



The Reading Room, 2008

Installation

Constructions, pine and MDF board. Size variable

In doing so, Dyer's work champions the role of language, not as tyrant, but as illuminator. The installation forces a renewed consideration of its architectural context, mocking the vernacular of the house. In doing so Dyer addresses the porosity of language and material form, so too she insists on an engaged response to the world.

The questions posed by Dyer's work are not easily unravelled. They are works that demand consideration. But they do so through a burnished idiom that makes for a remarkable production.

Damian Smith
2008

The artist would like to acknowledge the support of:
Elizabeth Bay House,
Historic Houses Trust
of New South Wales.
Jenni Carter, photography.
Sarah Mosca, photography.

Cover image:
A Reading: 3, 2008
Digital Image
Edition of 5
198 x 120cm

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Über has an extensive collection of original artwork by exclusively represented artists working in a wide variety of media including works on paper, painting, collage, sculpture, photography, installation and new media.

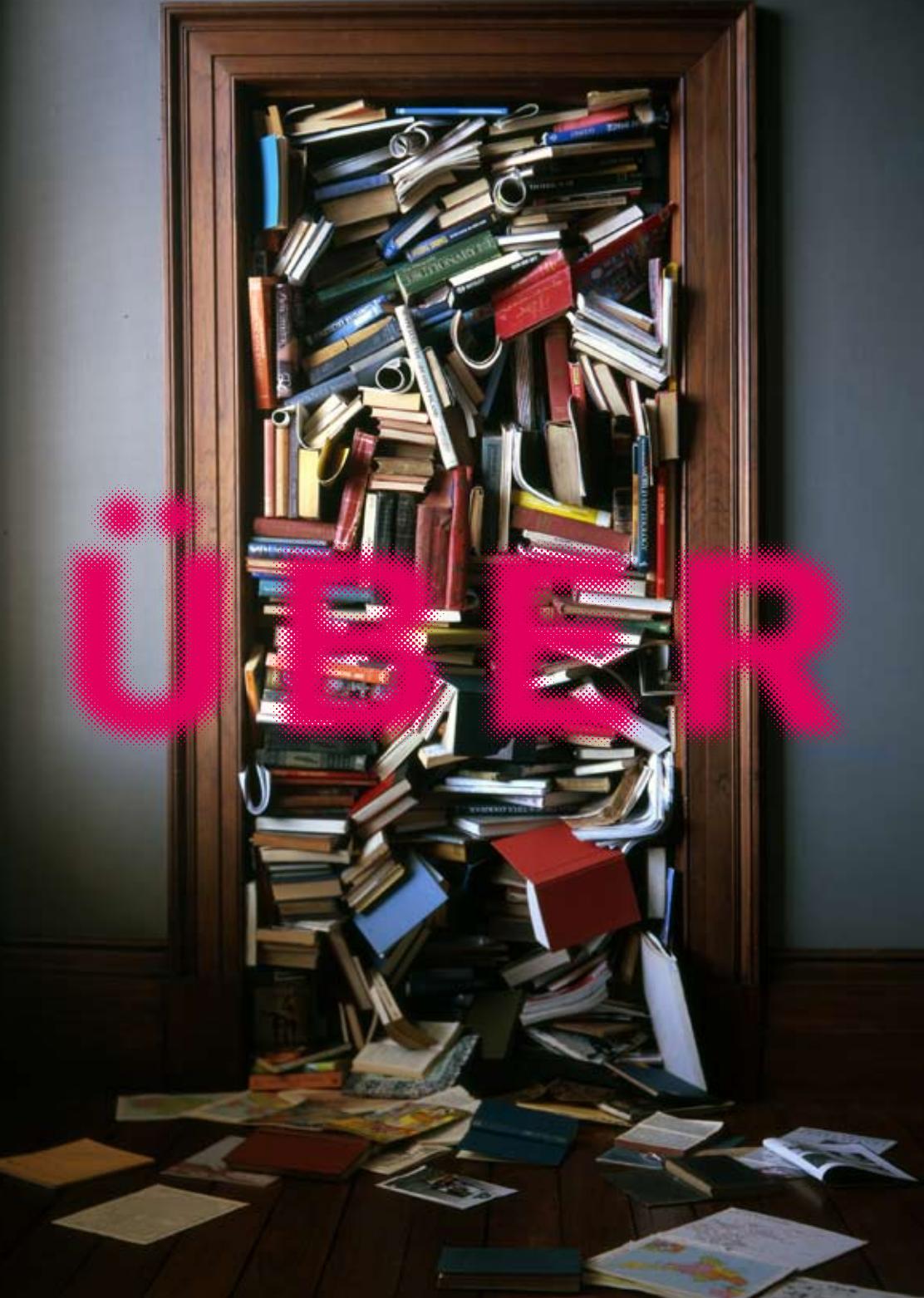
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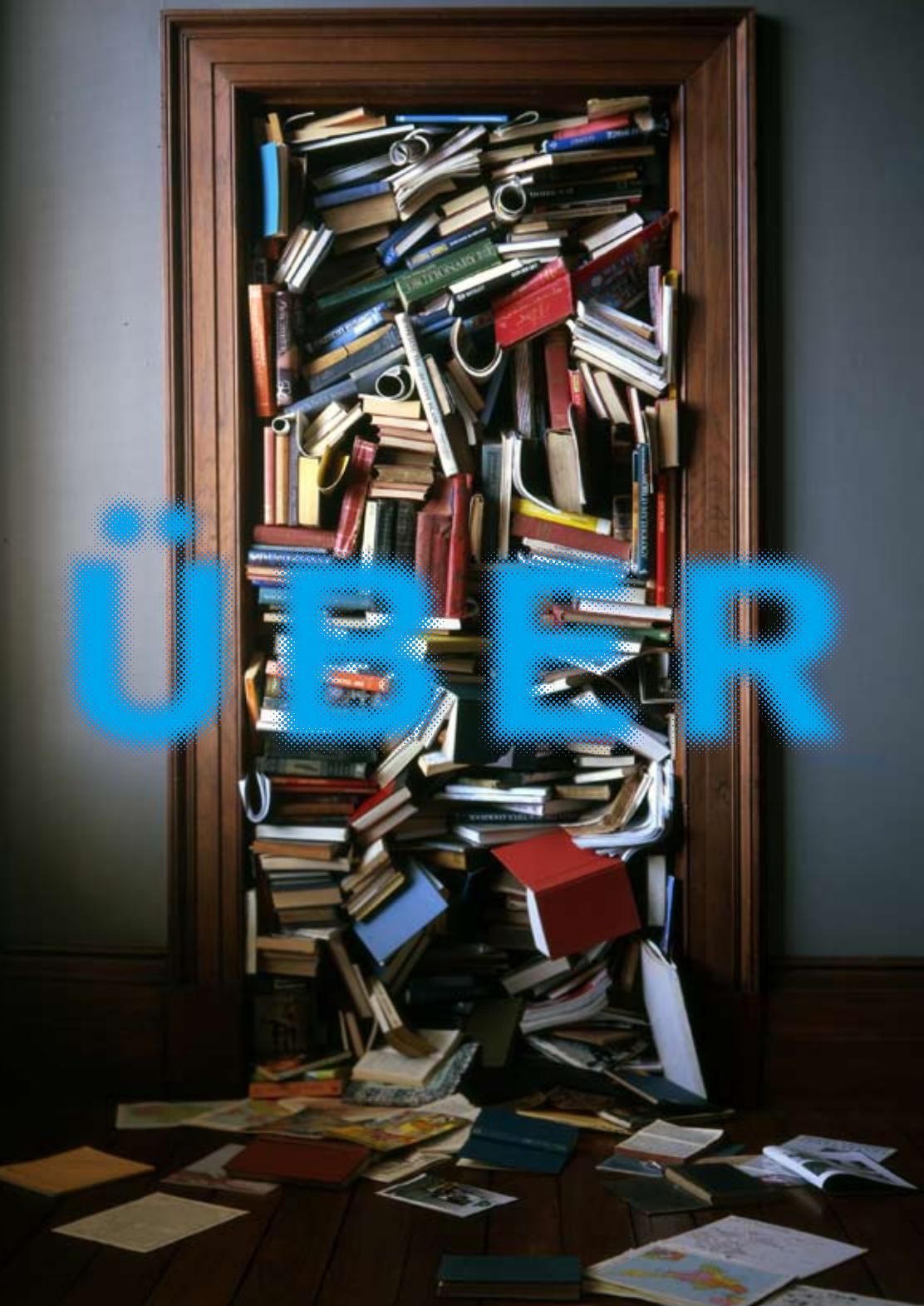
Anna Pappas
Director

Upcoming exhibitions

Here's to my sweet Satan
Julia Robinson (AUS)
Sculpture
01 October – 4 November 2008

Andrew Battye (AUS)
Painting
07 - 24 November 2008





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Tue-Fri 10-6, Sat-Sun 12-6
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www.ubergallery.com

The Reading Room

Jayne Dyer (AUS)

Installation and digital media

03 - 28 September 2008

Opening:
Wednesday 03 September,
6.30pm

Guest Speaker:
Associate Professor David Thomas
Ph.D, Artist and Lecturer at RMIT
University, Melbourne

RSVP: 29 August 2008
Phone: 03 8598 9915
Email: info@ubergallery.com



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Walking around the towering tables in Jayne Dyer's installation *The Reading Room* is a little like a sojourn into Louis Carroll's childhood fantasy 'Alice in Wonderland'. Amidst this forest of furniture the sensation is akin to one of shrinkage, as these decidedly familiar objects become elongated, ungainly and unreachable. Stacked atop their surfaces are clusters of enigmatic hardbound books; whether they are dictionaries, novels or technical journals it is impossible to say as Dyer has painted them a uniform white. By placing these books at the centre of her installation the artist, rather than delivering a statement of fact, presents us with something closer to a riddle.

Questions concerning the status of the printed word are again brought into play in Dyer's *A Reading 3*, where a riot of books tumbles from an elegant mahogany doorway. Dyer photographed her installation in the stately Elizabeth Bay House in Sydney, where she first amassed this conglomeration of impenetrable information. Here, in this orderly museum, her books recall ruins of a colony: of stone doorways sealed in the collapse of civilizations. Like a rabble from within their intrusive cascade speaks of a society under threat. But the epoch in question is not the Victorian era; it is the contemporary moment with its roots in the recent past.

As a means of unravelling these mysterious photographs of installations it is helpful to observe the 19th Century entomology collection contained in Elizabeth Bay House. Amongst other things, this study of insect life epitomizes the aspirations of the Enlightenment philosophers, (as does Diderot's *Encyclopaedia*), who's steadfast belief in the tangible remained unchallenged for more than two centuries. But as Dyer's work attests, information is never impartial. Nor is it devoid of the poetic. Her work asserts itself as a counterpoint to knowledge as unvarnished fact. It plays with ideas, skirts subjectively through the premise of an archive and identifies research as a primary material from which departures of creativity occur.

That the artist should feel compelled in the current cultural climate to raise such a question is revealing. After all, are we not heirs to a vast literary tradition? Or is it that the information age has failed to enhance our creative freedoms? Does our current fascination with so-called 'reality TV' reveal a collective distrust of that other virtual world: the one we carry within? Suddenly the parallels with the Victorian era seem striking indeed. Certainly the moral panic that attends the creative industries these days would confirm this observation.

Whilst epistemological critiques are not uncommon in the visual arts, Dyer's work is far from didactic in nature. One senses a delight in the archaic, combined with a preference for the

Fig. 1
A Reading: 7, 2008
Digital Image
Edition of 5
45 x 30cm

Fig. 2
A Reading: 4, 2008
Digital Image
Edition of 5
198 x 120cm

inexplicable. 'Redundancy' as the great Victorian critic John Ruskin decreed is a potent aesthetic attribute of all things ancient. It plays upon our reading of the past: nostalgic, authoritative and imbued with the passing of centuries. In her concern with both the history and future of the arts and letters, Dyer's work spotlights art's singular role in revealing what information alone cannot. Her stream-lined aesthetic belies a life-long meditation on the place of knowledge and the Muse in contemporary society. It dances between the uncertainties of poetry and the rigors of the academy; in this her work is profoundly humanist in nature. We see this too in the way her photographs capture the hand painted surfaces of her installations, that place

where the artist's autographic presence can be felt, even in their monochromatic hues, most strongly and where we are reminded of the person behind the creation.

Other works, such as *A Reading 1 & 2* present the hard bound volume as an impediment to direct experience. Each image focuses on a doorway barred by horizontal rows of books, spaced as to block the entryway whilst still allowing glimpses of the room within. How are the books held in place? Seemingly they contain their own inner tension. Pushing on to the door frame enough to hold them in place; were we to remove one they would all come tumbling down. In this the works act as invitation, enticing the viewer into the role of artist as agent of change.

Fig. 3
A Reading: 8, 2008
Digital Image
Edition of 5
45 x 30cm

Fig. 4
A Reading: 2, 2008
Digital Image
Edition of 5
198 x 120cm

