

# TOTAL CONTROL

HANNAH SMITH

9-23 MAY 2015



# THE SMITHS

*“The future of music lies in non-musicians” - Genesis P’Orridge of COUM Transmissions letter to Friendz Magazine, No. 28, 1971*

Local artist Hannah Smith returned home from Melbourne to be inaugural resident upstairs at The Walls and subsequently exhibits her solo show TOTAL CONTROL downstairs. Her show employs second-hand musical equipment sourced locally via the classifieds. She has salvaged materials from neglectful owners, objects that have laid silent in garages long after their novelty has depleted. Smith has not only recycled these musical relics but has rendered these tools potentially even more useless by excessive extensions and her efforts to subject them to uncertain acts of control, forced restraint, measure and fitness.

Through these additive and deductive modifications Smith appears to build and heighten her objects visibility, or are they attempting to compensate for something? While we are certain that her objects have been resurrected from garages and the clutches of wanna-be-don’t-wanna-be-now rock stars, what they gain through this transformation, Smith leaves more open and uncertain. Her sculptures start to embody strange new identities and operate in new arrangements in a middle-ground, between status’s of music and noise, sound and silence, performance and absence, the kinetic and the still.

In an earlier work, Dead Beat, 2013, you are invited to consider your body in relation to a drum pedal. You realise that where you need to place your foot, locates your body in a position that obstructs the trajectory of the beater. If you could contort your body in a way to depress the foot board of the pedal and be clear of it’s movement, the tension required to launch the beater at the end is greatly diminished by its 2m extension. The resistance to overcome is greater than the effort applied. Even if the pedal had higher tensile shaft it would make contact with the ceiling and not it’s intended target- (which doesn’t physically exist anyway). It lies there mute, handicapped by the resistance of distance from beater to cam.

In TOTAL CONTROL all of Smith’s objects are silent and still, potentially noisy, only the amps Lonely and Maybe hum. Even if you were compelled to play her distorted drum set or even parts of it, you can’t. The cymbal is out of reach, the tom drum too high to be comfortably played. Or maybe the floor tom is leaning against the wall on it’s flimsy legs. They made sounds once, even the graphite paper was rhythmically scrawled upon. Maybe it’s sheet music for the drums? So convoluted and layered that the notation has become indecipherable; a palimpsest score.

The discarded drum lying in the dusty garage represents a sort of defeatism, it is out of sight and relieves the owner of the responsibility to perform. However within TOTAL CONTROL it seems Hannah has gone a step further: altering instruments in a way not to encourage, but to persuade viewers of the futility of successfully mastering them. You can’t even have a failed attempt because they are rendered impossible to attempt to play, with Smith decomposing and the structures and hierarchies of the instruments technology, and therefore there is no ‘failure’, in a traditional sense. These works also remind me of Rudi Mantofani’s unplayable guitar sculptures, frustrating the guitar enthusiast as you can look at the craftsmanship and want to try it out yet are denied by physical inaccessibility. Same with Bruce Gray’s “Jimi’s Nightmare (Distorted Guitar No.1)”.

Hannah, who is self-taught in the area of music and sometimes performs with normal instruments, has told me about her ambitions and goals, “sometimes you meet them, other times you fail or are completely rejected, or your work is just some noise in a room”. She told me about her teenage garage-punk dreams and about her current arrangements in this garage-cum-gallery being amplified by the fluoro floor boards. The space between her arrangements relays a commentary where time spent, guidance is available and conducive to understanding the ranges of ideas in this silent disco or exploded one-woman band, with Smith in TOTAL CONTROL front of stage.

*Essay by Archie Moore*



**2.** Slouch Slagger, 2015  
Graphite on Paper  
(1400 x 2000)  
Image credit: Hannah Smith

**3.** Deadbeat, 2013  
2 meter long single kick drum pedal  
Image credit: Hannah Smith



**4.** TOTAL CONTROL (Arrangement #1), 2015  
Repurposed Pearl River Drumkit  
image credit: Hannah Smith



# THANK YOU

We acknowledge and pay respects to the traditional Aboriginal people of the Gold Coast and their descendants. We also acknowledge the many Aboriginal people from other regions as well as Torres Strait and South Sea Islander people who now live in the local area and have made an important contribution to the community.

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#### COVER IMAGE:

1. Lonely, 2015

Acrylic laser cut text, Laney LX20R Guitar Amp

image credit: Thomas Dallas Watson

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[www.thewalls.com.au](http://www.thewalls.com.au)

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**THE WALLS**



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