

Bolts to Basil: A Play in Four Acts

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Bolts and Basil is a play in four acts with an epilogue. Throughout the play conceptual concerns associated with sense of place are metaphorically expressed. Sense of place is considered in terms of geography and gender. Consideration is also given to notions of 'home', including cross-cultural interests and reflections on the garden as metaphor for 'home'. Scenes are set and titled: Industrial Landscape, 32.55S, 151.46E, Capital Control, From 'The Appropriated Alice', Forever in Our Hearts, and The Lighthouse and The Garden. Characters such as One Who is New to Representation, The Individual, Alice, Woman in a Bath in a Bed and The Gardener are introduced. The play is accompanied by a selection of self-titled artwork.

Keywords: Sense of place, geography, gender, home, art.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

One Who is New to Representation

The Individual

Alice

Woman in a Bath, in a Bed

The Gardener

IMAGES:

'Industrial Vessel 1'

Clay

44x26x26cm

'Compression'

Clay

79x37x18cm

'Tricks'

Fired chair, metal hoop, paint

100x75x80cm

'The Folly of Plan Z'

Fired chairs, metal chain, oar

340x180x180cm

'More Grave than Radox'

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Aluminium, water, wire, waxed cloth
80x100x100cm

'Lighthouse'

Terracotta pots, electronically controlled lights
6.6x2.5m floor area

'Giardino'

Terracotta pots, glass, lighting
5mx3m floor area

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE: 32.55S,151.46E

Setting:

Overwhelmingly rust; blue smoke and blight,
economically dependent, market share stable.
With vertical and horizontal integration, and
a complex social and political matrix.

A set for the boys of the brethren,
with **bolts** and beams, and
resources and ramps.

Enter:

The whole cast—espousing breadth and clarity of vision.
Busily occupied, walking strategically, paths crossing, lifting and directing.
Uttering expressions that reflect a full awareness of social and environmental
concerns. Well-formed values, not all favorable.
Strong historical perspective.

Exit:

Insider traders and the entire cast.

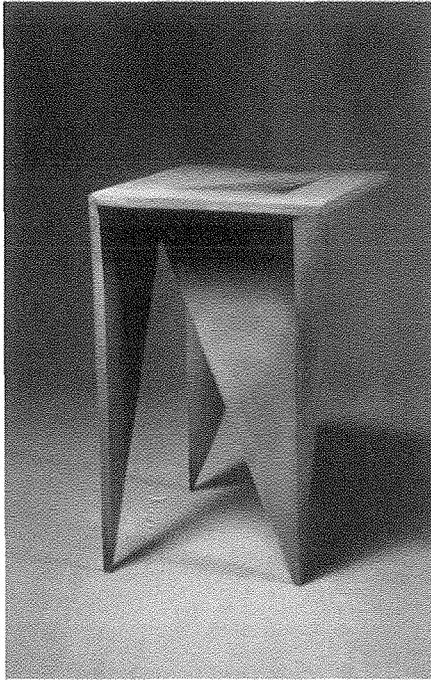
Enter:

One who is new to representation.

The eye of this beholder is focussed, fascinated by prospects and undertakings.
Selective vision allowed.

Looking for...locations within locations, place within space,
details, inside and out, color and light.
Playing with props, assemblage and rust.

Engaged in collecting, wetting, rolling, cutting, joining, firing and
fuming with salts.



'Industrial Vessel 1'

Exit:

After much enterprise the lone cast member packs up and vacates.
After an indeterminable time the entire cast re-enter and dismantle the entire setting.
A sign remains: 'Closed by their own'.

**ACT ONE
SCENE TWO**

CAPITAL CONTROL

Setting:

The physicality of scene one is overlaid with a political matrix and wider sociological concerns. The human element is the focus.

It is a set of basic geometry; beautiful and uniform.
Beauty and symmetry are the marks of power and control.

There are subtle but forceful pressures, and links to the previous scene.

Enter:

The individual, who notes the parallels (but is unaware of the effects in this context).

The action is in three parts:

The individual enters and is thawed and 'softened' by air-conditioned heat.

Once in a malleable state the 'pressure of conformity' is applied.

Finally, the individual is conveyed to a level.

Given the forces, the individual can only speak metaphorically, and engage in
Struggle.



'Compression'

ACT TWO

FROM 'THE APPROPRIATED ALICE' CHAPTER TWO, ALICE AND THE CARDBOARD REPLICA

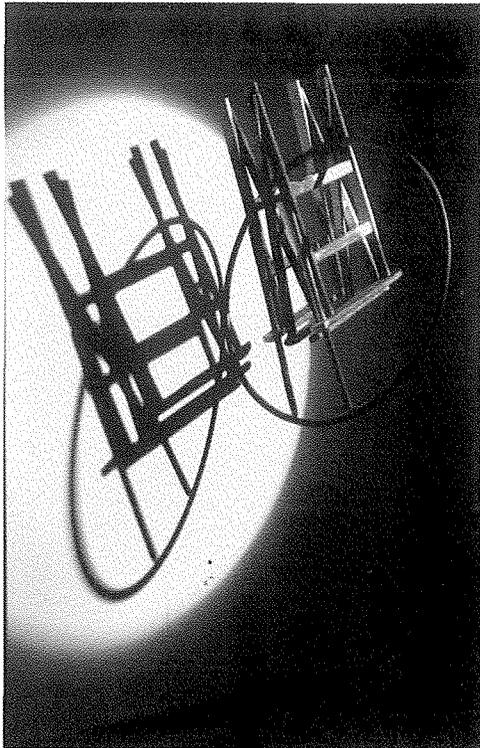
Setting:

Circus.

Stage black, with dramatic, directional spot lighting.

Seating for audience,

dais for King.



'Tricks'

Enter:

Lone female figure who sits. Alice writing Alice. Now with text in hand, she shares the narrative with the audience:

"The Circus! Oh, what fun!" exclaimed Alice as she took a seat to watch. However, it didn't take Alice long to realize that this was no ordinary circus. It had only the one act, and it was repeated over and over again.

It was a juggling act; and all the jugglers were women. Each performer stood in the ring and was presented with an enormous volume of items to juggle. Their

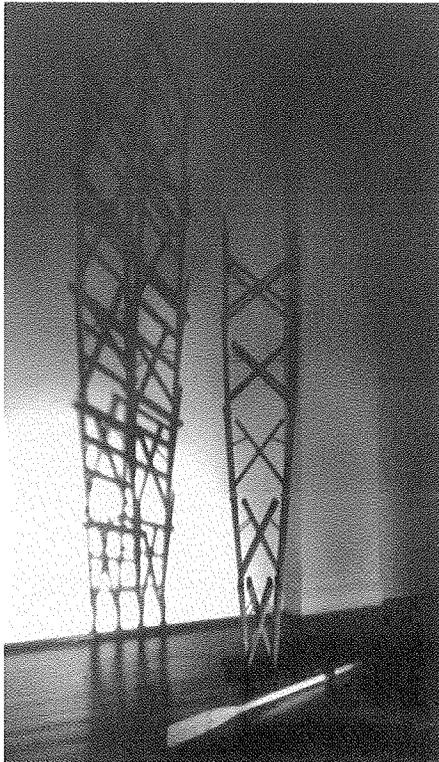
variety was vast, and included cups, saucepans, plates, hairbrushes, hairdryers, beauty creams, baby bottles, prams, rattles, typewriters, hearts, contraceptives, books, hammers, and telephones.

Each juggler began by taking one item and throwing it high in the air. This was followed by a second, third, fourth and fifth item, etc. until all the items were airborne. At the same time the juggler had to pay attention to the descending items. These had to be caught and re-thrown to keep a continuous flow. It was only possible to hold onto one item at a time.

This juggling act required considerable skill. But to increase the degree of difficulty the jugglers were required to wear stilettos.

Many jugglers lost control of their load during the exercise and all the items crashed to the floor burying the contestants under piles of debris. Some of the Jugglers even bumped each other. Only a few of them helped each other. Pandemonium reigned. Alice looked around to see the reaction of the audience. "Were they going to lend assistance?" She hoped so. But the crowd was disinterested and bored with these attempts. And they ignored them.

Other jugglers had more success. And, in conjunction with juggling they combined maneuvers on a bicycle. This was called 'simultaneous juggling'. And as they peddled they chanted "as good as them?" "as good as them?" looking for the crowd's approval.



'The Folly of Plan Z'

Then there were the Super-Jugglers who combined 'simultaneous juggling' and a tight rope act. Even the audience had to begrudgingly acknowledge that the Super-jugglers were 'as good as them'.

Alice admired their skill. She felt that she was 'as good as them' and relished trying her hand at the juggling act. Alice had no trouble throwing the items in the air, she juggled them well. But when she attempted to manoeuvre the bicycle trouble set in. The weight of the load was enormous and she had to concentrate very hard to keep it airborne. There was little time to notice that the bicycle was gaining momentum and the G-forces were beginning to press against her body.

Soon Alice was unable to resist these forces and she felt herself falling. She fell to the ground and her load crashed down on top of her. She lay there pulped and flattened to a façade, a cardboard replica

Meanwhile the King, who occupied the dais, became increasingly bored. Thump, thump his fist went. "Next act" he decreed.

"Yes," the crowd chorused. "Where are the clowns?"

"Who are the clowns?" pondered Alice.

ACT THREE

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Setting:

A re-presentation of a representation. Time is of the essence.

Enter:

Scene opens with a woman climbing into a bed, in a bath.

Comfort, then pleasure

Interrupted.

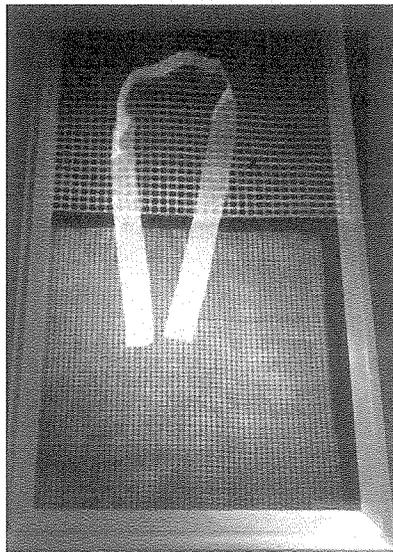
Voice calm and clear, mood reflective, speaking to the audience:

"There are several memories: penguins and polar bears, madonnas and mothers, angels waxed vestal and pure. Little known thoughts kept from my mind. Accept or deny; the terms were clear.

Faith is a sleeping grotto which timing will color benign.

Irrelevant now.

Let the dust settle."



'More Grave than Radox'

ACT FOUR

THE LIGHTHOUSE AND THE GARDEN

Setting:

The garden is used as a metaphor for 'home', with 'home' currently being re-established after dislocation.

The garden is Mediterranean.



'Lighthouse'

A household fridge is sitting, grotto like, in the middle of a domestic garden. The fridge is plugged in and turned on during the course of the scene. The door is opened regularly, sending a broad sweep of light across the stage mimicking a lighthouse.

Enter:

The gardener, who surveys the scene and calls out an inventory list:

basil.....the Goethe palm.....the cloistered majolica
landscapesthe La Pietra rose petals..... the
Corpus Christi floral street paintings.....(at this point the gardener is lured off
stage, overwhelmingly seduced by the phrase).....the Corpus Christi floral
street paintings.....the Corpus Christi floral street paintings.....
.....the Corpus

EPILOGUE

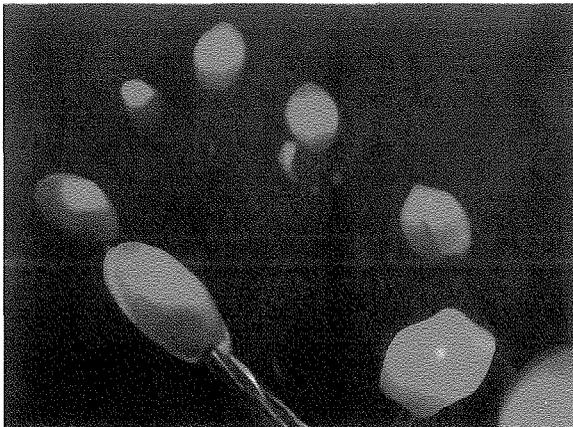
After an eternity, the gardener returns to the stage and reads a line from

BASIL: A TRAGEDY

By

Joanna Baillie

“Now am I satisfied. Forgive me, Basil.”



‘Giardino’

NOTE

1. **Of the Author: self-reflexively**

I am an active practitioner, curator, writer, educator and mother who holds qualifications in geography, commerce and art. In my art work I use media to express conceptual concerns associated with a sense of place, sense of place in terms of geography and gender, and notions of 'home' associated with a stable environment achieved after dislocation/relocation.

My interest stems from earlier studies in geography and my experiences moving from one location to another. In Newcastle, Australia I referenced the industrial landscape constructing clean, sharp constructions which replicated rusty metal and were metaphors for large-scale takeovers and other relevant 'conditions'. A year in Canberra encouraged the introduction of the human 'presence' and my interest turned to the socio-political issues of organizational structures, the power structure of hierarchy, conformity and resistance.

Later in Sydney I considered place, space and gender from an autobiographical viewpoint. In 1991 I moved across Australia to Perth. This was a significant move and the dislocation/relocation caused me to reflect on the garden as a metaphor for 'home'. To express this metaphor I incorporate garden items such as ceramic and glass vegetables and fruit, terracotta planter pots and window boxes in my installations. Since settling in Fremantle, a new cross-cultural dimension in my understanding of the garden has revealed itself and my art practice has been enriched by cross-cultural research into points of congruence and divergence between the Mediterranean environments of Perth, Italy and Spain. More recently my research has broadened to encompass floral festivals and floral street art.