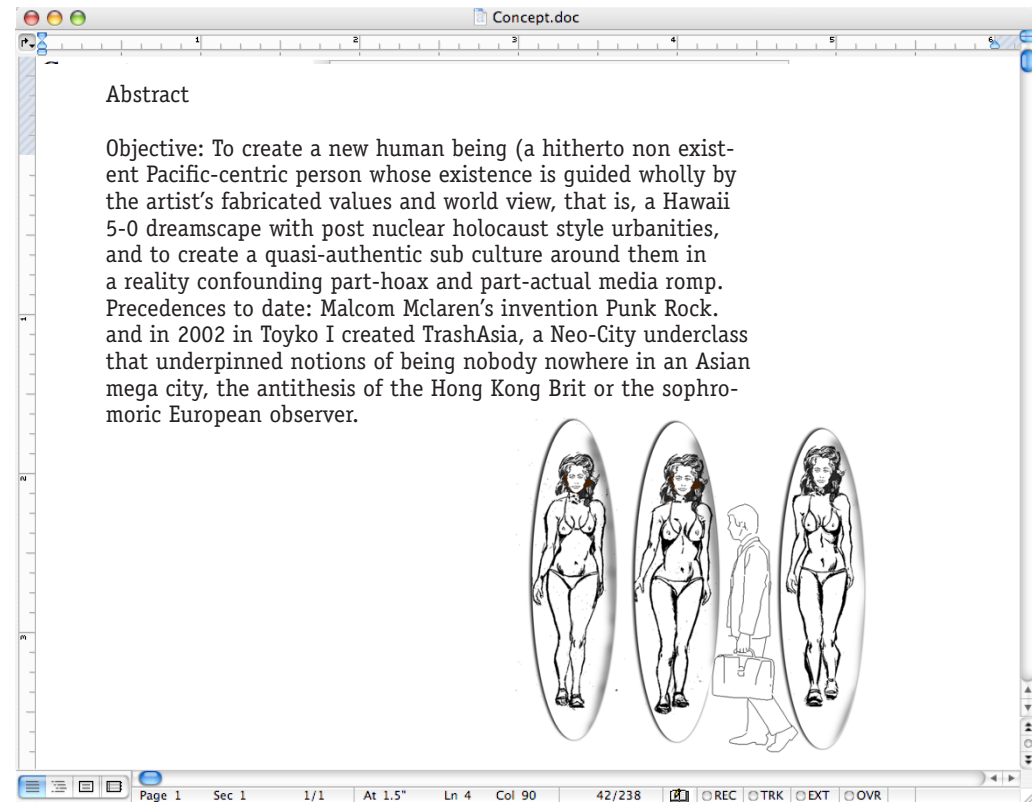
3.0 Development process

3.4 March 2005, early concept

The monumental scale of the Progenitors was conceived in an early document when I was still thinking of surf culture.



Peter McIntyre, early concept drawing 2005,
Photoshop image
800 x 600 pixels.



Early concept document, March 2005,

3.0 Development process

3.5 2005-2006, Music

3.5.1 History

The K GIRL VACANT music comes from a long process of working at achieving a crossover Hawaiian/Maori/punk sound. Up until the K GIRL VACANT project I had been working within an existing ethnic/Polynesian cultural music sphere, trying to push the boundaries of Polynesian cultural experience into other directions. But the real breakthrough came during the K GIRL VACANT project when I finally let go of the ethnic/cultural connections and language. This took the music into a quite different and unexpected direction in that the new language gave it an unknown quality that was not grounded in Polynesia, even though I was using sounds derived from Polynesian languages.

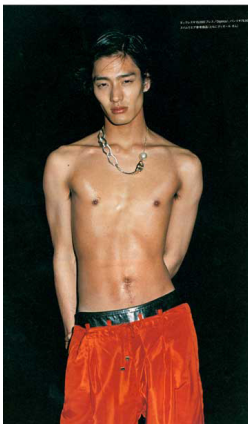
3.5.2 Process

All the music, instruments and voices are performed and recorded by myself. It is recorded on analogue equipment, a Tascam 488 MK II eight-track cassette recorder. This equipment is unique for its tape distortion capabilities, for example the female voices that feature in the animations are my own voice sped up. The process of recording is very open to random compositional events. The composition is improvised at the time of recording and is done by layering tracks over the top of the first track recorded, following the initial improvised song form. The time it takes to record one song or soundtrack is usually quite lengthy depending on when I am satisfied with the composition after layering all the different tracks.

3.0 Development process

3.6 May-June 2005, Developing Progenitors, Stray Pig

Stray Pig was at one stage in his character development conceived to be a sleazy ex-undercover policemen, but the scrawling of the unconnected words 'stray pig' across his shirt front did not develop the undercover cop narrative and made him *kawaii* instead. Being open to chance associations is an important part of creating these characters, it is a heuristic method up to a point (Klien & Witt, 2000) in that there is a looseness that can lead in any direction, but *kawaii* defines the end look. His muscularity has toned down and his character has developed from that of a fashion model (not *kawaii*) to a to K GIRL VACANT Progenitor (*kawaii*).



Source image
(Dazed and
Confused Japan,
2003).



Considered too
pretty in this
drawing.



Attempted to make
him look tough
by scrawling the
words 'stray
pig' and trying a
moustache.



Played with
ex-undercover
policemen
narrative with
the shirt.



Race and colour
experiments.



By the time Stray Pig
got to this stage he had
taken on a kawaii
nerdish
disposition.

3.0 Development process

Peter McIntyre,
Firestarter, web
graphic, 2003.



3.7 June-July 2005, Firestarter

Source: Firestarter was an animation character from the TrashAsia days, and became one of the Progenitors in 2005. Now she is back to being an animated character. Firestarter was originally a character I made for the Japanese fashion label 'Q'. I brought her into K GIRL VACANT motivated by keeping continuity with my past and past work and she was the transitional figure. Her composition as a portrait was at odds with the other Progenitor portraits [she has no legs and she is more of a cartoon than the others]. Now she is back in the light and sound dimension with the other animated characters.



Peter McIntyre, K GIRL VACANT, installation detail,
2005.

3.0 Development process



Peter McIntyre, Mama, animation still, 100 x 300 pixels.

3.8 July 2005, Sonny's Lettah

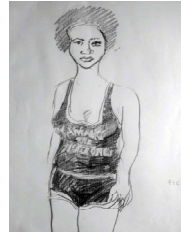
I also experimented with dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson's poem 'Sonny's Lettah' (Johnson, 1985) and gave it to one of my animated characters to recite. Johnson's poetry, written in Jamaican Creole, made a curious contrast with the animated character as she didn't have the racial markers expected in people speaking this language and consequently very few people could pick that it was Jamaican Creole she was speaking. It was an interesting experimentation mixing language and ethnicity in the animations, but seeing it in action made me realise that I would find it ethically hard to work with Tok Pisen or Creole because they belong to other people. A new, implied language came out of that consideration and originated out of the music and soundtracks that are an important element of K GIRL VACANT.

3.0 Development process

'A Fijian Girl' Burton Brothers (Knight, H 1980).



Peter McIntyre, Fierce, pencil, 2006, 10cm x 15cm.



Peter McIntyre Fierce, oil on board, 60cm x 240 detail.



Peter McIntyre Ping Pong, animation, 7cm x 9cm.

3.9 July-August 2005, Fierce

Fierceness for me had an anthropological association: Napoleon Chagnon's 'Yanomamo, The Fierce People' (Chagnon, 1968) a study of a South American Indian tribe, but in this case I used the reference in a very vague way where the Progenitor is wearing their T-shirt.

The shift from the source image to my own image through the drawing process shows how this Progenitor's mean look in the first drawing was an element in my decision making process. Her expression suggested ferocity and guided the development of the whole painting.

A device I tried out was to make animations of the characters, instigating a narrative with them being someone and doing something. Here Fierce is being a poor sport and being fierce in a *kawaii* kind of way. By taking her into an animated narrative, the intention was to create a story around her. Eventually I dispensed with this idea.



Peter McIntyre Fierce, oil on board, 2005, 60cm x 240

3.0 Development process



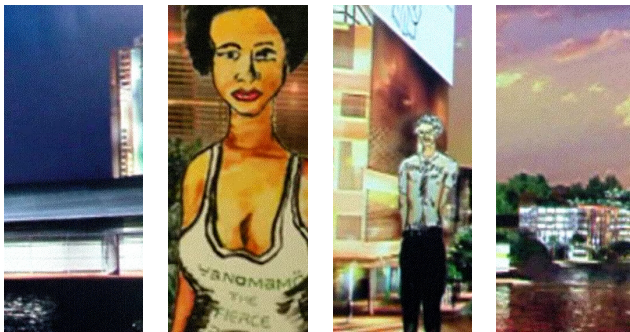
Peter McIntyre, K GIRL VACANT By Day, digital print 2005, 60cm x 35cm.



Peter McIntyre, K GIRL VACANT By Night, digital print 2005, 60cm x 35cm.

3.10 September-October 2005, Darwin

The Progenitors here are placed in a dreamscape, which is located in Darwin, Australia featuring Stray Pig, Fierce and Firestarter. I have them larger than life, as young gods, taking up space in their simulacrum of the 'real world', a 3D rendered landscape (Northern Territories Government, 2005). This landscape image has an otherworldly surreal beauty and acts as a window into the world that K GIRL VACANT may inhabit. Darwin was chosen for its location centred in an Austronesian confluence between West Polynesia, Melanesia, Indonesia and Micronesia to the north, white Australia and the deserts of the Australian aboriginal to the south. I had K GIRL VACANT initially located in Darwin, but subsequently a real location has become less important and the introduction of Constant's New Babylon gave the location a more obscure futuristic background.



Peter McIntyre, 'K GIRL VACANT in Darwin', video stills, 2005, 240 x 600 pixels.

3.11 October 2005, Video

The process of making these videos begins by filming a static artwork and jogging the camera around to give the impression of jerky hand-held camera action. These video clips are then edited together and made into giff animation files. The giff file is then put back into Quicktime video format and the music track is added. The process is a kind of technical parody of the typical 3D walkthrough. The dreamscape is rendered more successfully in video than in a single static digital image. The fleetingness in the movement of the passing images accompanied by the soundtrack successfully portrays the dreamscape environment I am looking for.

3.0 Development process

3.12 October 2005, Exhibition

Installation: I favoured a casual arrangement of the installation with the Progenitors placed unevenly on the wall [above], even though the formal arrangement, placed evenly [below] worked just as well.

Peter McIntyre,
K GIRL VACANT,
installation [informal
arrangement] 2005.

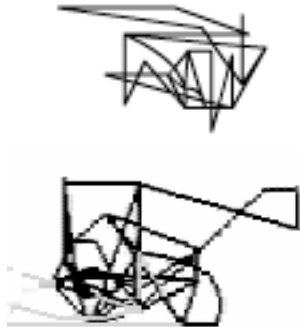


Peter McIntyre,
K GIRL VACANT,
installation [formal
arrangement] 2005.

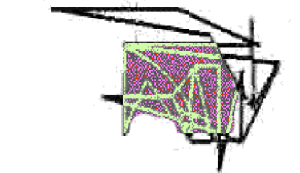


3.0 Development process

Peter McIntyre,
animation still, 2006,
50x 50 pixels.

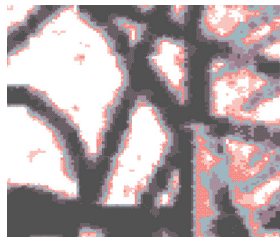


Peter McIntyre,
animation still, 2006,
50x 50 pixels.



Peter McIntyre,
animation still, 2006,
150 x 100 pixels.

Peter McIntyre,
animation still, 2006,
800x 600 pixels.



Peter McIntyre,
animation still, 2006,
300 x 150 pixels



3.13 April 2006, The Animation Process: Blobs and Scribbles

When starting this new animation, early in 2006, I had already recorded a sound track. With a new Macromedia Flash file as a blank canvas (a web animation programme) and the composition as the backdrop, I started out making a digital music video in the broadest sense of the term. Thoughts of filming a friend dancing to the soundtrack came to mind, but this idea was too hackneyed so I dismissed it and went back to abstract dancing shapes, which I had used before. First I drew this animation very casually using the angular pencil tool, which is quite clumsy and inarticulate as a drawing tool but it makes these nice random modernist shapes.

Next I exported the movie into Quicktime lowering the quality and messing the lines up to change the nature of the line, a process that is [as well as feels] quite painterly.

This image has the animation repeated and then exported into Quicktime and I then re-imported it into a Flash movie, a process of dirtying up the line and creating more little abstract animations, which I considered would go nicely in a mixture of animated and painted elements as part of an animation/painting installation.

Then I began to expand the graphic until it filled the screen, the animation becoming something quite different to how it started out, and although the heuristic (Klien and Witt, 2000) method helped me expand the graphic treatment, I felt I needed to go back to the initial small dancing graphic to move ahead.

These dancing blobs work along side the scribble animation developed here and formed the final animation loop in Secki Boui (2006).

3.0 Development process

Petert McIntyre, Oh Shit!, Oil on Board, 240cm x 60cm.



3.14 June 2006, Oh Shit!

The banal everyday-ness of the K GIRL VACANT meta-narrative creates the *kawaii* dialog and expands the range of the *kawaii* paradigm in that the portrait of this Progenitor is very 'adult' but still keeps the sketchy style used for all the paintings, however it is not a superflat cartoon. The inclusion of the text 'Oh Shit!' adds a dimension of tension and it also uses text as a fashion element.



Petert McIntyre, Oh Shit!, installation mock up [photoshop], 800 x 600 pixels.

3.0 Development process

Peter McIntyre, ARSE BANA (detail), Oil on canvas, 240cm 140cm.



3.15 July 2006, Narrative Painting

I used a diagrammatic, narrative style with this work and made a kind of Pinocchio story where at the end this Progenitor finds sanctuary located in Constant's New Babylon. However it was obvious that an explicit narrative painting like this was at odds with the Progenitor paintings and the animations for being too obvious. Suggestions of narrative in the form of the video pieces such as 'K GIRL VACANT in New Babylon' work better than throwing a simplistic story of rejection and redemption at the audience because the project is not specifically about one story and K GIRL VACANT are not seeking redemption, nor are they seeking entry into any particular society. That would imply that they are being redeemed from the margins and given access to the centre.

But then again the story of rejection from a hostile society and finding utopia as represented in this painting appeals to me, the artist. As with the Kaupapa Maori section, where I (as artist) began to separate myself from K GIRL VACANT, I am seeing that the need for utopia is what I (the artist) was looking for. K GIRL VACANT on the other hand have their own hermetic society and the whole process of dreaming up a utopia as something they desire as opposed to a place they already occupy is apocryphal – not part the unitary nature of K GIRL VACANT's principle.



Peter McIntyre, ARSE BANA, Oil on canvas, 2006 240cm 140cm.

3.0 Development process



Peter McIntyre, ARSE BANA, oil on canvas, 2006, (detail).



Peter McIntyre, Seki Boui, multi-media installation 2006, (detail).

Joss Whedon, Serenity, feature film 2005, (detail of film poster).



3.16 July 2006, Scripted Language

Developing suggestions of a scripted language also became part of the process of forming the lexicon of K GIRL VACANT. The written lexicon, like the spoken language, need only be referred to in the vaguest way. Here I experimented with hieroglyphics and Japanese. These explorations seemed to suggest the need for a more systematic symbol language making approach. Developing suggestions of a scripted language also became part of the process of forming the lexicon of K GIRL VACANT.

Sci-fi devotees, filmmakers, and 2000AD comics in particular have made efforts in rendering some kinds of invented script languages. Similarly K GIRL VACANT could use a suggestion of a written language. The Latin script [as in the Secki Boui animation] is also an option as well as these more whimsical scripts.



Think Nerd, Alien story, T-shirt design 2006, (Think nerd, 2006).



Starship Modeller, Alien Script, Graphic design 2006, (Starship Modeller, 2006).

Joss Whedon's film 'Serenity' uses a mix of written languages, Chinese in particular, to convey a sense of the futuristic (Whedon, 2005). And however bogus it may be, the scripts still work to give the impression of futuristic world.

3.0 Development process

Peter McIntyre,
Live painting
installation,
2005.



3.17 September 2006, Live painting

Creating a new Progenitor onsite in an 'action painting' session.

A marginal, subterranean location for this installation was chosen for the metaphorical nature of 'the Underground'.



3.0 Development process

3.18 September 2006, The Great Leap Forward

The Great Leap Forward was conceived and painted around about the time Jung Chang, the author of 'Wild Swans' was in New Zealand promoting her new book 'Mao: The Unknown Story' co-authored by Jon Halliday (2005). This Progenitor was styled with the same severe hair cut reminiscent of Madame Mao and wearing a T-shirt commemorating this dark period in Chinese history.

The Great Leap Forward is exhibited with Mao Tse Tung's Great Leap Forward propaganda projected across her front. Although it looked good, The Great Leap Forward propaganda seems to draw the work into another area: satire. The work then seemed to be commenting on or observing Maoist political directives. Before I tried the projections on her, The Great Leap Forward was obtusely ignoring the political realities of Maoist China and celebrating the style.



Peter McIntyre,
Great Leap
Forward, Oil on
wood, 2005,
60cm x 240cm.



Peter McIntyre, Great Leap Forward, installation
[detail], 2006.



Peter McIntyre, Madame
Mao, pencil drawing,
2005, 10cm x 15cm.

4.0 Concluding commentary

I would like to see K GIRL VACANT develop onward into the future. Ideas that have arisen are collaborations with musicians, K GIRL VACANT as a fashion label, live people as Progenitors, and narrative fiction in the form of animation shorts for MTV format television, which could open K GIRL VACANT up to other developments. At some point I thought people would be as central as the artwork, that K GIRL VACANT should be an ethnicity with real people involved as artistic collaborators, living artworks [they could be living Progenitors that exist alongside the paintings] and that there was also potential for K GIRL VACANT to become the focus for identification for anyone wanting an ethnic identity to attach themselves to. However as the project has progressed it transpires that people are not central and it is not necessary for the functioning of K GIRL VACANT for others to be engaged at all.

K GIRL VACANT, read as an autonomous *gesamtkunstwerk* [total work of art], has its own cryptic vocabulary and a significant dynamic inter-relationship between its various components, forming a complex narrative. How K GIRL VACANT might develop in the future therefore depends on how it is possible to actualise the potential of K GIRL VACANT without interfering with their self-sufficiency.

Peter McIntyre, GIRL VACANT
exhibition flyer, print media,
18cm x 7cm.



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6.1 Appendix 1

The following is taken from the transcript of an interview published in the article *Toi Iho: State Sanction* in *State of The Arts* Jan-Mar 2006 (Purvis 2006)

Peter McIntyre Te Mahurehure, Ngapuhi

My historic craft influences are from the so-called folk art tradition of the late 19th century up to the 1960s. Paint bought about a new medium for Maori artists at the time. Meeting houses where the ancestral images were painted on the wooden upright posts instead of being carved were favoured by the 19th century messianic cult Ringatu. The new medium suited the new spiritual world and vocabulary of the time. The artists painting these houses saw the reason to break with tradition in order to elucidate the changes in their world view, which saw the symbols of the Judeo-Christian world transformed to something never seen before. The destructive impact of white colonisation was absorbed and reinvented and a very distinctive style of art developed that was however still innately a Maori craft.

I see the work of these artisans as part of the traditional fabric of Maori culture presented in a new and unconventional form.

This sense of free-thinking creativity is an integral part of Maori culture and seems to me very far from the agenda of Toi Iho. To codify the process of making material culture in art or craft by a coterie of "experienced artists" that police developments and awards a brand has more in common with the boardroom than the practice of making art.

I am dubious about the way the Toi Iho mark seeks to reduce the Maori experience to an accepted form. The advertisements for Toi Iho on Maori television strike me as something horribly false, and have the scary resonance of the corporate machine behind it all.

I work in the most vaguely traditional sense, recently making colossal figurative paintings that have coded signs of a Maori perspective, which can be sensed by anyone who has experienced or could imagine the experience of a large-scale Polynesian monument looking down at them

The nomadic, mixed-race hybridities of the people I paint mock right-thinkingness with a variety of coded stances that rejects society with a Superfly grandiosity. The ensuing cultural confusion of misfits and outsiders creating another life and

validity for themselves is tinged with the tragedy of hardship. This is where my work connects with Maori folk art, with its painted diagrammatic depictions exorcising confusion and destruction out of a new world order.

Man's freedom is a fabricated freedom and he pays a price for it. He must at all times defend the utter fragility of his delicately constituted fiction and deny its artificiality.

Ernest Becker

6.2 Appendix 2

The following are email transcripts requesting permission to print the Rongopai Waitahi photograph. [see 2.1.2 Te Poupou]

From Peter Gordon McIntyre

To: Frank Ball of the Wi Pere Trust & Ian Ruru of the te tanagta o Te Aitanga a Mahaki Trust

Subject: Photo permission

Date: 10/15/2006

Kia ora Koutou

Ko Peter McIntyre tooku ingoa , No Nga Puhi tooku iwi. He Hokiangā tooku turangawaiwai, Te Marehurehure tooku hapu.

I te tipuna me te tanagta o Te Aitanga a Mahaki Trust

A tanagat o Wi Pere trust me ko Frank Ball me ko Ian kei te mihi ahau ki a koutou, Tena Koutou.

No naaianeī tonu kei te tuhithuhi a pepa kei roto i te

whare wananga a Auckland University of Technology. He toi i te mahi whakaahua i tooku kaupapa. I would like to publish a picture from Rongopai Waitahi in my thesis paper. The photograph I have is taken out of Painted Histories the book by ROGER NEICH. Te pakako a Wi Pere i te whare Rongopai Waituhi. Ka mohiotia ki ahua te pakoko o tipuna i te tapu ai. I whakakoha tonu a ahau ki oou tipuna. The paper will be published early next year, I can send you a proof before Christmas though for you to have a look at the context. Attached is the image and text the I want to put in the thesis document.

Thank you and best regards

Peter McIntyre

From Ian Ruru

To: Bill Ruru , Peter Gordon McIntyre

Subject: Photo permission

Date: 10/16/2006

Tena koe Peter

I've forwarded your request onto my father Bill Ruru - Mahaki Trustee for Rongopai. He'll approach the Marae Committee and reply to you soon.

Cheers

Ian

From: Bill Ruru

To: Peter Gordon McIntyre

Subject: Re: Photo permission

Date: 10/16/2006

Kia ora Peter,

Will pass on to the trustees of Rongopai Marae As the photo has been already published, permission has been allowed. However for the future we are endeavouring to protect our whanau property rights

We thank you for informing us and asking for permission

Kia a kaha

Bill Ruru

Trustee

6.3 Appendix 3

6.3 December 2006 K GIRL VACANT, Thesis exhibition

The final thesis exhibition was an installation that combined all the components that make up the K GIRL VACANT ethnicity: The digital world of movement, music, landscape and portraits inter-relating in multi-dimensional as well as static and active ways. Each component of the installation makes up the ethnicity K GIRL VACANT and the interdependencies of the components create the entity. The music and the animation film loop of six movies shifted from wall to monitor screen and back again, circulating around the installation.

