

The Art Life

"...it's just like saying 'the good life'"

(<http://theartlife.com.au/>)

Invisible Music

STUFF ([HTTP://THEARTLIFE.COM.AU/CATEGORY/ART-LIFE/STUFF/](http://theartlife.com.au/category/art-life/stuff/)) | Mar 30, 2006

| [No Comments \(http://theartlife.com.au/2006/invisible-music/#comments\)](http://theartlife.com.au/2006/invisible-music/#comments)

Our project for last week was to visit every artist run gallery in town. We defined 'artist run' as galleries not attached to art schools or funded like Artspace or Performance Space, aren't hire spaces like Blank Space or Blender. What we were looking for were galleries run on good faith and over-extended credit cards, run by a harrassed board and doing a lot with almost nothing. We consulted *Art Almanac* and when we looked at our list we realised just how few there really are. So we added the hire galleries back in, decided Firstdraft is artist-run because of its regularly changing board of young artists, and then added Esa Jaske Gallery in as well because although it's actually a commercial gallery we couldn't find Sydney's newest artist run space G&A [located somewhere inside a labyrinthine building on Elizabeth Street]. It's a hit and miss process, we know, but that's the fun of artist run spaces...

At MOP Projects (<http://www.mopprojects.org>) until April 2 Gianni Wise has his work *Who's (looking at) who?* sitting next to an installation by **Adam Cullen** and **Cash Brown** and it's an interesting mix. Wise's work is an elaborate installation that riffs on the form of the photo booth. You enter the gallery space through a heavy curtain and facing you is big black TARDIS-like box with a tiny screen recessed into the surface. The screen plays video footage of people on the street. The footage is crapped out greenish video and there are ominous sounds coming from a speaker behind the scenes. Around the walls are strips of images like photo booth prints, except they are taken from TV – **Margaret Thatcher**, **David Lynch** and a bald guy who might be **Martin Heidegger** or **Pik Botha**. There is a quote from **John McDonald** on the gallery handout – “Politics is an embarrassment in much contemporary art – an exercise in selling prepackaged opinions to the converted”. Aside from the pot-calling-kettle-black absurdity of that statement, the key here is the ‘prepackaged’ concept. Wise's installation is both demonstrative and yet oddly ambiguous. He says his work is a “private space of instant gratification and voyeurism where we may begin to ask who [is looking at] who? in a world of otherness” but it does not offer voyeuristic pleasure – the gaze is directed by the artist, edited by the artist, authored by the artist. The form may derive from a photo-booth, but the audience has no control here, we can only to act as receptors. Is that the point?



(<http://photos1.blogger.com/hello/238/7913/640/DSCF0118.jpg>)

Adam Cullen and Cash Brown, *Garden Slut*, 2006.

Limited ed.

Courtesy of the artists.

Next to Cullen and Brown's installation, Wise's work seems more ambiguous than it probably really is. That's because Cash and Brown's show *Wholesale Therapy* is so blunt it's like being hitting over the head with a 4x2. The show, an installation that takes up the big gallery space, offers brutally effective gag products, somewhere between a joke shop and an art tourist trap. Some of the objects relate to the art world – the *Funding Body Hard Ball* for example – whereas others come straight from the menagerie of monstrosities that populate Cullen's paintings – the *Garden Slut* for example would look right at home in a big acidic canvas. Other products are just as furious – *Skanky Ho Barbie* [with condom, syringe, bad make up], a soft home for pigs and a *Satanic Doll Kit* which is presumably meant for sticking pins in, or letting loose **Chucky** style. There are some other eye-watering products, a hair candle for instance, and some surprises; it's not a well known fact but Cullen is a dab hand with pot pouri and jams, but there's a "smell bag" on offer. Brown, an artist who is not as well known as Cullen, seems to have brought a lot of pathos to the work – her tiny livestock dioramas are heart rending little scenarios of calves taken from their mothers, cows run over by tractors, and lots of other blood-soaked situations. We wondered if this exhibition by Cullen and Brown was a "good thing". Did we need to see this work? Was the idea of it enough? One piece, some ready made road-side crosses with fake flowers attached, made us feel decidedly uncomfortable, yet the easy garden gnomes were pretty darn funny. We decided, eventually, that we liked the show because it was so effectively rude, so hard edged, so cruel. There has to be value in that.



(http://photos1.blogger.com/hello/238/7913/640/BK_bankstownRSLNo2_HR.jpg)

Benison Kilby, *Bankstown RSL No.2*, 2005.