

Put Up Your Dukes!
Gabrielle Amodio & Jill Sorensen



Put Up Your Dukes!

Gabrielle Amodeo Vs Jill Sorensen

Dragaons and Tea Cups etc

The Stoush

Post Script





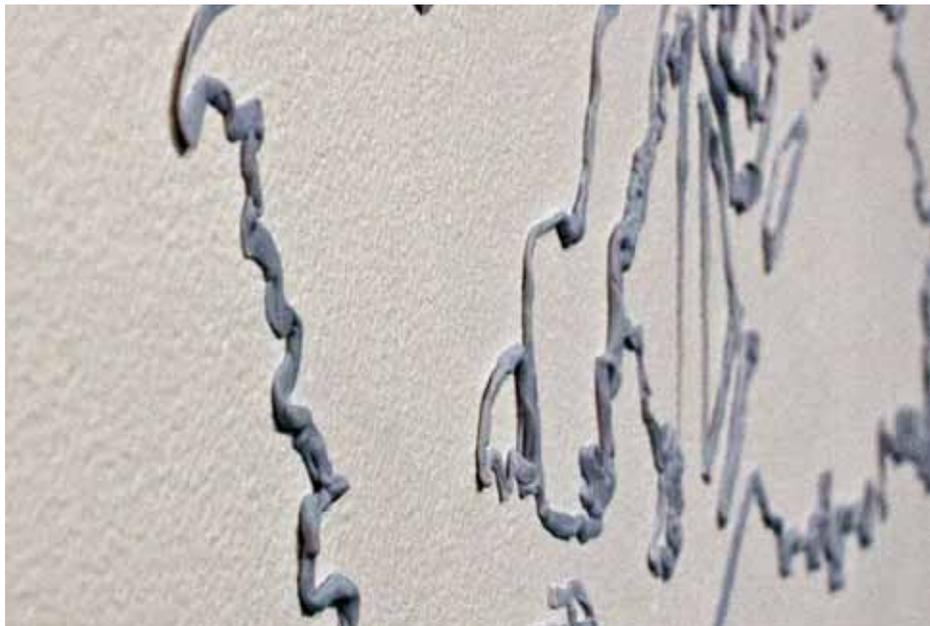
Dragons and Teacups: a collision of kinds

If every beginning marks another beginning's end, which beginning here ended and where did it begin? And so, with Alice, you plunge into the rabbit hole. Such an exasperating thought. Do you fight to grasp the earthy roots which line the warren as you plummet? Do you embrace the sensation of falling as you glimpse the cavernous unknown? And if upon falling you notice another someone, a curiously unfamiliar someone, in which vernacular do you utter? While we may not be able to converse in English with a caterpillar or in French with a mouse – at least, not cogently, as Lewis Carroll may have us wishing – we may well find ourselves reaching for connections in equally peculiar ways.

The world of contemporary art is all about connections and disparities, but, and to varying levels of consternation, we do not inhabit Wonderland. However, by operating in a liminal space which is, coincidentally, most lucidly represented in children's drawings, the world of art often poses as an alternative sphere. By depicting the blue sky quite above and the green grass firmly below, children use the unmarked space in between to enliven dragons and teacups. That which is extracted from the material world is fused with the arbitrary or fantastic, and, within this zone, such permutations are not jeered at but lauded: "how would the dragon hold the cup with those great claws? Oh, I see, he has a cup-mitten." Problem solved.

1. G Amodeo Negative Constructive *Collection*

2. J Sorensen Affirmative Rebuttal *Fir Tree Small*



This is not to infantilise tentative art endeavours, but rather to stress our readiness to diverge from norms when provided with a detached context in which to do so. The child's expression on paper, as with an object installed in a gallery, is, in its simplest form, the communication of an idea. In this abstract and removed space – lodged somewhere between the academic and the capricious – ideas are free to be pondered; liberated as it were, from the shackles of conformity and reason. It is within this sphere (to the anguish of polemicists) that great contradictions may conspire and connect, and it is upon this thought – that is, of contradictions converging without penalty – that I ask the reader to linger.



For an exchange, let alone an exhibition, to occur between two artists with conflicting praxis, a concrete framework may need to be developed. A common language, a theme or a vocabulary, will set in motion some provisional points of collusion. A shared vocabulary helps shape untried and intangible thoughts into identifiable forms. Raw perceptions, when adorned with points of comparability help each party to identify and empathise with the other. As the lexis circulates and art objects emerge, overlaps and borrowings will transpire. The exchanges, both abstract and material, may at times feel reductive or perfunctory in contrast to the profound conceptions which generated them, but ultimately, and gainfully, they operate as seedlings for the germination of new ideas.



It is with this overlapping and borrowing in mind, as well as notions of self-realisation through confirmation, that artists collide to create. When disparities occur, both parties must return to the rules. Premeditated approaches will be forced to give way to the conditional as the dialogue moves backwards and forth and sideways and round. Action awaits response. Response constructs parameters. Parameters create resistance and resistance prods at artifice. Artifice self-reflects and new propositions are brought forth. (Affirmative constructive awaits negative rebuttal. Negative rebuttal awaits affirmative rejoinder). With time, each artist's methodology - or more significantly the value of their methodology - is echoed, even if only faintly, by their counterpart's works. In this way, the creative exchange, as with any good conversation, is sustained by adaptation and renewal. Evidently, perhaps surprisingly, the margins of separation are more elastic than was at first expected.

With this realized, and with creative license in their possession, artists can bridge politically charged chasms to tread upon new terrain. Together, though not necessarily in unison, artists can contend with the dictates of convention. They will elevate the profane, distort facts with deceptions, and occasionally, they will surrender finesse for the sake of expediency. At other moments, without a doubt, meticulousness will supplant convenience, catalogued truths will eliminate deception, and subjectivity will yield to absoluteness. It is within the conditional space demarcated by

gallery walls, and which is so eloquently expressed in children's drawings, that artists may query their practice. And it is there within, that conflicting ideologies may be manipulated and merged to unforeseen ends. Logical conceptions may meet perceptually illogical ends and temporal notions may transform into spatial constructs.

In turn, viewers are invited in. They are implored to roam, and beyond a formal appreciation they are urged to think. One ought to realise that the philosophy of a work may be implicit in the work, and with this, the process of formation may override the final form. It is therefore entirely futile to evaluate, let alone calibrate, the art-maker's efforts based solely on material outcomes: "A modicum of fabric, times two drops of paint plus a multiple of corners equals..." - this manner of thought will lead the beholder only faster down the rabbit hole. Time is much better spent pondering how a process generates an outcome, or how an outcome might urge a rejoinder; this little white rabbit is the one worth chasing. On which note, if indeed you are falling down a warren-like cavern, and you notice another someone, a curiously unfamiliar someone, then throw down the allegorical gauntlet and put up your proverbial dukes. A collision course may at first seem rash, what with your meeting being still so young, but after all, a good old fashioned disputation between the continuum's endpoints may well end with a nice cup of tea.

“At last the Dodo said, ‘everybody has won, and all must have prizes.’”

-A Caucus-Race and a Long Tale

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll

Dragons and Teacups: a collision of kinds
Franky Strachan

Arrowtown palette

Battleship grey sea
Fog buttery white lusta
Hot chile jambalaya

Waikato Coastal Zone

Granite green stonewall
Bermuda grey patina
West Coast, grasshopper



Hanmer Springs (walls)

Green mist sandwisp twine
Thatch, teak, peat, husk, copper rust
Pale slate pumice cloud



Great Barrier/Hauraki Gulf

Spun pearl mountain mist
silver sand, pale slate boulder
Delta grey dolphin



Hanmer Springs (walls)

Green mist sandwisp twine
Thatch, teak, peat, husk, copper rust
Pale slate pumice cloud

Great Barrier/Hauraki Gulf

Spun pearl mountain mist
silver sand, pale slate boulder
Delta grey dolphin

Put up your Dukes!

It was over a convivial coffee that the stoush started. Perhaps that coffee happened around 2005 when they first shared a studio together and got to know each other. Perhaps it has happened with every coffee over the last eight years. But the coffee, when one said t'other, 'put up your dukes!' was 2012.

What caused this stoush? Maybe it was an askance glance and a raised eyebrow when discussing an idea for an artwork ("are you really thinking of doing that?"); suspicious, but perhaps also a tiny bit jealous... Maybe it was the realisation that each is able to do what the other would like to do but can't do. The poetic inversion they found between their practices/personalities sowed the seeds of a debate.

The resulting project, Put Up Your Dukes!, is a standoff, an exhibition that takes the form of a visual debate between Auckland-based artists Gabrielle Amodeo and Jill Sorensen. Each artist states their case and elaborates on their claim to a single territory. The moot:

In art, as in life, we occupy an ad-hoc* middle ground in which the only certainty is the impossibility of certainty.

The proposition for an exhibition based on the seemingly extreme and sometimes irreconcilable differences in their practices has grown out of their long



history of enjoying each other's work and wanting to show together, but struggling to find common ground to start from.

Sorensen states:

I am interested in the territory in which art abandons good-sense to joyfully embrace the vernacular of the stupid, the obvious, simple, pointless, pleasurable, silly, excessive, lazy, expedient and useless.

Amodeo Proposes:

Labour as it's own reward / the person who cuts his own firewood warms himself twice / validation through accumulation (being able to cite a big number validates a project) / refer to things obliquely, answer questions with questions.

The exhibition utilises the structure of the Douglas-Lincoln debate format used in the campaign for the Illinois senate in 1858 between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas.

In the build-up to this exhibition new works have been developed in a call / response fashion and use the idea of nature as a foil, a subject matter and directive, but the debate itself centres around the artists' different methodologies.

The artists have considered their works in relation to the time allotments of the debate; the affirmative has the time allotted in four parts, the negative in three.



Thus, Sorensen who has taken the affirmative side has four 'smaller' works, whereas Amodeo, who has taken the negative, has three 'larger' works. The idea of time translating into space is by nature subjective; the concepts of small and large, long and short, differ according to each artist's practice.

By positioning the exhibition on differences instead of commonality the project lends itself to a certain amount of posturing, circling and marking of territory through hyperbole. Initially the artists went to those points of their practice that offered the most extreme opposition to the other (what Sorensen calls indulgence in her comfort zone and Amodeo calls entrenchment in her fundamentalism).

And because of this the project, at least superficially, bucks the trend of constant forward-moving development in an art practice. This place of indulgence or entrenchment is what an artist knows he or she is instinctively drawn to, and will mostly try to temper in some way.

The debate unravels through the gallery. At the beginning of the installation Sorensen chose the space in the gallery for her affirmative constructive forcing Amodeo to respond both to her work and the spatial decision with her cross-examination.

But the project flips expectations: though trying not to forge new territories in their practices, the artists



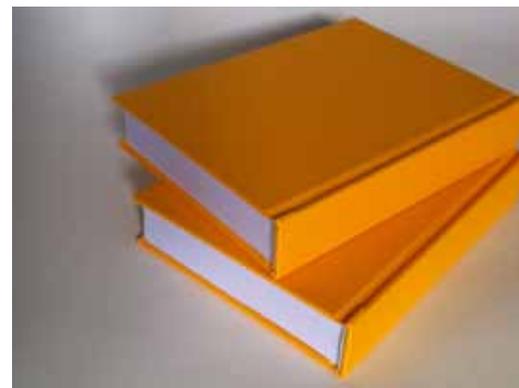
accidentally forged new territory; through exemplifying their extremes they found a backdoor way of collaborating.

Perhaps it never really was a stoush as there was always a hint of reconciliation. Through this process Amodeo and Sorensen found that to argue doesn't necessarily mean to disagree, that call / response can be, but isn't always adversarial, and that while they stake their own territory each artist borrows from, and overlaps, the other.



* Ad hoc is a Latin phrase meaning “for this”. It generally signifies a solution designed for a specific problem or task, non-generalizable, and not intended to be able to be adapted to other purposes [...] Ad hoc can also mean makeshift solutions, shifting contexts to create new meanings, inadequate planning, or improvised events.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad_hoc



Jill and Gabrielle's working relationship began with the group project A Chronological Manor in 2010 which culminated in the exhibition Drawing (For the Given Value of Drawing) at The Blue Oyster Art Project Space. Put Up Your Dukes! is a continuation of the A Chronological Manor project.

Jill Sorensen completed her undergraduate studies in 1991 at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Australia and gained an MFA (First Class Hons) at Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, in 2002. She has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally, recently having a solo exhibition at Kobo Chika in Tokyo, Japan. Jill exhibits at Whitespace Contemporary Art in Auckland and has been a Fine Arts lecturer in the undergraduate and postgraduate program at Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design since 2003.

Since graduating her MFA (First Class Hons) in 2007 Gabrielle Amodeo has shown throughout New Zealand, including RM (Auckland) and Enjoy Public Art Gallery (Wellington). Her 2012 solo exhibition at Auckland Film Archive An Unkindness of Ravens subsequently toured to the Pelorus Trust Mediagallery, Wellington in 2013. Upcoming exhibitions include the group show Two Cities, which will operate across two spaces simultaneously: RM in Auckland and Veredas-SP in São Paulo.



<p>Speech:</p> <p>(Art)</p>	<p>Time:</p> <p>(Calibration of art-making effort on a scale of 1-7)</p>
<p><i>Affirmative Constructive</i></p> <p>Jill Sorensen Garden</p>	<p>6</p> <p>6</p>
<p><i>Cross-Examination of Affirmative by Negative</i></p> <p>Gabrielle Amodeo The Pictures and Things from our Walls</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p>
<p><i>Negative Constructive</i></p> <p>Gabrielle Amodeo PODOCARPACEAE/Dacrycarpus – PANDANACEAE / Freycinetia</p>	<p>7</p> <p>7</p>
<p><i>Cross-Examination of Negative By Affirmative</i></p> <p>Jill Sorensen Resisting Societal Norms</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p>
<p><i>Affirmative Rebuttal</i></p> <p>Jill Sorensen Fir Tree Small II</p>	<p>4</p> <p>4</p>
<p><i>Negative Rebuttal</i></p> <p>Gabrielle Amodeo Sound and Vision</p>	<p>6</p> <p>6</p>
<p><i>Affirmative Rejoinder</i></p> <p>Jill Sorensen A Pile of Boxes</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p>