

1. Why did you have your first solo exhibition now, before completing your BA Fine Art degree?

- (1) Early 2014, I had no choice but to interrupt my studies due to external factors beyond my control. Meanwhile, I rented a shared studio space, and began working with no particular show in perspective, but purely driven by the need to keep making art. At the end of the year, I was offered the possibility to show my work at the Alliance Française, and I immediately accepted. I guess it functioned as a way to challenge myself to go take this project a little further, outside the private and comfortable realm of studio practice. The fact that I hadn't yet obtained my BA was never an obstacle. Besides, I already had a fair share of constraints to deal with.

Comment [SMC1]: Please elaborate

Comment [F2]: I don't really know what to add to this, and I'm not sure how you expect me to elaborate. Changing the word "need" to "will" would probably render what I was trying to say more accurately. Why did I have this will to keep making art? Hmm..., good question. I have no idea!

2. I thought I recognised some of the work in *Tropics* - have any of the works been made in your previous years of study?

- (2) Yes, the project began during the second part of my third year at Michaelis, while I was experimenting with light and the materiality of found photographs. One or two works made during this time became part of the final selection of works, after a long editing process at the studio.

3. Can you elaborate a bit more on why you are making work about/around hallucination, specifically considering that at least 3 other students' work from last year's Michaelis Graduate Exhibition dealt with this topic as well?

- (3) The works are not *about* hallucination per se, although I think it's a useful conceptual tool to make sense of the works. I used the term "hallucinatory" to highlight the perceptual shifts potentially existing both internally within a loose narrative of fictional characters and scenes, and externally between the viewer and the backlit images. Since I didn't take part in last year's graduate work, I can't say the work consciously relates to recent Michaelis graduates' practices, but maybe there are connections to be made, I will let you decide!

Comment [SMC3]: But what about this topic/investigation do you really enjoy pursuing? Why are you making this work?

Comment [F4]: I don't know exactly why I made this work, apart from the fact that the prospect of messing with the materiality of found photographs really excited me. From the start, I was happy to spend hours selecting and altering the slides. This is how it all began: the chance of finding a box full of slides and the excitement of experimenting with this source material. No pre-determined theme or conceptual framework. The meaning(s) of the project, or the apparent themes present in the work, made sense to me much later, when I was able to link the images I had produced with my interest in altered states of perception, including dreams and hallucinations.

4. Can you relate your own work with the work you did for the recent Penny Siopis retrospective at the Iziko National Gallery?

- (4) I was very lucky and honoured to be part of Penny Siopis' set up team for her retrospective at Iziko. She asked me to re-create a work she had made in 1994. The installation involved the use of black light, phosphorescent chemicals, glow in the dark objects, and various miniature sculptures displayed in a dark box. As an assistant my concern was to create an atmosphere that best translated Penny's ideas, and not to distil my own visual interests in the work. In hindsight, I realize that the project influenced my practice, especially with regards to the play with light and altered perceptions.

Comment [SMC5]: See comment SMC2

Comment [F6]: At this point, it would probably be more useful to discuss the various ways in which these ideas are translated visually in each work. Consider "Doom": a man is standing near a fountain in a garden – unaware that someone else, the viewer, is standing behind him – and everything looks pretty much "real". Except the sky has turned purple, and reddish shadows overlap the image in the foreground. The combination of these unusual features, superimposed on what was originally a banal photograph of man on a dull cloudy afternoon, can be read as a hallucinatory *invasion* of the man's field of vision, blurring the distinction between what he believes to be real, and what isn't. This makes me think of photography's historical (and much debated) claim to truthful representation.

5. What role does Jonah Sack play in your art practice? I noticed that you thanked him in the exhibition leaflet for *Tropics*.

- (5) Jonah Sack generously supplied me with a few vintage slide projectors, which I needed specifically for this show.

Comment [SMC7]: Maybe we can leave out this question, because it is perhaps not that interesting in terms of your work? I wanted to find out whether you received theoretical input from Jonah.

6. How will your current work feature in your final year of study at Michaelis towards your BA Fine Art degree?

- (6) As part of my graduate work this year, I'd like to delve deeper into the ideas behind *Tropics*, though not necessarily restricting myself to one particular medium. Taking the notion of hallucination in its broadest sense as a starting point, I'd like to use it as a tool to translate found images and objects into **new realms of meaning**.

Comment [SMC8]: Please elaborate

7. Which artist's work do you most closely relate to your own?

- (7) Luther Price's work is what comes to mind. I discovered his work two years ago while working on found slides. His interest in the materiality of film and the physical manipulation and re-stitching of found footage proved a useful reference for my own practice.

Comment [F9]: Well, it's hard to explain, because I'm still in the process of thinking about the contours of my new project. What interests me, more than hallucination as an "event" in itself, is the way altered perceptions are both determined by the immediate external world, and at the same time contribute to shaping (the perception of) this world in a new way, assigning new meanings to it, or contradicting previous understandings of it. Right now, my focus is on bureaucracy and contemporary structures of power in South Africa. If I were to re-create a bureaucratic structure through the lens of an imagined psychedelic hallucination, what would it look like? What would it mean? I'm working on it...

8. How has the shared artists' studio space in Hope Street influenced how you make art?

- (8) I don't know if sharing a studio space directly influenced the way I make art, but to work within this community has definitely proved an incredibly resourceful and stimulating experience, an open space not only for work, but exchange, discussion, critique etc.

Comment [SMC10]: With this mention of cinema and projection, and visibility/invisibility, I'm reminded of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*. In the third paragraph he writes: "The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as instrument of unification. As a part of society it is specifically the sector which concentrates all gazing and all consciousness." But then he goes on to say: "The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images." How would you fit your work in this formulation, if you think it is even applicable?

9. Please elaborate on the media you are using (lightboxes, manipulated images, family archives), especially in terms of painting.

- (9) My collection of found slides probably comes from discarded family archives, though I have no precise information about their origin or context of production, only a few hints here and there. I spent hours literally viewing each slide one by one, selecting those that intrigued me. At the same time I began chemically altering the slides' pigmented surfaces using bleach, or experimenting with scratching or superimposing the slides. This ongoing process led to new re-assembled slides, in which the initial 'photographic' look of the slides had shifted into a more painterly kind of imagery. The photographs suddenly had the potential to become paintings through surface alteration and/or collage. In their final form – i.e. single large format photographic transparencies mounted in lightboxes – the works take on a scale that alludes to painting, as well as a sculptural presence embodied in the very structure of the boxes.

Comment [F11]: Your mention of Debord's writings makes me think of "Venus in Blue", which I see as the centrepiece of *Tropics*, because it embodies this notion of the projected image, existing both in the outside world, and as a perception induced in one's mind. The image comprises a blue screen on an elevated platform, faced by rows of empty seats, amidst a curious industrial landscape, further complicated by the bodily presence of a classical Venus sculpture superimposed on the entire scene. To me, it definitely alludes to this notion of spectacle, though in a different way. Here the blue screen seems to mediate perceptions rather than social relations.

10. This question is very much the same as the previous one: What is the value of the projected image (lit from behind) in *Tropics* and upcoming work?

- (10) Displayed in dim light, the backlit transparencies in *Tropics* have a **cinematic quality to them**, though in a different way than, say, projections on the wall. While the images are only visible through light, the light source itself remains invisible, hidden behind the "screen", as if the image itself contained the light necessary for its own existence. Nevertheless, I didn't attempt to conceal the power cables from the viewer, making it obvious that the backlit images, and the illusionistic effects they may produce, are all entirely **constructed**.

Comment [SMC12]: Manu, has this interviewing process been useful? Do you think editing an interview in a Word document can be an artwork in itself?

Comment [F13]: Yes, it's been very useful, thank you. It forced me to think more in depth about the project, and also to articulate my ideas in a way that (hopefully) makes sense. And yes, I think a conversation about art can be an artwork. Why not?