

She Dreams of Liberation

Streamed words and thoughtless painting by STEPHEN BRADLEY

Depot Gallery II, 2 Danks Street, Sydney

2 – 13 April 2013

Opening Saturday 6 April, 3 - 5pm

Artist Statement

It's 1975 and I have decided to write a play. I have a vague idea of what I want to write: a drama about a family in the grip of domestic violence; but there is a problem: I am a uniquely unworldly adolescent and have no experience of the subject matter. I am at that time working in the school holidays cleaning cars. In the lunch break I have nothing to do, so I find a quiet office and set about writing down what seems to be naturally produced by my imagination, and what is interesting is that when I let go and let the story tell itself interesting things happen. The result is *Heads You Win, Tails I Lose*.

1982, I'm now a film student living in Sydney and have decided to write a screenplay. I know vaguely what I want to write; a black comedy about a delusional young man in the grip of religious mania who contemplates euthanizing his best mate. Again, in the absence of any life experience of the subject matter and without any real means or inclination to research the project, I do what I did with *Heads You Win, Tails I Lose*; I open my mind, I let it happen and *The Long Plunge* turns up.

1988 comes and with it a vague idea for a novel, but what I have in mind demands planning and research far beyond my capabilities, so, again, I let it stream onto the page and over the next couple of years, as I travel through Asia and Europe, *The Journey of the Flower Man* materialises.

1990 and I am commissioned to write a play about Van Gogh for the Edinburgh festival. I read ALL of the thousands of letters Vincent wrote to the key people in his life. The letters are rich, powerful and unplanned; they are Vincent's stream of consciousness. The play, *A State of Being*, evolves into a monologue of selected letters and I become interested in painting.

1993 arrives and I decide to make a painting with as little thought attached to the process as possible. The result, *1993* is born out of a torrid process of creation and destruction and to my surprise appears to describe a scene from the chapter of *The Journey of the Flower Man* I am at that time transcribing. It is a defining moment: I have painted something which I have 'forgotten'. Recognising that the making of the paintings and the written works is the same process leads me to publish *The Journey of the Flower Man* and launch it at my third London show, *Two Minds* (1999).

Since 2000 I have written two unpublished novels: *The Reclamation* (2000) and *White Island* (2002), both consciously utilising the discipline of the stream of consciousness process I now call 'streaming'. To safeguard the authenticity of the written works I have imposed a strict set of rules: The works are entirely unplanned, they begin and I follow them; I am not selective about what I write – I write

down everything I see, in the order that it appears; I have trained myself to not think about the story when I am not streaming, but if my mind wanders to it when I am not writing, I consciously focus on something else; I do not add, embellish or delete; the only changes made are spelling, grammatical and formatting.

These written works are therefore driven by a pure narrative flowing from my subconscious, combined with commentary from my conscious mind. As with our dream world, where the part of the brain that creates and projects the narrative and the part that views it are entirely separate, the same is true of streaming. The integrity of the piece is dependent on the conscious mind playing no part in creating the narrative.

It's the decade after the turn of the century, I'm now living in Sydney and have developed the 'thoughtless' painting process further by using found canvases. After blanking them out with an opaque wash I then work in the usual way: thoughtlessly, creating and destroying. My next show, *Sub*, at the Hardware Gallery in 2011, includes seven new thoughtless paintings made post 2000 and several key works from the London period, including *1993*. As I write in the catalogue for *Sub*: 'It has struck me that many of the most interesting and important marks in these last paintings were not made by me'.

2012, winter, and I'm on a plane to New Zealand. An idea comes into my head about a memory of being in the womb. It flows into another thought, so I begin to write down what I'm seeing in note form on my Blackberry. I write for the entire flight and the flow doesn't stop after the plane lands; I am in the grip of *The Time Capsule* and stream it for sixty two days until it stops. It has been a productive year: I have also made five thoughtless paintings on recycled canvases.

2013 and it's time to exhibit again, this time at Depot II Gallery at Danks Street. Thirteen selected paintings and *The Time Capsule* launched. *She Dreams of Liberation*: streamed words and thoughtless painting.

Stephen Bradley

March, 2013