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Don't Stare at the Sun/for too Long AMY PEREJUAN-CAPONE

30 Nov - 20 Dec 2019

This has been a massive project, and started in this form late last year. I think I may have been tipsy at an opening and boasted I'd make a plane, because for some reason that made sense at the time. I had been thinking a lot about my anxiety over the future, and how my adulthood was increasingly feeling like I was starting a new job with a really bad handover. This is no reflection on my parents, I came to realise a lot of it had to do with the pace of change of our world. I'd had this driven home to me when my husband and I spent time on artist residency in high Arctic Greenland where the environmental, colonial and capitalism-driven changes are vastly outpacing or disrupting a lot of meaningful intergenerational skills and knowledge transfer. This seemed very familiar to me having grown up in Australia, and is terrifying. Navigating identity, or even navigating the skills traditionally required to be a functioning adult, let alone specialised skills built up over generations to survive, is to me like shifting sands at this moment in time.

So the plane. My dad has been flying since he was a kid in the 60s; self taught and inventive. My childhood was defined by flight, the house overrun by stretched out parachutes, bits of glider and engine parts, propellers, stories of insane thermals, near death experiences, and the cast of other dusty birdmen. Dad successfully made homemade flight part of our working class reality. When the rug was swept away from under us with the 1994 closure of the Midland rail workshops, an epicentre of skilled labour, and dad having mastered his trade there over 25 years, the landscape of our future went from predictable to the insecurity my generation is native to. But as our family navigated further fragmentation and stress, flight was a constant that buoyed many moments of disintegration.

The humbling challenges of my own coming of age made me increasingly paranoid that I kinda knew fuck all about anything and this has led to much of my general anxiety. I realised I hadn't ever really listened, amongst the noise of these disruptions, and various other challenges meant I'd never learned many of the skills my parents have. If they were gone tomorrow, I thought, I'd still be incompetent and so much knowledge would go with them. I'd fall out of the sky. So to alleviate this I decided to make a copy of dad's plane, a symbol of so much in our family. I'd go about making it with the knowledge I have, and collaborate with dad to learn from him. Some parts are functional, the parts I learned proper skills. Other parts are wrong and useless in context, made of totally inappropriate materials; these are the grey areas representing fragmented legacy.

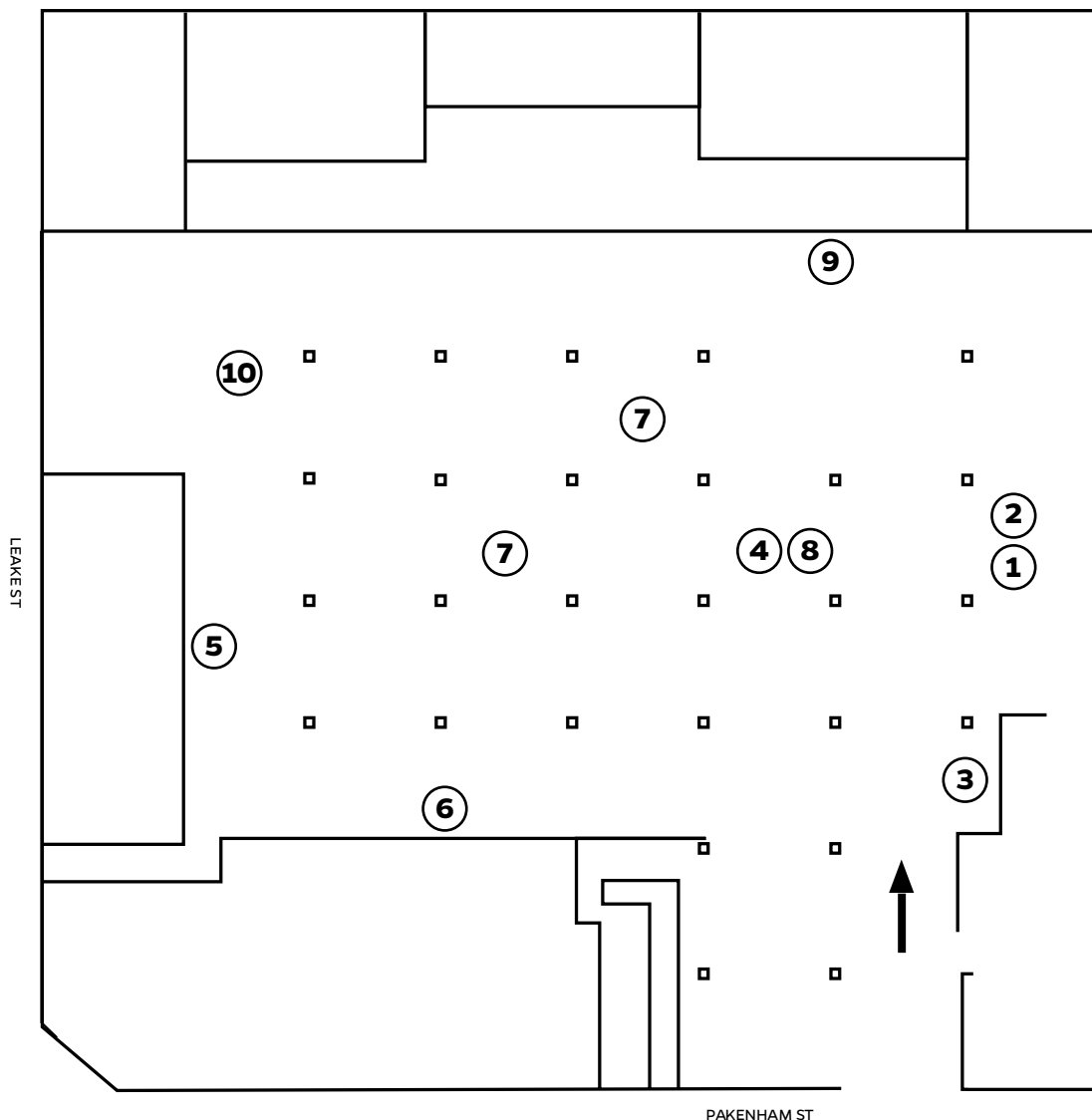
Despite coming from a place of personal insecurity, throughout our collaboration I realised I also had much to teach dad. He enjoyed experiencing the ambiguity of art that I thrive on and in this we learned of our common restless drive for adventure. The result is still evolving, I will continue to learn and add, like a family quilt. This skeleton may develop from a thing that will never fly to something that might. Always a dreamer.

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Amy Perejuan-Capone is an artist/designer based in the port town of Fremantle (WA). She graduated with a BA(Fine Art) from Curtin University in 2009 and an Advanced Diploma of Industrial Design from North Metropolitan TAFE in 2014. Amys work combines a fascination with machinery and systems with natural phenomena like the weather, memory, tactility, and flight. Her installations and temporary public performance have deployed media as diverse as painting, furniture, ceramics, aircraft, and blizzards.

LIST OF WORKS

- 1 Magic Hour, 2019. Digital video loop on miniature CTV monitor. 120mm x 150mm x 300mm. NFS
- 2 Toshiba CTV, 2019. Ceramic. 130mm x 180mm x 150mm. \$500
- 3 Chatter, 2019. Ceramic. 80mm x 220mm x 220mm. Ceramic: \$400 (headset NFS)
- 4 The Plane (dreamer), 2019. Mix media. 2m x 6m x 10m. POA
- 5 Legacy I, 2019. Digital video. 12mins. POA
- 6 Legacy II, 2019. Two-channel video. 12mins. POA
- 7 Untitled, 2019. Various defunct engine parts and ceramic. Dimensions variable. POA
- 8 Cockpit Transmitter, 2019. Ceramic. 100mm x 120mm x 150mm. \$350
- 9 Skins, 2019. Emergency blanket foil. 1.8m x 10m & dimensions variable. POA
- 10 Foil, 1994. Hanglider. Courtesy of Greg Perejuan. NFS



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Legacy

EMMA BUSWELL

The greek legend of Icarus tells a tale of master craftsman Daedalus and his son Icarus. To escape Minos the king of Crete, Daedalus created for himself and his son a set of wings made from beeswax, feathers and string. Icarus, overconfident in the jubilation of their escape flew too close to the sun and his wax feather wings melted, plummeting him to his death. It is a cautionary tale warning of the perils encountered in conceit.

Footage swoops through grey tinged fields endlessly taking up the screen, littered here and there with glimmering momentary flashes of gold. I'm falling downward into aerial perspective and my sense of up and down is disrupted, guided only by the slow return of the frame to capture Amy's plane. Resplendent in its gold skin, the plane appears almost mythic in its solitary pose. Strangely it seems like a scale recreation of the aviator badges prominent among aviation military personnel, miniature as it appears pinned to the landscape. This object is a culmination of stories and experiences, and in Amy's own words is a symbol of the trials experienced and knowledge held by her family.

There are several things that come to mind in considering this project, and perhaps because of its ambitious scale and epic undertaking, the prominent references for me are to be found in film. Fly Away Home is a 2005 film starring Anna Paquin, as Amy, a 14 year old who reconnects one summer with her estranged father. Her father, played by Jeff Daniels, is a wild eccentric and visionary inventor who finds difficulty in reestablishing the relationship between himself and Amy. After finding a nest of goose eggs, and subsequently raising the goslings that have 'imprinted' on her, Amy and her father bond over building a light aircraft to help guide the geese on their first migration south for the winter. There are uncanny parallels here to Amy Perejuan's own life. A father visited on the weekends who has a natural tendency toward ingenuity and invention, building ad hoc aircraft and sharing his own love of flight with his young daughter.

This project also makes me think of the film Bicentennial Man, made at the precipice of the new millennium. The 1999 film, starring Robin Williams, focused on a common preoccupation of the decade: a near yet fantastical future populated with wacky technology. The film documents the 200 year journey of an NDR series robot called Andrew who is part of a national roll out of mechanical domestic servants. Andrew demonstrates capabilities beyond typical machine knowledge and programmed intelligence and his owner Richard agrees to sponsor Andrew's request to become a real and human man. This unconventional Pinocchian tale is a story of becoming, and like Amy's project tells the story of machine-human relationships framed and exacerbated by external situational forces.

Amy's Dad wants to make this thing fly, she tells me this over discussions about her current undertaking, a tributary recreation of her father's own light aircraft. Amy has been working on this project extensively with her father for the past year and half, learning the ins and outs of light aircraft construction in a remote workshop in the hills. Foremost this activity is one of skill sharing, and a way of intergenerational knowledge sharing. As Amy learns welding, engineering and mechanics and physics of flight, her dad is becoming acquainted with the ideation behind art, and contemporary language and ways of seeing.

Amy's father Greg acquired an earlier aircraft, the last of his procession of hang-gliders when she was a young child, and so flight has been an experience that has bonded them both. Like Icarus and Daedalus, when flown, the hang glider allows mere mortals the momentary experience of flight. This

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human scale contraption, decorated in sunset rainbow bursts of blue, violet, red, orange and yellow has reappeared in Amy's work over the past several years, evident in documentation, drawings, film and most prominently in the slender satin sash-like adornments and delicately hand woven and knotted cords that affix sections of the plane to its aluminium armature. The green rectangular fields reference the workshop floor of Greg's hanger, painted such to allow for ease of finding dropped or discarded parts and tools. On them lay pieces of ceramic construction and defunct original parts that have not yet found a home on the planes skeleton, or that have already been replaced.

This iteration isn't the end of this project. Like robot come man Andrew, whose whirring machine organs are slowly swapped out for human parts, ultimately, Amy and her father want to continually alter the plane. Exchanging out the sections of machine which are made as placeholder simulacra, the clay engine and timber furniture into working engines and functional light weight components. The brashness of Icarus is a warning but also a calling cry, and so too is this work. Shorn of its gold vestiges, displayed as they are spread eagled on the wall, the plane shown here as a skeleton is a reminder of the vulnerabilities and precarities of our time. There is a power gained in the emotional upheaval of reaching out to those around us, and now more than ever there is an importance in the ingenuity of invention and exchanging knowledges, skills and tales.