

Julia Stewart
What words can't say

B

Bus Projects is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. Bus Projects' 2017–19 Program is supported by the City of Yarra.

Bus Projects acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate: the Wurundjeri people and Elders past and present of the Kulin nations.

**CREATIVE
VICTORIA**



S

A painting swapped for a magic carpet
Bethany O'Connor

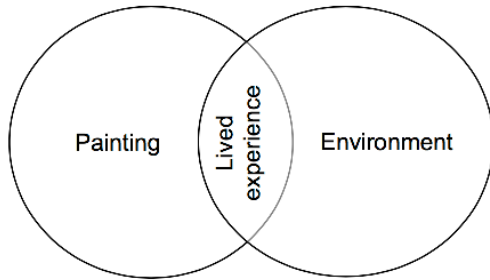
Julia Stewart
What words can't say
29.08.18—22.09.18

Over time a companion duplicates the mannerisms and operational systems of its counterpart. The process of cutting, copying, and pasting is performed to transmit information from one locale to another, without mining the original source to a point of depletion. Grafting information from one site to another allows a relationship to form between two ideas previously separated by the constraints of time and space.

Operational images transcend documentation, existing as a hybrid between drawing and photography. Operational images are those that move past representation to partake in an operation, often through the exchange of data. A point of distinction between operational and representational images is the ‘funny animated yellow arrows and green boxes’ that seem to hover over determined points of interest in the image.¹ Trevor Paglen explains that these marks do not affect the machines ability to operate; they are included ‘to show humans how a machine is seeing’.² The moving arrow on Google maps is not indicative of the code in action; it exists as a visual cue for the user to understand the operations of the object.

For more than a century art makers and art devotees have attempted to determine the operational nature of painting – how its internal code might be communicated to the viewer.

Paul Chan asks where art belongs and concludes that ‘For art to become art now, it must feel perfectly at home, nowhere’.³ Sitting alongside any wall, table, construction site or screen, paintings offer companionship to the ground on which they sit. This companionship offers the painting a role outside of the gallery, an amicable and sometimes admirable responsibility.



In spaces outside arts cannon, paintings may begin to adopt duties relegated to objects. A hospital requires a painting to act as a companion. They often greet us on our way into the world and wave us goodbye on the way out. In these settings, they offer a way to pass the time or counter the sterility.

The painting's duty to serve as a compassionate object can be short-lived, as its ability to communicate its operational function is dependent on more than the formal qualities contained in its perimeter. A painting may be excavated from its place on the hospital wall and transported back to the institution that birthed it. Paintings continue to be cut, copy and pasted. From the gallery walls to your parents' walls, to the internet, to the chambers of the CIA. It can continue to fly through spaces until it lands in its final resting place.

¹ Trevor Paglen, "Operational Images," *e-flux journal*, 59 (2014).

² Ibid.

³ Paul Chan, "Where Art Is and Where It Belongs," *e-flux journal*, 10 (2009).

Julia Stewart grew up in Daylesford and now spends her time between Daylesford and Melbourne. Stewart completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2016. Stewart has since had two solo exhibitions titled 'Slow Going' and 'What Remains' at 167 Queens Parade and Rubicon ARI. Stewart has also participated in group exhibitions at Easy St Studios Gallery and George Paton gallery.

Bethany O'Connor is a writer and artist. Her practice investigates information systems as a way to discern how truth and fiction are constructed. Bethany investigates text, both written and oral, to create speculative propositions for how we might come to better understand the data used to fabricate our past and future. She holds a BA with majors in Creative Writing and Art History from the University of Melbourne and is currently completing her BFA at the Victorian College of the Arts.

B

U

Bus Projects,
25-31 Rokeby Street,
Collingwood,
VIC 3066 Australia.
busprojects.org.au/

S

PROJECTS