



Otherworldly:
Altered Objects and Artificial Spaces

Anna Nazzari
Gina Cinanni
Marzena Topka
Moir Doropoulos
Tanisha Burtnyk

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I first became aware of the possible existence of other worlds via C.S Lewis' *The Lion The Witch and the Wardrobe*. The very idea that a humble wardrobe could be a portal into another dimension blew my mind and I can remember checking every wardrobe in the house to see if the flimsy backing would give way to a mystical, transcendental universe. Without success, I gradually accepted that Narnia was not my destiny yet continued to pursue a vision of other worlds in the hope that something else existed, something other than the drudgery of school, chores or family life.

As a child, my exploration of other worlds was intuitive and it is only now, when I contemplate the title of this exhibition - *Otherworldly: Altered Objects and Artificial Spaces* that I dissect the term "otherworldly". As a compound word, its coupling is not devoid of divergent meaning. The expression "worldly" evokes the idea of an enlightened individual or someone concerned with unlocking material values and everyday experiences unique to this world. Conversely the word "other" contaminates this logic: it refutes sameness and homogeneity and distinguishes itself from a perception of what is fixed such as norms, identities and behaviours by exemplifying all that is alien and out of sync.

The illogicality and strangeness associated with the "other" can be understood through the Symbolic Order. According to Jacques Lacan, the Symbolic Order is a means of regulating society through the control of individuals. He suggested as long as society speaks a language congruent with the Symbolic Order, its laws, class systems, genders etc. are internalised so that it replicates itself in a fairly consistent form. Hence, in this type of order, the "other" is deemed lesser and often symbolises the feminine, disorder, irrationality, cunning, appearance, myth, ephemeral and so forth (Cohn, Hill and Ruddick 2005).

Today, the residue of this order ensures "other" and "worldly" exist in an infinite conflict. It is an absurd marriage, but one whose eternal opposition traces the ambiguous territory governing our perception of what is real. And what is real? The term otherworldly defines something of, or attributable to, another world, typically worlds that contain supernatural, psychic, alien, mystical and heavenly themes. Slotted into a fictional realm, it appears to stretch beyond the common thoughts or experiences of this world. Yet, the conflict the term promotes between the real and the unreal and the rational and the irrational highlights its "human-centred" meanings and grounds it in this world's realities.

In Douglas Adams' book *Mostly Harmless: Hitchhiker's Guide 5*, his otherworldly protagonist Arthur receives the following advice: "Everything you see or hear or experience in any way at all is specific to you. You create a universe by perceiving it, so everything in the universe you perceive is specific to you" (Adams 1993, 71). When contemplating Adams' words, perhaps the term otherworldly is more accurately a filtration system, a means of releasing perceptions of reality specific to the user.

For the artists in *Otherworldly: Altered Objects and Artificial Spaces*, this seems to be the case. The work created appears to paradoxically parallel, redeem, raise an awareness of, or memorialise an experience or aspect of reality specific to them. In this exhibition, the artists embrace themes pertaining to: the unexplained or unexpected happenings in this world; the psychological and physical losses of identity; the limitations of alternate realities; the traces of psychic residue retained in found artefacts and the illusions generated through the distortion of other people's mediated realities. And in doing so, they appropriate this world through an otherworldly lens.

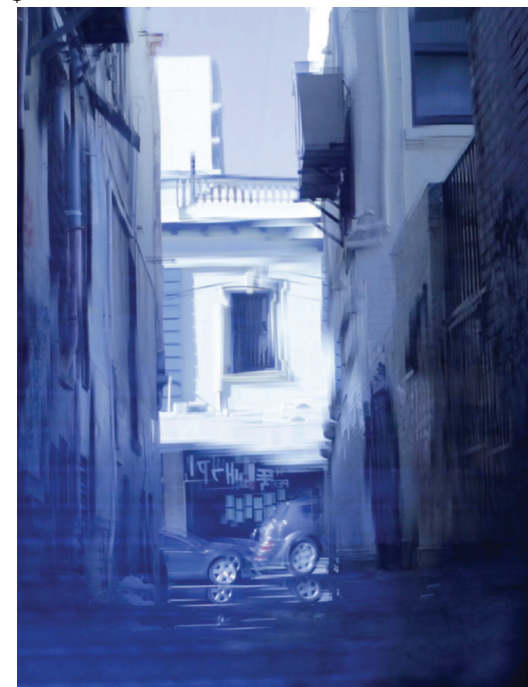
As I conclude, I am reminded that as a child I believed Narnia would allow me to escape my mundane reality and it is now, as I ruminate on this, I wonder whether I was actually escaping or simply creating my own perception of reality.

Dr Anna Nazzari is an artist, writer and lecturer at Curtin University's School of Design and Art

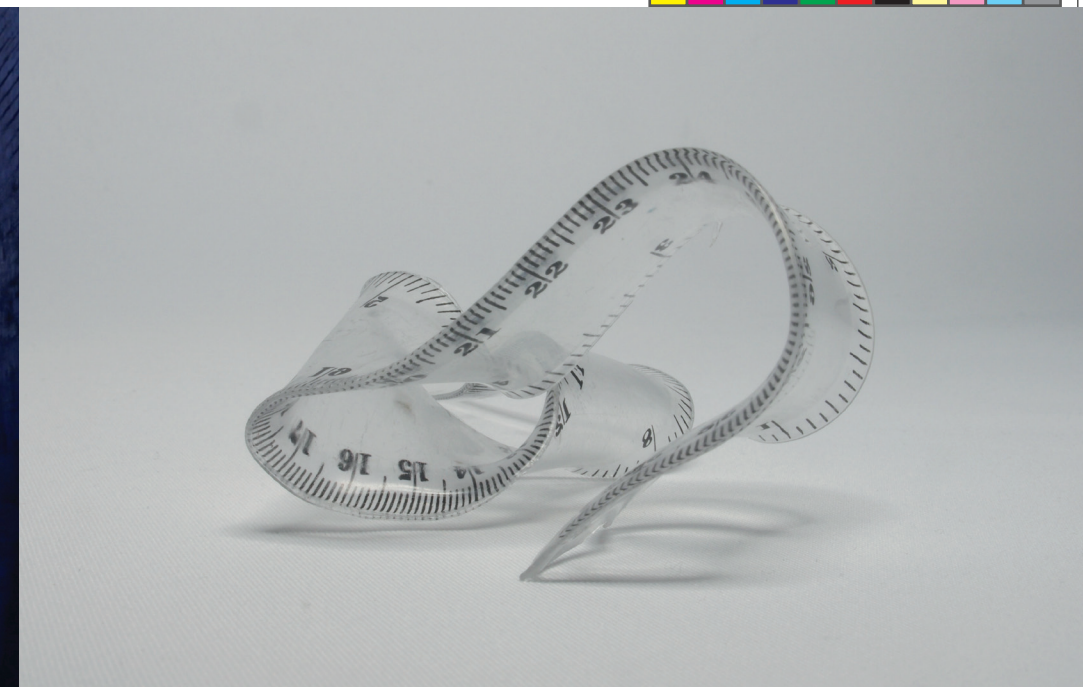
Adams, Douglas. 1993. *Mostly Harmless: Hitchhiker's Guide 5*. Pan Books: London
Cohn, C., F. Hill, and S. Ruddick. 2005. *The Relevance of Gender for Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction. Disarmament Diplomacy* 80 <http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd80/80ccfhsr.htm> (accessed December 12, 2014)

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Front image: Anna Nazzari, *Detail of Mind Echo*, 2014, *Animated Video*, *Dimensions variable*.



Anna Nazzari, *Detail of Mind Echo*, 2014
Animated Video, Dimensions variable



Marzena Topka, *Telekinesis*, 2014
Altered ruler, 3 x 16 x 7 cm



Gina Cinanni, *Excavation # 3*, 2014
Ceramic shard, Size variable



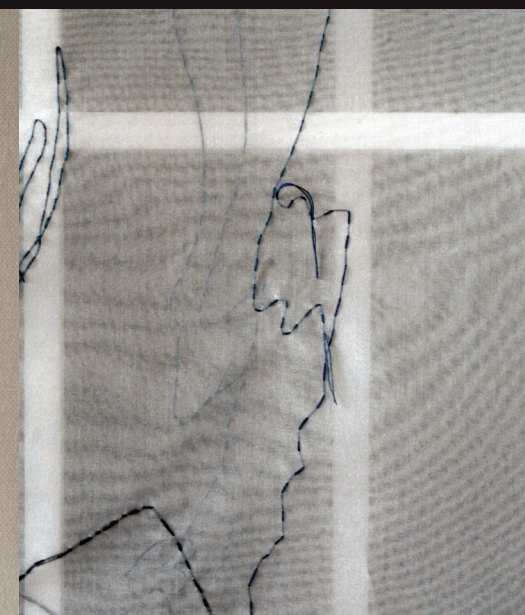
Gina Cinanni, *Excavation # 5*, 2014
Ceramic shard, Size variable



Tanisha Burtnyk, *Asylum*, 2014
Digital Image, 30 x 40 inches



Moira Doropoulos, *ALTERNate realities (detail)*, 2014
Silk organza, pine wood, stitch, indigo dye, Dimensions variable



Tanisha Burtnyk, *Asylum*, 2014
Digital Image 30 x 40 inches