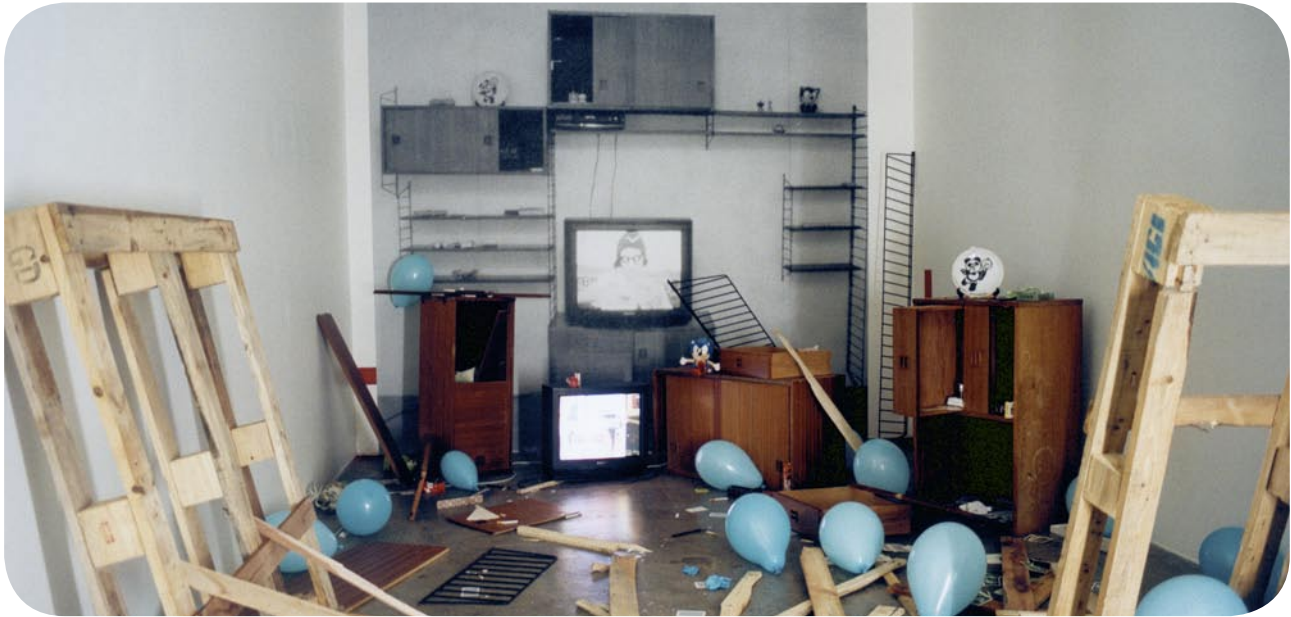


Daniel Malone does Artspace



“Art is a really great excuse to do lots of silly things”
– D.M.

Installation view of *Destroyed Room* (2003), with *Iag Gnuy Mus fo Muk* (2003) DVD

Walking into the show one might presume that Crazy Dave and his mates had snuck in there the night before the opening and had a bit of a shin-dig. The first thing that hits you is that the wooden walkways from the previous exhibition are still there – “Another Artist’s Pallets”. The back projection room is filled with a deconstructed/destroyed *Kum of Sum Young Gai – Iag Gnuy Mus fo Muk*, smashed (other artists’) pallets, and balloons from the days of *Break and Enter*. The ‘Malone’ tag that Billy Apple has scrubbed off the Artspace light-box sign outside is now displayed on a giant sticker in the entrance way. Smaller tag stickers are a bonus with your copy of the micrograph (the Teststrip catalogue publications series that has continued to outlive the physical gallery, R.I.P.). O what a magical mess he weaves!

I think the most obvious point to take from the whole Retrospective is that a lot of the work is credited to other artists. David Tremlett, Daniel Malone (of San Francisco), Joel Shapiro, Martin Kippenberger, Billy Apple, Patrick Malone; the list goes on. The micrograph, written by Malone, is also not credited to the artist. Modesty?... I think not.

In this introspective retrospective D.M. semi-detaches himself from ownership of the work, but also makes himself more important through this mere association. Although he hasn’t had anything to do with the physical creation of the painting by Patrick Malone, for example, it now becomes a Daniel Malone through conceptual affiliation, and will be sold as such to second cousin Sue Farell, who had always wanted a “Malone” for her collection.

I’ve known Daniel for a good few years now and the mad cobweb of intellection that is his art makes perfect sense to me. But to anyone not privy to this understanding what does the show offer? Without reading the micrograph (i.e. not being invited or not having \$2 for one at the show) or going along to the floor-talk (which was really informative and fun but only captured an audience of roughly 20 people) what kind of sense or meaning could one get from the show? I think it’s a case of you really have to want to understand to understand, so I guess the “non-believers and haters” are never really gonna get it. More fool them.

On the other hand, if you are not completely turned off or intimidated by the lunacy of it all, you may simply get a buzz from the “softness of breast and nipple” in *HardHayNipple4* by Daniel Malone (SF) as T.J MacNamara pointed out in his *New Zealand Herald* review – this is “the only interesting image”. Or perhaps you can find solace in the brush strokes and use of colour in the untitled painting originally created by George Edward Lewis (third husband of DM’s paternal Grandmother) then completed by Daniel Malone (NZ) for the exhibit.

In these respects perhaps there is a little something for everyone hidden in Malone’s (or some other artists’) work. I mean I personally would presume that TJ was both “non-believer” and “hater” and he enjoyed the element of titty.

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Malone Syndrome or The Art of Being Lost and Found

Daniel Malone, *malone@artspace*, Artspace, Auckland, June 2003

Colin McCahon and Daniel Malone are my favourite artists in the whole world. Any serious exploration into the work of Malone will blow your mind, and I encourage everyone to go there (the art that is). Writing this pretty much did my head in, because the more I thought about his work the more expansive it became. Yet he is not daunting. You can come away from any experience of his work with the sweetest, simplest idea resonating in your head for days, and that's art worth viewing.

Malone's work can at first appear alienating to the casual viewer. This alienation however is the key to coming to an understanding of *malone@artspace*. Displacement is a fundamental part of being in the world, yada yada. More interestingly, it is also what one feels when first moving from the physical world, into a discovery of the spiritual realms. Heidegger knew "that to start out towards truth and love it is necessary to tear up our roots, to leave home far behind, to free ourselves from every immediate link connected with our origins, as in that tough passage in the Gospel in which Christ asks his mother, 'what have I to do with thee'."¹

What was the Mother Mary to Christ? In the earthly realms, everything. She was his connection to the earth, to a fixed lineage documented and emphasised in detail throughout the Old Testament. In the spiritual realm, nothing. The spiritual realm exists regardless of race, in fact regardless of anything except (and this all depends on what you ascribe to) faith. All that existed for Christ in the spiritual world was his relationship with God.

The inside cover of *COPY* (the TESTSTRIP Micrograph or map for *malone@artspace*) is Malone's signature colour sky-blue. It is a poor copy of an indefinable hue. Sky-blue, as found in nature, is free from any one description. It is endlessly changeable. Yet its hue is completely dependant on the weather. The lesson here is this: true freedom cannot be described by unattachment. Freedom can only be attained by being in a permanent harmonious relationship with something else. It is finding that other to which we can align ourselves, which is the hard part.

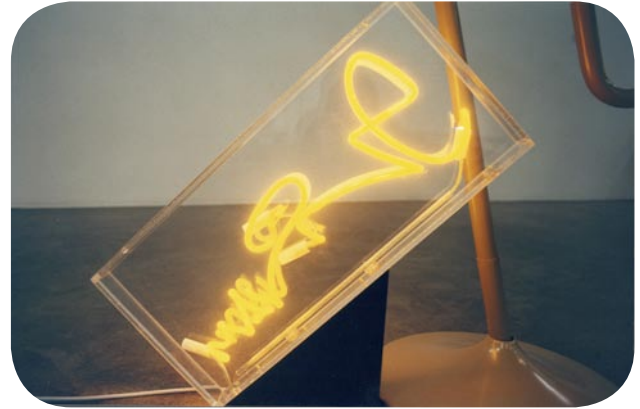
The soul of man, therefore, desiring to learn what manner of things these are, casteth her eyes upon objects akin to herself, where of none sufficeth.² The first time I ever spoke to Malone he was looking for his house keys. I soon realised he was always looking for his wallet, phone, keys... The world sucked them in, and only very rarely spat them back out. Malone was always looking for objects, which he felt, through some tenuous relationship, belonged to him. In *COPY* Malone aligns himself with a handful of people, in a multitude of ways. Here Malone takes the role of calligraphy student, assistant, grandson,

cousin and friend. He also connects himself with an artist from San Francisco who shares his name, and a Joel Shapiro sculpture entitled *Malone*. Each fragment makes up the mirror ball which reflects Malone. We see our passions, thoughts and desires mirrored in many things, but these can only ever be a poor copy of who we are. *COPY* reads like the prodigal son so removed from his homeland he has to construct himself out of the debris around him. Objects, names, works, writing by loved ones, all identified with, and fitted together to make a whole.

Just as moonlight is the reflection of sunlight, *malone@artspace* takes the direct sources hinted at in *COPY*, and creates something both fragile and melancholy. The show presents Malone's practice in many facets. It is a framework fitted snugly together, yet so loosely interwoven in terms of disparate origins, that one can't help but feel the whole thing could crumble any moment. What is left is the narrative of an identity, scavenged from everything around us, our experiences, our past, our dreams, our friends. Malone deliberately never showed at the opening, but was instead spotted at Michael Lett's further up the road. Disengaging himself from the present moment, Malone removed any trace of his real existence. The beautiful simplicity of the I, who lives and breathes in the present moment regardless of anything else, was in absentia.

The opening work is *Caveats Aside*, a documentation of Malone's performance *Blow-up* at the Auckland Art Gallery's New Gallery. The images are arranged in the form of a capital I, mimicking the paintings of Colin McCahon and Stephen Bambury which appear in the documentation. The I which constantly surfaces in McCahon's work, can be seen to refer to Christ's declaration of himself, the I AM; the I which connects earth to the spiritual realms. During *Blow-up*, a panel taken from the New Gallery toilets becomes the foundation for Malone's own 'I' portrait; a portrait that cannot be completed by Malone himself. Something other is needed. In *Blow-up* it is the architecture of the gallery. *Malone@artspace* describes both past and present attempts at finding other grounds on which to place his I. The most obvious is Malone's use of another artist's work, creating pieces which claim dual authorship. Other works show an attempt to locate a completed portrait through other cultures. *Kum of Sum Yung Gai* or *Iag Gnuy Mus fo Muk*, as its reverse is titled, is an attempt at integrating, yet at the same time alienating oneself within another culture, in this case through the addition of prosthetic eyelids. If learning Mandarin helps you to think like the Chinese, then Malone has done this also. More recently, Malone has taken the way of the Wigga, as presented in the show's vatrine. Not merely listening to hip-hop, but writing it, and getting scars shaved into his eyebrows. These are however merely traces of the original, and all removable. Just like the sticker tags which make up the cover of *COPY*.

If true freedom is achieved by being in perfect harmony



with something else, what must follow is a state of personal deletion or selflessness. It is pointless to distinguish between mine and thine in the union of true love. Malone plays at deletion of self, by becoming lost in the trace. The Malone tag describes the written trace, which is constantly deleted from the street, and can now be detached from the cover of *COPY*. Ironically what is being removed is not Malone's tag, but that of the original Malone tagger Crazy Dave. It was this tag which inspired Malone's spate of vandalism/urban enhancement, and by removing the sticker we also delete a piece of Malone's personal history. Through the use of other artists work Mal(bad)one, takes the trace of another, and trains it in his own direction. In doing this he takes the standard original and bends it to his own ends. An attempt at freedom from a perceived norm.

This attempt at freedom from a prescribed norm is reflected in the physical forms some of the works take. The bent lamp of *Les Fleurs du Mal* is a direct replica of Martin Kippenberger's *Untitled (Lamp)*. Yet Malone's copy is not the vision of a drunkard; its title, after Baudelaire's, translated *The Flowers of Evil*, gives the lamp the appearance of being weighed down by guilt. In *Wooden Cast* based on *Malone* by Joel Shapiro, Malone makes a mould for Shapiro's bronze sculpture *Malone*. Like *Les Fleurs du Mal* it is also bent in structure. This cast is the only major hiccup in the show. Poorly made, you could never pour molten bronze into it. As a mould, it would only serve to produce the most munted copies of Malone. Malone knew its failure, which is why he threw it out. It's a stand-in, all the more beautiful for its fallibility and quite possibly my favourite work because of this. Which is why, unbeknownst to him, I saved it from the trash. Bentness of form resurfaces again in the videos, which are both played backwards, reminding me of the myth that Satan speaks through certain records played in reverse. This reversal could also be an attempt to resurrect the past. Now resurrection certainly involves 'reversal' of natural process in the sense that it involves a series of changes moving in the opposite direction to those we see... It means, in fact, playing backwards a film we have already seen played forward.³

Malone@artspace presents itself as a retrospective of works from 1992-2003. This is not his first. TESTSTRIP hosted Malone's *The Artist as Criminal (A Retrospective)* in 1992. *Malone@artspace* is not a succinct, finite summary of the past work of Malone. It is the narrative of a past, in much the same way as history is created by the additions and correlations bought to it by writers. Through the

My Name in Lights (2003) neon, and *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1996) mixed media, installed as *BREAK A LEG, MAKE THAT TWO* (2003)

presentation of new works, as well as the changing of old works specifically for the show, we have no sense of a past removed from the present moment. History becomes not a linear progression, but merely a reshuffling of cards. The clearest example being the decision by Malone to retain, in a changed form, NICJOB's walkway from the previous Artspace show. For each of us time will either one day run out, continue on into a linear concept of eternity, or repeat itself through the process of reincarnation. Malone appears undecided. In the main room a Malone tag in lights turns a written trace into a gesture at eternity. The drooping lamp of *Les Fleurs du Mal* deflates any ideas of posterity in its flaccid form. These works are placed in direct relationship to each other, presenting a cross road between eternal life, or the big sleep.

The final room, NICJOB's walkway reshuffled and retitled *Another Artist's Platform*, leads us to is the apocalyptic *Destroyed Room (for Giovanni Intra)*. In keeping with the show, this is not the last room you inhabit. The architecture of the gallery forces you to retrace your steps before you leave. Back through the past. My favourite detail of *malone@artspace* is found here. Within this room of constructed chaos, is strewn a couple of packs of cards. The game of life undone. One set from Japan depicts a set of exquisite Bonsai gardens. Maybe it was Malone's *Breaking and Entering* documentation, or pure sentimentality – and I am a sentimental kleptomaniac – that caused me to steal away with the Jack of Hearts. It describes a miniature spruce, positioned within rocky crags. It is still thick with foliage, free to live and breath in the moment, despite the severe constrictions of its form. It is only in this present moment of breathing; the only dimension in which we live, that we can hope to connect with God.

Notes

1. Claudio Magris, *Danube*, pg47.
2. Plato. This attribution is controversial, as there is some doubt as to whether these words are his.
3. C.S. Lewis, taken from his essay "Miracles" compiled in *God in the Dock*, pg 319.

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