




EXHIBITION PROGRAM 2013  
**CRUDE TOOLS, FEEBLE ACTIONS**  
ANASTASIA BOOTH  
24 APRIL – 11 MAY

## !Metro Arts

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### IMAGES

- Cover / *Your Lips, These Eyes* (2013) digital collage  
1 / *Tender* (2012) Installation view  
2 / *As Long as it Takes (Ice)* (2013) Still from video  
3 / *Portrait* (2013) digital collage

All images courtesy of the artist.

### THANK YOUS

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## Anastasia Booth Crude Tools, Feeble Actions

When discussing the possibilities for this essay, Anastasia Booth recounted a story about a fetish party. It took place at the house of a dominatrix, which she described as 'a non-descript house in Brisbane'. I have never been to Brisbane, but I imagine a humid suburbia, cars in driveways, pavements where dogs are walked, school bus routes, and a house with a private dungeon downstairs.

The dungeon itself is described as having a rough-and-ready quality, as though hastily constructed with the materials at hand. Mismatched carpets on the floor; walls draped in black curtains. Arranged on the walls are racks of tools, ropes and other apparatus, their sheen of high quality and good craftsmanship unexpected within the literally home-made space.

Amongst all the bizarre elements of this story, what stands out for Booth is its incongruous setting: a suburban home. Here, the domestic and the fantastic collide, jarringly. The fantasy setting is slick and grandiose. The reality is old carpets and curtains in a basement.

Culturally, fetish tropes – including props, costume, setting and personae – are sustained self-reflexively through the practice of BDSM itself. When the reality of the space does not live up to the fantasy, it falls on the participant to make up the difference. In the case of the home dungeon, domestic associations with family, mealtimes and chores must be abolished in order to maintain the illusion. The participant must willfully forget the suburban street, the letterbox, the garden shrubs, the doorbell; must put out of their mind any glimpsed reminders that they have entered a home, a place with such familiar banal objects as breakfast cereal, shoe polish, canned beans, a laundry basket.

The body of work in *Crude Tools, Feeble Actions* considers the aesthetic of fetish sites, sustained by professional sex clubs, 'dungeons' and urban spaces; and specifically the way this aesthetic is reflected and replicated in 'home-made' versions of these sites. Often amateurishly constructed, low-budget, and making use of available materials, these spaces' "Do-It-Yourself" quality sits uncomfortably with the erotic fantasy they aim to conjure. The gap between desire and fulfillment must be bridged by fantasies projected onto the objects contained within the site. Through sculpture, installation and moving image, Booth explores this slippage between fantasy and reality.

For Booth, the use of fetish as a strategy for art-making is an ongoing concern. She probes the dialogue between art-making and divergent sexual practices, drawing several parallels: similarities in the materials used in sculpture and fetish tools; the performative nature of both art and BDSM; the often-repetitive processes of craft. Carefully constructed, minimal in form, Booth's work is reminiscent of minimal sculpture as well as the body-performance artists of the sixties and seventies – Rebecca Horn, for example, whose earlier work involved the addition of sculptural prosthetics and additions to the human body. In a series of performances Horn used sculptural work to explore the body's possibilities and limitations in relation to its environment.

In *Crude Tools, Feeble Actions* the main installation involves several platforms or stages constructed from perspex and fabric. In addition to echoing physical sites, these stages reflect the theatrical nature of fetish. Their materials allude to the theatre-set-like artifice of home-made spaces: black felt curtains used to mask and soften walls, perspex to contain or separate. These structures are physically tenuous, seemingly unable to support the weight of a performer, and failing to mask any of their own inadequacies.

Booth has described this exhibition as exploring the 'aesthetics of failure'. While her sculptures may reference the visual language of fetish, they are often necessarily impotent, their supposed functions obscure or impossible to realise. Casting sex toys in ice, for example, creates a dilemma inherent in the materials. In the video *As Long As It Takes (Ice)*, an ice dildo is held to the wall between silhouetted lips. This is an interaction between body and object: each constantly influences the other, the mouth's warmth melting the ice even as the ice numbs the mouth. Considered here, the act of fellatio becomes one of endurance, and ultimately destruction as, solid yet ephemeral, the penis is slowly reduced to cascades of melting water. *As Long As It Takes (Ice)* is emblematic of this: a representation of desire that disappears even as it is pinned to the wall.

Striving to mimic the tropes of fantasy and desire, the do-it-yourself sites of fetish cannot live up to their grandiose intentions and end up lurching into the absurd. The parallel between fetish and art-making continues here: the process of construction, the lamentable gap between intention and outcome, a familiar story for any artist. Booth's work, exploring this, speaks the tragicomic language of human inadequacy – one that is recognisable to all of us.

| Anna Dunnill