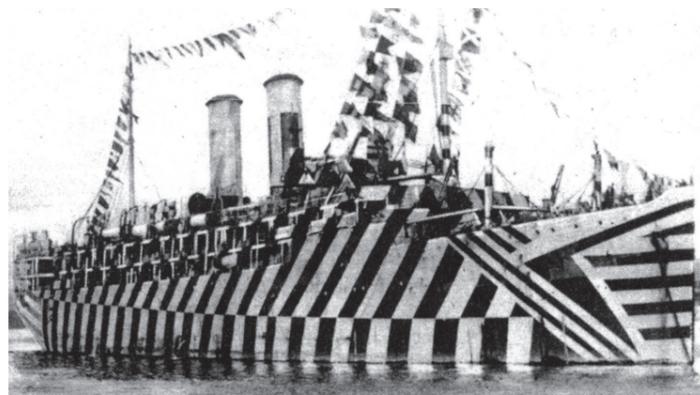


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STEPHEN HOBBS

“DAZZLE”



Top: Periscope drawings by British Lieutenant Commander Norman Wilkinson.

Middle: WW1 Dazzle Camouflage.

Bottom: Camouflaged railway lines near the station at Pont-à-Mousson, 28 October, 1915.

Above: Rendered example of project proposal.

Stephen Hobbs is a respected and well-established member of the South African art community. Based in Johannesburg, Hobbs has exhibited extensively across South Africa and abroad, contributing immensely to the complex relations between art and society. He is noted for his prolific collaborations with Marcus Neustetter. Together these two artists have been the driving force behind The Premises Gallery and the Trinity Session, which was for a time housed within the Civic theatre in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. Hobbs has always been involved with social and community-based work, most notably connected to his partnership with Neustetter, and their varied public art initiatives. Hobbs' most recent work can be described as highly conceptual, multimedia-based, multidisciplinary, formalized and interactive executions that focus on human ergonomics, structural proximities, and environmental experiences.

Hobbs' approach deconstructs notions of architecture and space, charged with social, political, and economic undertones. His work can be regarded as iconic and monumental. Architecture, specifically, is used as a catalyst for spatial perceptions, constructed initiatives, and edifices of representation, stitched with influences from Modernist avant-garde trends that existed during the early 20th century. Hobbs situates his influences within the transitional context of contemporary South Africa, often emphasizing the struggle to reform and reconstruct communities and buildings, and as a result improve upon the lived-lives of individuals in the aftermath of urban decay and post-apartheid entropy.

Hobbs' last two exhibitions, held at the Substation in Johannesburg, and the Kwa Zulu Natal Society of Arts (KZNSA) in Durban, are certainly a testament to the historical nature of his spatial interventions and community initiatives, often bringing together the talents of various architects, artists, designers, writers, photographers, filmmakers, musicians, and the like. At the Substation (1 and 2), Hobbs responded to the space in three parts, producing a body of small-scale assemblage sculptures, incorporating a number of found objects suggesting the early experiments of Kurt Schwitters, Piet Mondrian, and Vladimir Tatlin. When pieced together, these small assemblages become a large-scale installation, accompanied by a site-specific external sculptural intervention outside the building. The exterior treatment could be seen by an appreciative audi-



ence at all times, situated on the opposing building to the Arts department of the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS). This approach was in part a reaction to the space itself, bearing no windows and modest entrances. Thus, the culmination of the installation/intervention came a month after the opening of the show with the unraveling of the interior to the public.

In Durban, at the KZNSA (3 and 4), Hobbs changed his approach to suit the new demands of the open-plan building, with its many windows, high ceilings, free-flowing interior and exterior arenas, this time not restricting viewers to the exterior of the building as was the case at WITS, but still turning to the influence of Tatlin (5).

After a multitude of successive interventions, Hobbs wishes to move his attention to an experimental and prolific space in Pretoria, namely the Outlet Project Room on the Arts campus of the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT).

Using similar sentiments and approaches executed in the above-mentioned works, Hobbs proposes to paint the exterior of Outlet and the surrounding buildings in the tradition of WW1 battleship camouflage, spurred on by the canonical mythology surrounding the magical realism masterpiece by Jorge Luis Borges titled "The Aleph" (6). Once again, Hobbs wishes to interact with the space, and to some extent have the space interact with the public. The social impact of this project is immense, specifically to the institution itself, instilling a sense of rejuvenation on campus with the advent of a monument on site. The work also replaces the existing decay surrounding the area presently with a conceptual mantra that can educate and inspire, rather than depress and encourage disdain.

"Dazzle" is the most recent event to be hosted by Outlet; a project space that has always been focused on the development of ideas, stimulating discourse and well-grounded experimentation. The official opening will be held on Saturday the 8th of August 2009 at 14:00.

Images 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 are documentations of interventions by Stephen Hobbs.

Image 5: Studio view of Vladimir Tatlin's model Monument to the Third International (1919-1920).



STATE OF OUTLET PROJECT ROOM SURROUNDING BUILDINGS PRIOR TO INSTALLATION



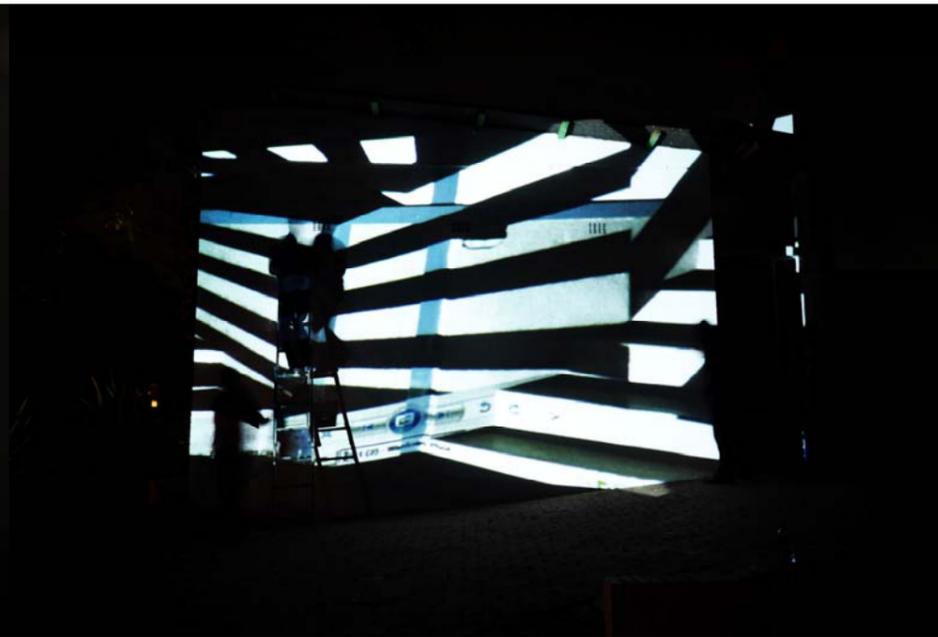
INSTALLATION VIEWS

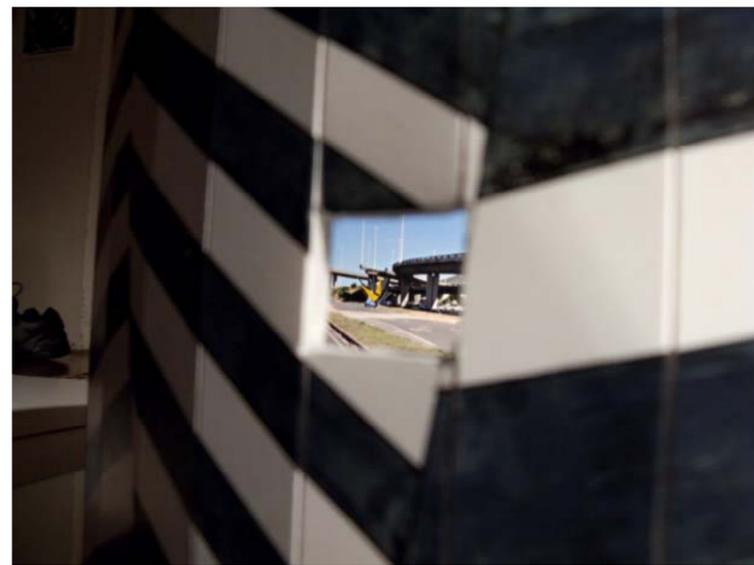
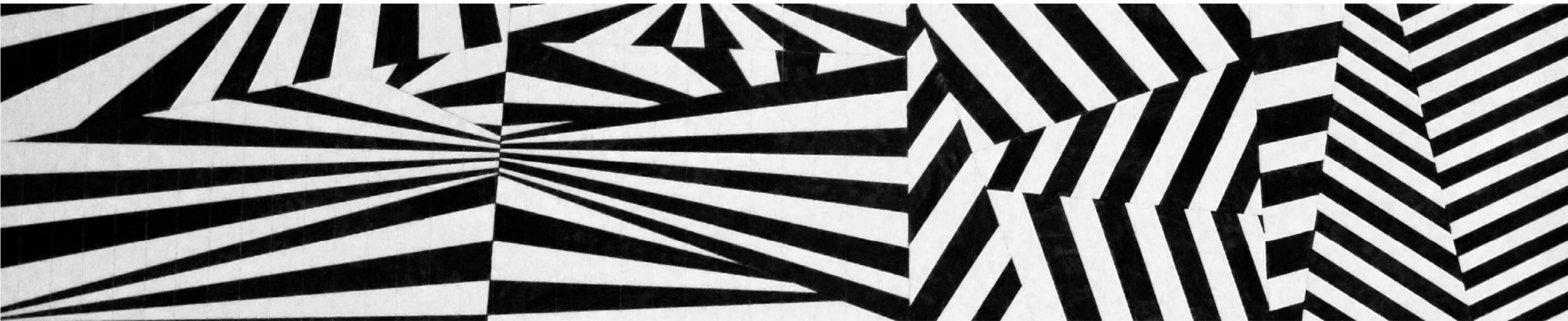


STUDY FOR THE ALEPH 1 (2008), 60X60X60 CM, INSTALLATION IN THE OUTLET PROJECT ROOM

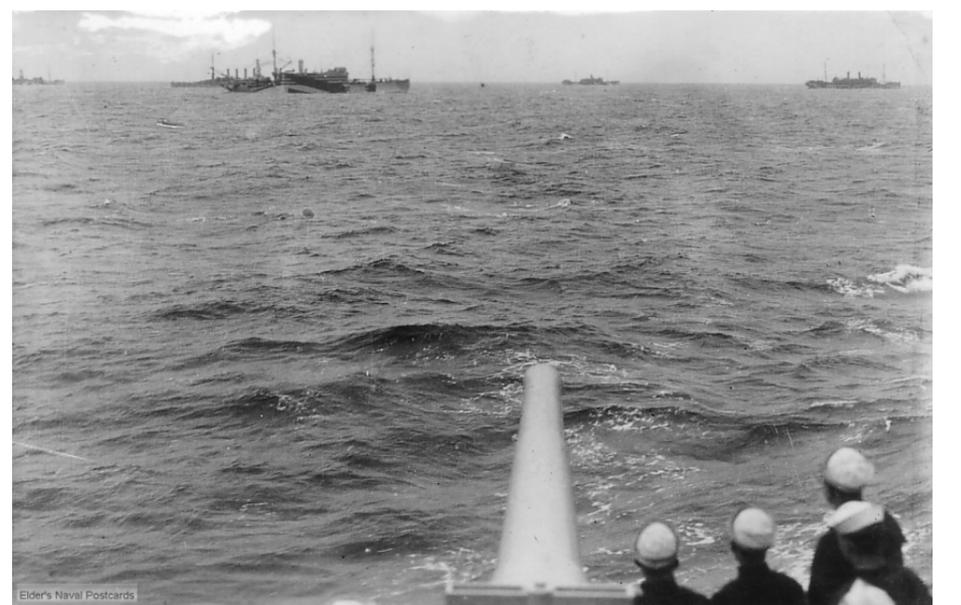
REFERENCES.../

PREPARATION





STUDY FOR THE ALEPH 2 (2009), 20X30cm



WW1 DAZZLE CAMOUFLAGE

