

9 March 2014

Dear Friends

Many thanks for indulging my request. As you may have already guessed, my 'imaginary friend' Alex would be more accurately described as being 'semi-fictional'. A cloud of uncertainty does not hang over Alex's existence, but rather obscures his presence. In his current state Alex remains invisible to most, disappeared to some and missing to a few.

You may have caught some of the recent conversations happening in the visual arts across Australia? Rather than focus on artists withdrawing from the upcoming Biennale of Sydney due to its Founding Partner's profiting from mandatory detention, some commentators have sought to shift attention towards lesser-known artists fleeing persecution who are currently languishing in these very same circumstances. There is a cruel irony to artists fleeing states that persecute them for expressing their views, only to find themselves ensnared in systems that seek to suppress (and exploit) them as migrants. So now it seems appropriate to foreground our entanglements as artists, émigrés and friends.

Perhaps a peculiar solidarity would occur if one were to connect the leisure time and easy cosmopolitanism of the transnational 'creative classes' to the enforced inactivity of the globally displaced? Postcards are a style of correspondence familiar to us all, by which we share our encounters, insights and goodwill. These missives sent out into the world are ephemeral and intimate gestures that facilitate time-lapsed conversations with those that we imagine as friends, allowing 'imaginary others' to shape our thoughts.

If in the 21st century everyone is an artist or has an art project, then we might think of the artist as a mode, a function or a role one performs alongside other roles, such as teacher, administrator, call-centre operator, parent or whatever one does to get by. So what about 'our detainees', do they serve a function as well? How do non-citizens contribute to global civil society? In an era where art has left the institution and concerns itself with all manner of objects and activities it seems that what is at stake is not art per se, but having one's activities (and inactivities) recognised as art. This is much more difficult to achieve, of course, if one is isolated and disconnected. I know you all as artists. We know that artists are in detention. It's also possible there are those in detention who don't know they are artists yet. Might these postcards catalyse such pathways of recognition, and perhaps friendship?

Wish you were here.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Sin', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.