

## MATERIAL THINKING: *The Poetics of Process*

To:

Visual Arts Teachers Association.

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing as a means of introducing myself to the association with the possibility of offering my services as a practicing artist, instructor and lecturer. My name is

Dr. Glen Skien and in the past decade I have completed both my Masters and Doctorate in Visual Arts through Griffith University Queensland College of Art. Within this time frame I have been in the position of associate lecturer within the printmaking faculty of QCA together with having maintained my practice as an exhibiting artist. Since leaving the academic environment I have formulated a series of studio-based workshops founded on my doctorate outcomes *Mytho-Poetic: Print and Assemblage works by Glen Skien*, which formed a Museums and Galleries Queensland national regional gallery touring exhibition in 2014/16. (*catalogue attached*)

**MATERIAL THINKING: *The Poetics of Process*** presents a collection of process driven visual arts workshops that allow the medium and the choice of materials to inform the conceptual intentions of each outcome. The outcomes for each workshop focus on enabling visual art students to recognise that their personal connection to a specific process and medium are intrinsically connected to their conceptual considerations.

The *poetic* as opposed to the conceptual platform that underpins each workshop is a means of maintaining skill-based studio practices that allow students to develop their conceptual concerns through process driven outcomes.

Merging both two and three-dimensional outcomes the concept of **MATERIAL THINKING: *The Poetics of Process*** has been designed so that workshops can be suitably modified towards visual arts curriculum from senior graduates to middle school grades.

Essentially, I was hoping that the association would endorse my delivery of these workshops within the visual arts program by passing on this letter of introduction to the heads of department of visual arts. I am also available to present workshops and artist talks to regional schools throughout Queensland. The courses are available to teachers as professional development workshops that would extend their understanding of the concepts and methodologies engaged within the program.

As a practicing artist who remains avidly committed to maintaining a meaningful connection to arts education, I look forward to the opportunity to discuss further the finer details of the program I have outlined.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Glen Skien (DVA, MVA)

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## MATERIAL THINKING: *The Poetics of Process*

A series of studio-based workshops that explore the poetics of making.



### The Poetic Concept

Material Thinking: *The Poetics of Process* provides the opportunity for visual art students to engage in a series of creative workshops underpinned by a form of 'material thinking'. Through a series of studio-based strategies that allow for unexpected poetic associations, *material thinking* provides a platform for the development of students conceptual thinking. The emphasis of any process driven methodology is a belief that the 'making' informs the conceptual, in contrast to the concept perpetually informing the process of making.

The motivation of each workshop is for students to embrace a contemporary application of collage-based disciplines that enables them to analyse and interpret their initial exploration of materials and process to help define their conceptual concerns.

The models that support each of the workshops are structured towards printmaking, collage and drawing-based practices such as the monotype, montage, photographic transfer technique, the artists' book, and the box assemblage. The interdisciplinary nature of each workshop allows for a mix of 2D and 3D interpretations. The outcomes of each lesson provide students with the opportunity to create meaningful responses through a better understanding of the relationship between materials and process.

The strategies that guide each of the *material-thinking* workshops are as follows:

- Creating unexpected juxtapositions to form unfamiliar visual relationships.
- The merging of self-narrative (personal stories) as a way of questioning cultural and historical narrative structures.
- Imaginative play. Students are urged to embrace the concept of 'intuitive knowing'.
- Exploring the nature of the fragment. Students explore the capacity of 'the fragment' to inform narratives relating to identity and notions of place.
- The deliberate shattering of progressive narrative structures.
- Leaving conceptual gaps that create spaces of doubt. The notion that not every element or response needs to be bound to a semiotic intention.
- Embracing and deliberately extending perceived contradictions.
- A rigor of observation and appreciation of the meanings and contexts often embedded in both materials and processes.
- Engagement with poetic and metaphoric thinking/making.

## **Phenomenology Based Descriptions**

A significant element to the series of material-thinking based workshops is the integration of a written component whereby students are encouraged to document their reflections on processes and use of materials. Essentially these descriptions present a form of deconstruction and personal decoding of student's outcomes. In its most fundamental definition phenomenologically based descriptions provide a strategy for documenting both objective and intuitively grounded responses that offer a platform for identifying and articulating the essential meanings embedded within their studio responses. The basis for inclusion of phenomenology-based descriptions relates to providing students with a personal strategy for facilitating independent analysis and evaluation of their studio outcomes. The documentation of studio responses also provides a method for students to identify the context of their works in relationship to professional artists and contemporary arts practice.

### **Workshop Descriptions:**

#### **1. Self-Narratives in Print: Watercolour mono-print/ dry-point/chine collé**

An introduction to mono-type and dry-point printmaking techniques that incorporate collage elements as a method of exploring self-narratives.

#### **2. Fragments of Identity: Collage/ Montage techniques**

As a way of extending interpretive skills this workshop requires students to develop a collage piece using a photographic-transfer technique as a means of exploring the relationship between our interior and exterior perceptions of the world.

#### **3. The Garment as Ritual: Printmaking/ drawing/ photo-transfer**

Through the use of an item of clothing or photographic images of clothing students engage in a series of printmaking, photo-transfer and drawing based exercises that explore personal identity in relationship to ritual and ceremony.

#### **4. Imaginative Archives: Images and Objects as Cultural Artefacts**

Through a mix of photographs and found objects students create an imaginative archive as a means of identifying and questioning how the past is constantly informing the present.

#### **5. Decoding the Book: Artists' Books/ Book binding and rubber stamping**

In a contemporary context artists' books are book works whereby the artist is designer, writer, creator and publisher. Students will be instructed in a book binding method that may be used as a model in the creation of their personal artists' book.

#### **6. The Poetics of Objects: Bricolage**

Using the simplicity of the box form students will be instructed in constructing a box assemblage piece as a means of exploring material-thinking and the poetics of objects.

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Glen Skien: 'The Europeans': Dry-point and Collage 175x60cm

### **Self-Narratives in Print: Mono-print/Dry-point/Chine Collé**

'Self-Narratives in Print' introduces students to the fundamental printmaking methods of dry-point etching and chine collé (collage) that incorporate collage elements as a means of expressing narrative.

The outcomes of this studio-based workshop provide an understanding of several print related techniques together with allowing students to identify how the incorporation of material elements have the capacity to reinforce a specific narrative or concept.

The workshop will commence with demonstrations of each method followed by conversations regarding the notion of 'material thinking'. Essentially, through the use of ephemera materials as collage elements, students will be made aware that all materials are embedded with a range of associations that may relate cultural, historical or personal narratives.

The workshop can be designed to cover one technique if time is limited.

#### Resource Materials:

Intaglio Press (can be supplied if unavailable)

A4 Dry-point plates (Mylar plastic sheets or gloss surface card.)

Dry-point drawing tools

A4 Cartridge or Printmaking papers (several sheets per student)

Newsprint cut to fit press bed (30 sheets)

Black and Red intaglio or relief printing Inks

Supply of Muslin or fabric kitchen wipes for plate preparation

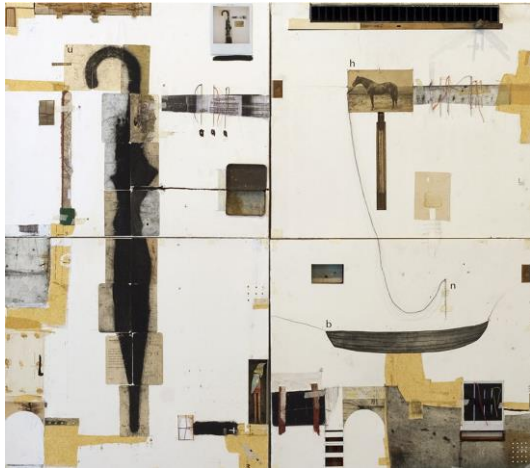
Students are asked to provide a collection of low relief ephemera materials.

For example, remnants of fabric with textured patterns, interesting textured surfaces from disused packaging, maps, natural materials such as leaves or feathers, or any discarded materials that come from their most immediate environment.

A5 x 2 colour laser printed images of student's choice related to current class project.

A stock of ephemera materials will be supplied by tutor.

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Glen Skien: 'Existential Umbrella': Etching, collage and found objects 120x100cm.

### **Fragments of Identity: Photographic transfer/Watercolour Monotype**

As a way of extending students interpretive skills this workshop requires students to develop a photographically based collage response. Using a combination of photographic self-portraits and images taken from a familiar interior environment, students examine how their experience of place connects to their experience of self. Introduction to a simple watercolour mono-print method will offer an extended method of experimentation.

Within its often-minimal approach collage/montage techniques allow students to dissolve many inessential elements, providing the most direct link for interpreting everyday experiences. Both collage and montage processes can be used as a way of discovering new and unexpected meanings as well as bringing students to a closer understanding of their subject matter.

The workshop will cover the demonstration of the photo-transfer technique using photographic images that are able to be transferred onto a range of material surfaces.

Resource Materials:

Intaglio Printing Press

A4 cartridge paper or range of paper including printmaking papers or transparent papers (several sheets per student)

A variety of material surfaces for experimentation.

2B Pencils/ Masking Tape/)

Students are to come prepared with ten A5 photographs (5portraits/5interior)

The use of text is encouraged however make sure it is in reverse.

Scissors, PVA glue

The transfer solution will be supplied by the artist.

All photographic resources to be printed out on laser printer.

Basic watercolour set/ range of fine brushes (Roymac range 0-5)

A5 mylar dry-point plastic sheets (one per student)

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Glen Skien: Shirt and Suit Coat Monotype and painting

### **The Garment as Ritual: Interdisciplinary/Frottage/Filmic responses**

The representation of clothing by European artists as a symbolic questioning towards the nature of ritual and its capacity to inform a sense of self has been set in place since the Renaissance. As a medium for exploring ritual clothing provides a poignant vehicle for referencing personal identity yet inescapably extends into the collective cultural experience of everyday life.

Using a series of A4 and A3 scale photographic images of a garment of their choosing, students are asked to explore concepts of ritual by creating a series of images that create a progression of altered states.

Students will be introduced to printmaking, photo-transfer and monotype drawing techniques as a means of taking their chosen item of clothing through a series of transformative states.

(If time permits the extended outcomes of this workshop may allow students to respond using time-based mediums to create a resolved work or responding with a 3D response that uses the chosen item of clothing within a soft-sculpture).

#### Resource Materials

Intaglio Printing Press (not essential)

Relief printing ink (Black) Rollers

A3 cartridge paper

Variety of papers (textured, transparent tracing paper, rice papers) and interesting fabric surfaces (calico, muslin)

Masking tape

Drawing Materials: charcoal/ 6B pencils erasures

Photographic resource materials are to be printed using a laser printer

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Glen Skien: 'Waste Books' (detail) Photographic transfer and monotype

### **Imaginative Archives: Interdisciplinary/print and collage**

Combining the techniques of photo-transfer and printmaking, students explore the concept of the historical archive. Using a postcard format, 14x10cm, students create an imaginary cultural archive made up of a collection of personal objects and randomly gathered images.

The context for this workshop provides students with a method that allows them to question the way that the past, in the form of historical and cultural archives continue to define our present-day experiences.

Students will be shown dry-point, watercolour monotype and photo-transfer techniques as a means of presenting their inventive archival collection.

Students are not to be given any specific 'theme' to their collecting apart from intuitively gathering a combination of images and objects that they have a sense of connection with or simply find interesting.

The success of outcomes for this workshop rely on students/teachers providing a rich collection of resource materials pre-workshop. Students could be directed to commence their process of collecting over a two-week period prior to the workshop that will provide the starting point to their imaginative archive.

#### Resource Materials

Intaglio Printing Press (not essential)

Card paper stock: Approx.size 14x10cm. (Estimate of 20 per student)

Printing Inks and rollers

Drawing materials/ 6B pencils/ masking tape

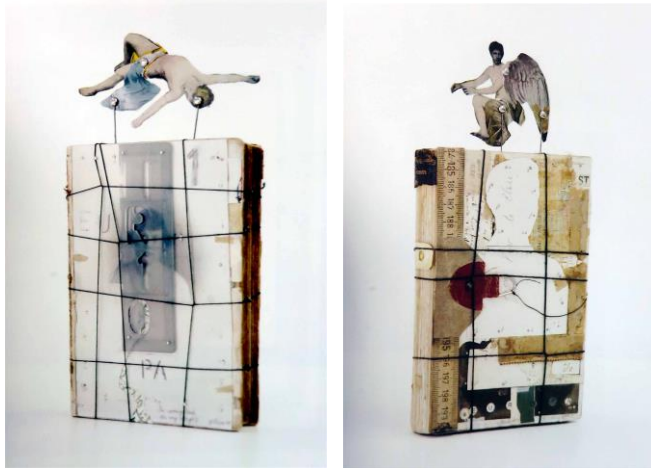
Personal collection of 2D and 3D objects and images

(3D objects can be incorporated as photographic images or as objects)

Basic watercolour set/ range of fine brushes (Roymac range 0-5)

A5 mylar dry-point plastic sheets (one per student)

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Glen Skien: Two altered books from 'The Library of Phenomenology'

### **Decoding the Book: Artists' books**

Essentially the term artists' book relates to a medium whereby the artist creatively and conceptually engages with the book form in a way that challenges our understanding of books in relationship to text, narrative and meaning. Artists' books in a contemporary context are book works whereby the artist is designer, writer, creator and publisher.

In this workshop students will be shown a book binding method that may be used as a model for creating their personal artists' book response. The lesson will also include a rubber-stamping technique that can be incorporated as a text or image element within the book form.

The artists' book form presents an opportunity for students who wish to engage in filmic time-based responses as a more resolved outcome.

#### Material Resources:

All book binding needles and thread will be supplied for this workshop.

Paper: A4 or A5 size cartridge paper/ 12 sheets per student

Collection of inexpensive erasures/6 per student

Relief cutting tools

Relief printing inks: Red, Blue, Yellow, Black

Pocket Stanley knives/one per student

Medium size paper clamps/ 2 per student

Masking tape/ 2cm flat brushes

2mm straw board (book covers) cut to A4 size

Calico or any light weight material for outer covers

PVA glue (Aquadhere brand recommended as it dries fast)



## MATERIAL THINKING: *The Poetics of Process*



Glen Skien: Image and Text series: Box Assemblage 50x30cm.

### **The Poetics of Objects: Bricolage**

The word 'bricolage' originates from a French expression that relates to artisans who creatively use remnant materials left over from previous projects to construct new works and new meanings. For French theorist Levi-Strauss meaning-making was formulated through a process akin to bricolage practice. He regarded our creation of meaning and purpose as a matter of piecing together our life-history through a process of gleaning and gathering of artefacts, oral and written descriptions together with social and cultural practices.

As bricoleur, the artist's response and engagement with process is often more fluid and intuitive, allowing for open-ended outcomes. Within the context of contemporary visual arts practice, bricolage is underpinned by imaginative gatherings of materials and objects that are immediately encountered within the artist's everyday experience.

Using the simplicity of the box form students will construct a box assemblage piece as a means of exploring material-thinking and understanding the concept of metaphor made available through discarded objects and surfaces.

Each student is to come with a collection of 3/5 objects and any interesting surfaces/fabrics that may be incorporated into the assemblage piece.

The best gauge for the scale of objects is that it can rest in the palm of the hand.

The source of these materials may relate to the natural environment or to personal/family connections or simply randomly collected items.

Resource Materials:

2mm straw board/ collection of coloured rice papers (dark colours recommended)

PVA glue (Aquadhere brand as it dries fast)

2cm flat brushes/ Masking tape/ pencils Rulers/pocket Stanley knife/ assortment of coloured thread/sewing needles/cutting boards