

LIFE AFTER WARTIME, A SUITE OF MULTIMEDIA ARTWORKS

In 1998 Ross Gibson and Kate Richards began collaborating on the suite of works **Life After Wartime** (LAW). Based on Gibson's extensive research into a crime scene archive owned by the NSW Police Service, the suite of works is a series of interrogative responses to the archive.

These black and white images capture a startling visual record of life, folly and death in Sydney nearly 50 years ago, offering glimpses into a world often ignored by traditional records of history.

"These images remind us that the past is not really the place we comfortably imagine it to have been, but is rather a terrain as layered with tension and complexity as our own moment in time." Ross Gibson

The parent project of LAW is a CD-ROM funded by the Australian Film Commission. Released in late 2003, LAW CD-ROM is a story engine with which users can construct an infinite array of narrative circulating around various characters and locations in a portside city immediately after World War II. An exhibition version of the CD-ROM entitled **Darkness Loiters** has also been designed for gallery display.

The next work in the suite is **Crime Scene**, exhibited by the Justice and Police Museum, Sydney in 1999. This photographic exhibition of 100 prints has a generative sound design, an interactive touchscreen database of oral history interviews with forensic detectives, an additional database of images with Gibson's research notes and a web portal to contemporary forensic websites. **Crime Scene** ran for 12 months to popular and critical acclaim, and went on to an extensive tour of regional galleries.

Gibson and Richards have also devised a live version of LAW in which they improvise storytelling using images and texts from the LAW database. Staged in a synesthetic relationship with jazz minimalists The Necks, **Life After Wartime live with The Necks** was performed at the 2002 Adelaide Fringe Festival with support from the Australia Council. It later played 2 sell out nights in Sydney at The Studio, Sydney Opera House in 2003. In what could be described as improvised movie-making (or improvised audio-visual storytelling), **LAW live with The Necks** explores an intuitive interplay of the visual sequencing of crime images and minimalist text

along with The Necks' unique improvised musical compositions. The hypnotic intensity of The Necks' music fuses with these evocative images to take audiences on a fascinating journey exploring the underside of Australian history.

Gibson and Richards are developing an immersive installation, entitled **Bystander**, based on the same images and texts.

CRIME SCENE

The Crime Scene Exhibition is based around one hundred large format photographs from the Scientific Investigation Bureau archives of the NSW Police. To interpret the pictures, Ross Gibson and Kate Richards have gathered interactive databases, documentary interviews with Police Detectives (including some of the photographers featured in the exhibition), soundscapes, objects from the forensics collection, evocative narrative texts and succinct curatorial accounts.

Focussing on Sydney in the decade after World War II, the exhibition shows an era of great turmoil, repressed yearnings and violent outbursts.

The Crime Scene Exhibition is a revelation – dark and foreboding, thrilling and disturbing. It challenges our common sense presumptions about the past and about our everyday life in the present.

The exhibition had a record-breaking season at Sydney's Justice and Police Museum in 1999 and 2000. It then went on an extensive tour of regional NSW museums and galleries.

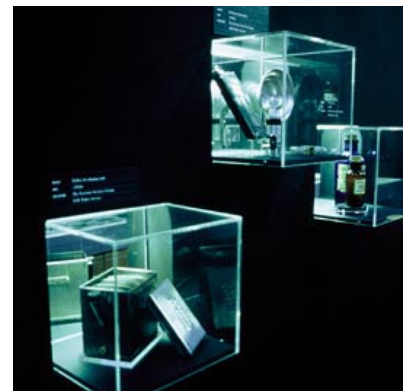
Technical Specifications

Approximately 100 printed images

Generative soundscape

Touchscreen interactive comprising interviews with forensic detectives

1 workstation interactive comprising mini database of images and research notes



DARKNESS LOITERS

Darkness Loiters is an algorithmic story-engine. Designed for public exhibition in a gallery context, it can be played for any amount of time. The investigator chooses images from a dynamic interface connected to the Life After Wartime database. The investigator's choices construct intriguing narrative sequences of image, music and text.

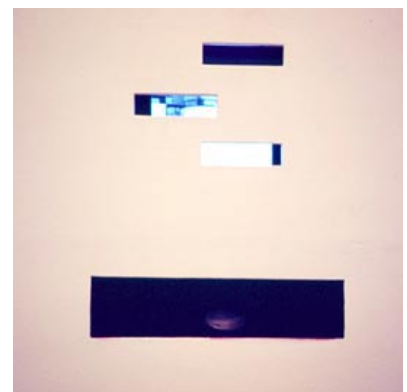
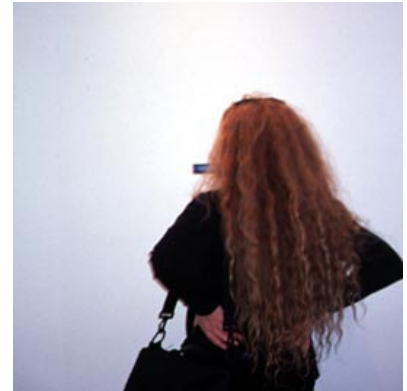
Darkness Loiters has been exhibited in Sydney, Melbourne and Johannesburg.

Technical specifications

CD-ROM for Mac OS 9, OS x, PC

800 x 600 screen size

Stereo sound



LAW CD-ROM

Life After Wartime CD-ROM is a story-engine utilising a database of crime scene photographs, haiku-like texts, combinative music and sound design.

Alternately buffeted by clues and intrigued by possible interpretations, the investigator of the CD-ROM collaborates with the tendencies written into its algorithms.

Gradually the investigator creates a contentious street history of a blustery port-side city.

Technical Specifications

CD-ROM for Mac OS 9, OS x, PC
800 x 600 screen size
Stereo sound



LIFE AFTER WARTIME LIVE WITH THE NECKS

Life After Wartime, live with The Necks is an improvised collaboration involving Ross Gibson, Kate Richards and the music group, The Necks (Chris Abrahams, Lloyd Swanton and Tony Buck).

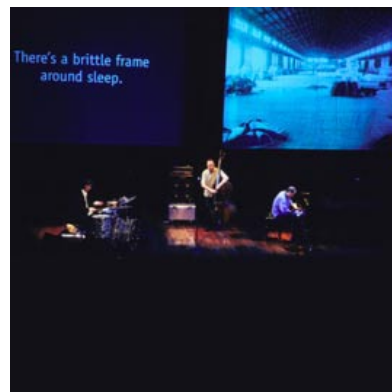
For the past fifteen years The Necks have been at the forefront of the experimental music scenes nationally and internationally. The London Guardian has described their music as something *"entirely new and entirely now... they produce a post jazz, post rock, post everything sonic experience that has few parallels or rivals. Their music is a thrilling emotional journey into the unknown."*

In Life After Wartime Live, Gibson and Richards improvise an image-and-text 'movie' responding to the evolving moods and patterns of the Necks' performance. The result is an intuitive interplay of sonic, pictorial and narrative aesthetics that evokes the hidden impulses of our recent past.

Life After Wartime Live with the Necks was performed at the Adelaide Fringe Festival in 2002 and to standing-room-only crowds at The Studio, Sydney Opera House in 2003.

Technical Specifications

Stage or performance space suitable for 2 channel projection and 3 piece band
Piano, drum kit, microphones etc for band
2 front projection screens (supplied)
2 lap tops (supplied)
2 midi interfaces (supplied)



BYSTANDER

Bystander is an immersive environment composed of photographs, sequences of short text, and musical patterns that all knit together to conjure haunting moods and stories for a large, darkened gallery space.

The images, texts and sound files of **Bystander** are all governed by computer systems to form an environment that responds evermore intelligently, semantically and aesthetically to the behaviour of visitors interacting with the historical material over time. Feedback relationships develop between the visitors and the environment so that the 'eco-system' of **Bystander** offers emergent patterns of narrative and ever-altering rhythms of dynamic reaction.

Employing eight channels of sound and four large projection screens configured as an investigative gallery, **Bystander** dramatises interactive and dynamic approaches to historical interpretation. It encourages visitors to ponder what life was like on the streets, in the taverns, bedrooms and ferry-stops of the boisterous, harbour-side town of Sydney in the years after World War II. It places visitors in an environment buffeted by a kind of 'spirit weather', where swirls, gusts and storms of emotion and interpretation all surge around the investigator in response to how attentive or distracted s/he might be in the presence of evidence from the past.

Bystander is in development in partnership with the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

Technical Specifications

Computer (specs tbc)
4 rear projection screens
4 data projectors
8 speakers

