

Conversation between Eline McGeorge and Hollybush Gardens, on the occasion of *Travelling Doubles*, 2007.

A BLIP IN TIME

Hollybush Gardens: Your titles often refer to some kind of estrangement or alienation - *Familiar Strangers*, *Departure of a Stranger*, *Possibilities of another Place*, *Unexpected Elsewhere*, *Resumed Arrival*, *Friendly Unfriendly Visitor* – is this alienation connected to today's capitalist society and the breakdown of national borders?

Eline McGeorge: Both yes and no - it is linked to the current political situation, but it also refers to a different kind of alienation that is not bound to any particular time or place. I guess geographical movement, made easier by new means of transportation, has led to a situation where more people live as immigrants. However, for immigrants unrestricted by political borders, their alienation may seem less precarious, since the same mode of transport that moved them away from home could get them back again in only a matter of hours. At the same time this hyper-transportability accentuates a sense of 'no-place-being-truly-home', where everywhere has an aspect of alienation and estrangement. To add to this there is also the issue of secularisation that dissolves set norms and worldviews, and then the scientific theories that propose explanations for our existence that are expanding far beyond our understanding... On a different level I think alienation is a fundamental feeling that has always existed and not only relates to geography, roots and historical/political phases, but is part of a basic human need to grasp the world around us and to find a way of belonging to it somehow.

HBG: In your animation *Departure of a Stranger (Friendly Unfriendly Visitor)* 2004/2005, bodies, objects and elements move through a landscape and undergo different kinds of transformations, blending into landscape or becoming abstract/geometrical shapes. The meetings that occur in this habitat would in real life be impossible. There is an unconquerable gap between the human form, animal form, architectural form, and the elements - you disregard these gaps, they collapse, and we are presented with a re-ordered habitat. Is there a political engagement involved in this break-up of the habitual order and in your work in general?

EMcG: My work comes out of an impatience for change, an impatient waiting for the future - its prospects and possibilities. It stems from a wish to take an active part in the future by reassembling things differently, making something new out of the materials, situations and ideas that are already here. I hope that my work manages to pose questions regarding existing political hierarchies and ruling political ideologies, and I hope it proposes something else. Even if I just make a small contribution through these physical 'manifestations' it feels worth it to me, and even if most changes happen very slowly, lots of different small actions coming together can suddenly cause a change.

HBG: What role do you think art can play in relation to the political?

EMcG: I think art can contribute to the political debate in a more multilayered and less time-bound way than many other form of political engagement. As an artist I enjoy the fact that art can engage in the political without claiming to have any answers or solutions. The political aspect for me is less about being pro or anti something but more about nurturing and encouraging change. I think art can

act as a stimulant to potential changes, and be an element to inspire, focus and further them. I think it can be used as a tool, a 'fertiliser' in order to push positive change.

For me artworks have little value in and for themselves, personally I don't attempt to make work that is self-reflective, I'm interested in that which the work points towards, outside of itself. It is of course hard to distinguish between different kinds of references embedded in an artwork, and references to other art works will also at some point lead art out of itself and connect to the 'outside' world. However, I appreciate art that does not go through too long a chain of references before it connects to a thought more general than the purely artistic. Having said that, I don't want to be dismissive of art that is essentially a form of thinking in itself, which can also be relevant on a self-reflective and self-referential level. I think I'm making works that to some extent rely on a certain knowledge of art and art history, in order to access it fully - but this is the case within any field of 'language'.

HBG: Recently your animations and your drawings/collages have become more abstract. In *Among Familiar Strangers and Surveilled Places* (2007), *Resumed Arrival* (2006), and in your newest animation you have let go of figurative elements; there is no longer a recognizable landscape inhabited by different figures; instead different abstract or geometrical shapes are formed through the process of animating the drawings, and it seems as if you focus on the act of drawing and the process of animation, themselves - is that right?

EMcG: My current work is more abstract in general, the obvious figures have more or less disappeared from my drawings and animations, and I'm letting go of the more fixed proportional reference points. In the later animations the act of drawing has an important place, but through drawing I try to work with ideas that can run parallel to and play off the 'act' of drawing. Both 'Resumed Arrival' and the new animation are less representational than the earlier animations - narrowing the gap between what it is in itself and what it is representing. However, since I am making art and not something more functional, I think that what I make will always be representational of something outside of its dysfunction. At least that is what I aim for. And I like the crossing over of parallel thoughts and references. These two latest animations are both set in a fictional space that gives no proportional clue, open to operate on different scales from the micro-molecular through to vast dimensions of the universe, and then sometimes back to the paper through the materiality of the drawn lines. My work deals a lot with this kind of two-way conversation with the materials; a thought is carried forward when it is invested in the 'right' material (and failing when it is invested in the wrong material). The material responds back so the thought process can develop beyond the initial idea. I think this is a common way to work with materials, not just in art practice, but in all disciplines that investigate 'materiality', i.e. science, engineering, design and craft.

HBG: How do you relate to time and space in your animations?

EMcG: I try to create a fictional space that is more or less without proportional 'restrictions', or with a changing and merging of proportional indications. I want to mix levels of dimensions and make a 'narrative' with parallel and anti-hierarchical notions of scale. Animations have a lot to do with timing, the duration of each frame, and the move from one frame to the next, the transformation it creates, and in the way I animate drawings, each frame comes out of the destruction of the one before. What makes me return to animation again and again is the possibility of giving a drawing a duration and a narrative through modification. I think animation can refer to the very basic notion of one form or one material transforming and dissolving into the next, a

narrative of the anti-materialistic side of the materials. As the 'matter' of the previous frame is 'destroyed' or 'dissolved' the form of the next frame appears. My latest animations build their 'narratives' from transformation and modification of space and matter (material/form) or as according to the scientific theory of phase transitional terms; from dissolving, evaporating, condensing, sublimation and transformation of space through light and reflections of light. This is all carried forward by time, of course, and the animated drawing allows the time for this to take place. Time becomes both the destroyer of the previous shape and the creator of the next. The technique of animation allows for experimentation of the representation of space-time. Another scientific reference that comes to mind here is the theory that space-time is not something infinitely divisible (and therefore not perfectly continuous), it is composed of 'lumps' and 'jumps', observed in the field of quantum physics, e.g. an electron orbital jumping from one level to another. This means that motion is, at the smallest physical level, a series of jumps (animation) from one quantum space-time coordinate to the next, each occurring over distance and time intervals that are not divisible into smaller measures.

HBG: The technique you use in making your animations is very low-tech and laborious, can you tell me about this process?

EMcG: For my latest animations I have worked with a pencil, a rubber and a single sheet of paper. I make a drawing, then scan it and then continue working on the drawing and scan again. Each animation normally consists of about 400 drawings, but on one sheet of paper, so I'm only left with the last drawing, which is also the last frame of the animation. I have used this way of making animations to reflect my interest in materials and their physical abilities, and also because of the anti-materialistic aspect of the process; the recycling, transforming, erasing, the non-stable, dissolvable and ephemeral.

HBG: Given the imagery in your new work, could you explain how you navigate between the representational and the appearance of abstract space? Is there some sort of meeting between the physical and metaphysical?

EMcG: I always try to make the idea and what the work *is* in itself (its materiality and technique) correspond as closely as possible, and I try to avoid making work that is too obviously representational or illustrative. I don't know if it is possible or even desirable to completely erase this gap and avoid the representational all together since I think the representational aspect can provide a 'healthy' distance or detachment from the artwork. Somehow the representational element can function as a tool that creates the distance needed in order to be able to form thoughts around the work, and, more importantly, what the work might be referring to outside of itself. At the same time, I think that for a work to be worthwhile it has to be more than just a 'shell' or an illustration of an idea, it also has to *be* that idea, only then can the artwork do something worthwhile. But I am not sure about the term 'metaphysical', traditionally metaphysics is the philosophy of that which transcends physics, and was defined as such, after what was traditionally seen as a break between philosophy and science during the development of modern science. Metaphysics and physics seem now to merge on the level of popular science and - there is as a common awareness of, for instance, cosmology, chaos theory, quantum physics, genetics - possibly encouraged by a general anxiety about the environment. I consider my thinking is within 'physics', I work from the starting point that the material carry the 'metaphysical' as potential in itself and in it's future, and that there is no division, that it is all physics (rather than that it is all metaphysics).

Another way of looking at it could be that Science Fiction carries with it suggestions of the future of 'physics', where the 'metaphysical' becomes 'real', but more importantly, it carries with it the ability to look at 'the now'. By dislocating the present into a fictional future, it carries it into a universal displacement and estrangement, and through that, says something about terrestrial conditions.

HBG: You also make sculptures, and in these one can see a continuation of your earlier animations where architectural and human forms meet. Perhaps you are now thinking of the exhibition room as an all-embracing space, a habitat where re-orderings can take place?

EMcG: I have always felt uncomfortable with an installation being a 'display' of artworks. I aim to make installations as a place for habitation for works rather than a display. By habitation I mean a 'display' where the work can have some kind of belonging, 'function', and dialogue between each other and the space. This is also why I have started to manipulate the architectural shape of the gallery space. By breaking up the room with wall-constructions, I want to create both a functional element within the installation and manipulate the characteristics of the habitable areas of the gallery. These constructions can function by blocking out light for a projected animation and simultaneously serving as a screen for the projection.

It hopefully suggests a certain path and, affects how the spectator approaches the work. The constructions are also in dialogue with the works, not only by offering a habitat for them and having practical functions, but also by creating a space and a form that reflects back to the works and thus underlines and contains their appearance. For example, cutting across the space with a wall, and balancing a thin sculpture at its end will create an amplified perspective. When approaching the sculpture the 'false' perspective will underline the distance to it. The spectator will have to pass the sculpture closely in order to get through to the other side. I am aiming for a complete experience where the 'representational' and 'display' aspects become secondary.