The installation addresses the relationship between ideology, beliefs and hermeneutic paradigms that influence or determine the way we relate to objects and how our perceptions of space underscore an affective aspect to our understanding of this relationship. It is an exploration of the ways in which humans relate to and interact with objects and each other, and how this may be predicated on a fundamental linkage to functionalism, within a structuralist discourse, disseminated and propagated through social conditioning, mainstream media and social institutions. This self-referential critique of modernity and the way we relate to everyday objects is central to the development of all incarnations of the project for FMGrande and Nick Wishart.

The 2011 Underbelly Arts installation involved four found objects: a jug, an old television, a vacuum cleaner and a lamp, each painted white. Projected onto each object were representations of contexts in which we usually see each object, animated representations of each object and distorted views of spectators interacting with the objects.

The objects themselves were fitted with electronic sensors, which in turn fed data to a number of laptops at an operating desk where FMGrande and Nick Wishart created electronic soundscapes, which in turn responded to user interaction with the objects. A proximity sensor interacted with a live video feed from a camera, which projected an image of the user interacting with the object on to a large three-meter by four-meter screen behind each object.

Approximately every hour FMGrande and Nick Wishart would perform a sound piece which interacted live with audience members entering the hall, the effect of which created an immersive space allowing for spectators to contemplate the form and function of each object on display, and possibly question the notion of space itself. Was it a performance, an installation or more sculptural in form? How was one to behave in the space, interact with others, or relate to the surroundings or the artists?

Whether or not patrons left with these questions in mind was not a concern of the collaboration. Both artists’ primary concern was the creation of a unique work of art. They aimed to utilize any confusion and anxiety the work created to develop a methodological approach to understanding the myriad of ways in which media art can intersect with the spectator or general public.

The work is an ongoing collaborative project and is currently being developed as a new performance piece to be exhibited later in 2013 and beyond. In its current incarnation the artists are developing new modes of interactivity utilizing found objects or electronic detritus. The main thematic impulses meditating on notions of object, space, and our relation to and within them remain at the fore for FMGrande.

ISEA 2013 Workshop

The STA Workshop for ISEA 2013 was held in Studios 1 and 2 of the Bon Marche Building, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney on the 8th of June, 2013.

To commence the workshop, video and installation artist FMGrande gave a short lecture on the conceptual framework which informed the initial Spatio-Temporal Anomalies installation at the Underbelly Arts Festival in 2011 and its future development as an installation and mode of art practice. He introduced the underlying theoretical concepts informing the work, including the notion of ‘social-space’ and the contextualisation of modes of space in Henri Lefebvre’s work The Production of Space (1974), particularly in regards to the ways in which the installation attempted to intersect with many of the themes polemized by Lefebvre [1].

For FMGrande, the notions of space and object were central to the project and the wider implications of the artistic enterprise. The ways in which we interact with objects within space informs our interaction with other humans and our relationships. For Grande the implicit objectification of the human form is a direct extension of the primacy of functionalist thought in relation to space and object in western society. He argues that we have become slaves to functionalism and begin to treat each other (humans) in the same way we treat spaces and ob-
jects. This is where human relations begin to disintegrate and become a trivial extension of a business, an enterprise, an interaction, a transaction. We are no longer communal beings whose primary purpose is to form part of a stable coherent society, where humanist moral codes and the centrality of positive loving behaviour dominate, but mere objects, as a piece of furniture or a television, to be traded like commodities, whose use value is determined by whatever market we find ourselves in. The irony being of course, that in early twenty-first century capitalism, most art will eventually become some form of commodity [2].

For FMGrande, artists’ whose work have influenced and inspired the direction of the Spatio-Temporal Anomalies project emanate from a variety of disciplines and practices. They include media artists such as Alex Davies, Shona Kitchen, Nam June Paik, and Rodrigo Derteano, traditional influences from the dadaist and surrealist movements to fluxus artists and contemporary graffiti and mural art.

Alex Davies’ installation work Dislocation (2004) is inspiring for the artists because it elucidates the possibilities within media art practice itself, particularly the use and choice of suitable technologies, but also the very practical use of illusion and trickery to create an other-worldly sense of space and our relation to it. As Mueller explains: “4 small mounted monitors are set back in one wall of an enclosed installation space. You need to approach them closely to see what they are showing. It takes a moment to realise that what you can see is your own back, and those of your neighbours peering at the adjacent monitors. The screen flickers slightly, as if there is a minor disruption in transmission, and someone else enters the gallery, nearer to the camera, talking on a mobile phone. The sense of their presence behind you is spine-tinglingly palpable, as is the illicit feeling that you are eavesdropping on their conversation. But glance over your shoulder and you find the room is empty. The other presence was a phantom, a ghost in the machine”[3].

In many regards the sense of bewilderment, amazement, confusion and possible disappointment a spectator feels being fooled by the illusion created by Dislocation ignites in them a sense of cautious self-reflection for future engagement with contemporary art. This comes very close to what FMGrande terms a Spatio-Temporal Anomaly, where space and time are distorted to create an other-worldly feeling or sensation, the distortion being an intentional projection of the artists’ will. Although for FMGrande this occurs at the point of inspiration, where the affect and resonance of a work of art inspires moments of conceptual lucidity, breakthroughs in cognitive association or sparks a moment of brilliance regardless of the contextual framing of the work.

Another influential artist is Shona Kitchen. Her work High...Low (2011) is a solar powered interactive illuminated installation in Deptford, United Kingdom, which is synchronised with the tide of a neglected and run down area of Deptford’s tidal creek. It was developed as part of a consultative community regeneration project and is designed specifically for “repeat viewers...to ponder the changing nature of the sign and, with it, the tide which drives Deptford Creek” [4]. FMGrande used Kitchen’s work as an example of how consultative processes in contemporary art can produce work that is socially engaging, generate a sense of wonder, and use modern technology to establish new forms of public art: “The art work, an illuminated sign made up of the words HIGH...LOW, spans 21metres/69feet and 1.5metres/6.5feet high. A total of 165 LED spotlights create this tidal indicator which sits on the creekside wall in front of the Faircharm Industrial Estate building – each lamp serving as a pixel. As the tide moves in and out twice daily, the letters within the words are illuminated to reflect the current level of the tide with each segment lasting approximately 20 minutes” [5].

Nick Wishart’s presentation at the ISEA 2013 STA Workshop focused on his art practice. His band Toydeath have toured internationally, released albums and have a solid cult status and following. The band performs dressed as invented toy characters and create music using modified toys. This is commonly referred to as circuit bending, where a toy is dismantled and a specific element is modified, such as a circuit added to allow the pitch to be modulated, or volume to be adjusted or sounds to be distorted. Utilizing the modified sounds, the band then develops and writes new music, and have performed at venues such as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, the Australian Museum in 2013, and various music venues and festivals, such as the One True Love Festival in Japan.

Wishart introduced participants to Reed Ghazala, considered to be one of the founders of circuit bending in the 1960s. He went on to describe the different forms of circuit bending, the electronic and philosophical principles based on experimentation and a discordant, chaotic and random sense of creation, where sounds and noises are discovered and formalized into existence through body contact testing and then soldering[6].

The work CeLL, a collaboration with artist Miles van Dorssen, formed a major influence which Wishart hoped to inspire possible directions for the Spatio-Temporal Anomalies project. Assembled in a large steel shipping container, “CeLL could be considered the epitome of minimalist visual sculpture. It is the aural elements that make it special. The mechanisms inside and, of course, the massive sound emanating from this banal steel box, make it an exciting and mysterious anomaly” [7].

Wishart then facilitated a practical workshop where participants assembled an electronic trigger kit, which could be used in conjunction with their own work. Participants were instructed in safety, technique and creative modes of experimentation, with regard to the construction of electronic kits and prototypes using soldering irons, wires, solder and appropriate tools. This was followed by a breakout session and discussion with FMGrande covering the possible uses of software and hardware available to artists wanting to experiment in interactive media arts practice. He demonstrated the use of icubex sensors with vdmx software to manipulate vision and sound, as well as setting up pedals from a dismantled organ to run a basic arduino makey-makey interface with Ableton Live. The workshop concluded with a broad discussion of the history of media art and the ways in which media artists utilize technology to develop and make new works.

Fig. 2. Spatio-Temporal Anomalies, Underbelly Arts Festival 2011. (© FMGrande, Catherine McElhone Photographer)
Regardless of how we arrive at a particular space, in the physical sense, we are bound by its material construct once there. Whether one can overcome its history, the way it can shape our emotions, and the influences it has on the way we think, may depend on a person’s ability not to experience the space at all, to shut off from all or parts of their surroundings, in a form of physical selective perception [8].

Selective perception can be a subconscious process of filtering observations into an order of importance, or a mind self-censoring device that activates when confronted with something anomalous to the expected order of how a space is meant to be. Regardless of how it occurs, the point remains that thoughts, however grounded in reality or the fantastical and illusionary, occur in space.

We become aware of the space predominantly through and within a mode and process of self-awareness. We place ourselves in a location in relation to our view of those around us and with an understanding of the context through which we came to be at a particular place at a given time. Our awareness of space can also involve a seemingly random contemplation of form and contact, where form is the way we interpret the physicality of a space in two, three or even four dimensions, and contact is the level of importance we place on the presence of others in our immediate vicinity.

More often than not, our perception of what others may be thinking about us leads to conclusions about how we fit in to a given space. This could be seen as another dimension of space, albeit a socially constructed one, yet still possibly measurable as a mathematical expression. As confident as we may be as individuals, we wear clothes, a suit and tie, a dress, a uniform, even torn jeans, because we are afraid (subconsciously or not) of what may happen to us if we don't. It is this implicit objectification of space that the Spatio-Temporal Anomalies project seeks to intersect with and question [9].

Whether through the accidental development of new works of sound, vision and interactivity, or the creation of new hybrid electro sculptural works through intentional experimentation with electronics, programming and found objects, the project seeks to explore and develop new approaches to media art practice. FM Grande is currently developing a series of sculptural experiments using old and new technology to create electro-sculptural works, which produce hybrid visual forms for print and screen. Some of these new works will be incorporated into upcoming Spatio Temporal Anomalies performances [10].

References and Notes
3. Lizzie Muller, Evocative Objects, Strange Selves in RealTime issue #70 Dec-Jan 2005 pg. 23
7. Bryoni Treasure, Live Bait: Boxing the monstrous, RealTime issue #60 April-May 2004 pg. 31