

**SAME SAME (2016) Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney - Patrick Quick, Chunyin Rainbow Chan, Akil Ahamat, Roslyn Helper, Kiah Reading, Steph Overs & Bogna M. Konior**

***Individuals must become both more united and increasingly different.*<sup>1</sup>**

Félix Guattari made this apparently contradictory plea in response to the observation that consumer capitalism delimits the range of possibilities for subjectivity. According to Guattari, an individual is forced to choose between a limited variety of products, opinions, and ideas—the market demarcates subjectivity. Despite this apparent drift towards subjective standardisation under recent forms of capitalism, the individual is obliged more than ever, to produce itself as a differentiated singularity. To accrue cultural and financial capital one must attract attention, one must stand out; the market thrives on aesthetic difference.

Guattari's response suggests that a move beyond the market as the preponderant subjective container, must be based on a form of social unity that embraces difference. The works in this exhibition inhabit this contradictory terrain. How is a social unity, with its connotations of standardisation and normativity—to be thought of in relation to the production of aesthetic difference that is vital to contemporary economy? *Same Same* is a response to this contradiction, a détournement of the uncanny sameness of networked consumer experience, a working through of the actually-existing context within which aesthetic differentiation is attempted.

In very different ways, the works in *Same Same* all make use of generic tools of production, distribution and communication to broach a series of questions related to this tension between the whole and the part: Does the subjective and aesthetic differentiation that network capitalism demands make political alliances impossible? Can amplifying corporate aesthetics produce a meaningful critique of their underlying rationale? Can processes of individuation be de-coupled from the market forces with which they are currently imbricated?

### **Roslyn Helper- *Summation of Life (Part 1)***

Video (17 mins, 15 seconds looped)

Edited by Peter Fitzgibbon

In *Summation of Life* Helper makes use of the SwiftKey note-taking app to generate poems heard in the video. SwiftKey goes beyond the regular predictive function of the iPhone by analysing Facebook and Gmail data to identify patterns in a user's language. The poems are generated through a process of writing thousands of notes via the app, making extensive use of the app's predictive function. While writing, Helper chooses words from SwiftKey's suggestions, building sentences in an additive fashion, changing tense, tone, place and subject as words accumulate. The work is the result of a collaboration where the software sets the boundaries, and Helper moves among the options provided, suggesting directions in which the sentence might develop. The result is a poetry that is not quite human and not quite artificial.

### **Kiah Reading - *Roll and Crash, Bongo***

Performance duration 15 mins

Digital almost-melodies created by derailing software that has defaulted to the boardroom and lecture hall, every gesture instrumentalised and optimised. A performance, as in how much capital — creative, symbolic, informational, social— can you deliver as a human body when put under very specific and strict conditions devised to boost productivity [\$. Presented with the easily identifiable visual language of aspirational 9-to-5 normalcy, alleged affluence, and tucked-in shirt modesty, this body is pushed to move towards its *unbounded* potential, beyond laptops and onto the quasi-dance floor.

### **Akil Ahamat - *Muscular Dreams,***

*Concrete, Wire, Pole, Nike Air Max, video, 2 mins*

Muscular Dreams is an assemblage of dreams and fantasies lived through contemporary objects and media.

The first thing the colonial subject learns is to remain in his place and not overstep its limits. Hence the dreams of the colonial subject are muscular dreams, dreams of action, dreams of aggressive vitality. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, and climbing. I dream I burst out laughing, I am leaping across a river and chased by a pack of cars that never catches up with me" - Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.15

As a small boy I dreamt of flying, just like Michael. I suppose I still do, but faced with the reality that I never will, I try to walk softly, buoyed by his breath." - Akil Ahamat

### **Stephanie Overs & Bogna M. Konior - *13 Propositions***

Topsoil, video, 15:00

In this version 13 presents itself as a ritual site, the earth altar or electronics grave is a homage to a new paganism, acknowledging the material origins of technology. Perhaps summoning rare earth deamons to life from their tomb within the screen, the voice of 13, spoken by B.K competes with storms, hail, wind, fire, bugs, glitches, bells and satellite feedback to deliver the propositions. Central themes of non-linear time, recursion and anti-structure, dislocation and feedback, scared and fractured sonics are explored in the hope that activated rock data and ancient spirits are embedded and codify themselves within the ritualised space.

**Shanzhai Perfumes: 心想事成 (sumseung sising)**

Jelly wax, plasticine, mirror, counterfeit fragrance, aroma diffuser, audio loop 1 hour,

Fake perfumes have been posited in the media as one of the most threatening counterfeit goods because of their hazardous health effects. However, this violation goes beyond the physical. Knock-off fragrances disturb the interplay between brand, status and the Western notion of the authentic-self. The relationship between scent, personality and body is highly intimate. Perfume is a performative manifestation of that link; an insight into one's project of the self.

A product's value is not fixed and depends on the changing demands of the market. This fluidity is equivalent to the abject wobbliness of jelly and to the transgressive, shape-shifting nature of counterfeits, or "Shanzhai." Suspended in the bottles is the generic Chinese phrase 心想事成, "May your heart's desires come true." Like plasticine, the feedback loop between our wishes and the market is malleable. The bubbly textures are murky, but their effervescence suggests aspiration. Shanzhai Perfumes explores how the counterfeit leaves us in a state of ambivalence.

The urge to participate in modern consumerism grows stronger, particularly in developing economies such as China. Despite its self-deceit, the counterfeit offers a discursive site for fantasies of access and social mobility. Within this imagined reality, can the fake create alternate systems of desire and pleasure?

**Patrick Quick (2016) *P Proxy 2*, mobile phones, performance duration 15 mins**

The work is part of a series begun in 2009. The work is the product of a novel performance that is structurally and conceptually concerned with feedback and capital. Taking instruction from the artist via Skype, the curator conducts a series of calls between ten mobile phones. The feedback from this process generates what is heard, with the performance ending once the available call time of each phone reaches zero. For the remainder of the exhibition the phones will—presumably—periodically receive automated messages from the service provider about the lack of available credit, in addition to the phones' own alerts about the diminishing battery life. The cost of each performance has been cheaper than the last, and therefore typically longer, due to the competitive pricing of telecommunication service providers internationally.