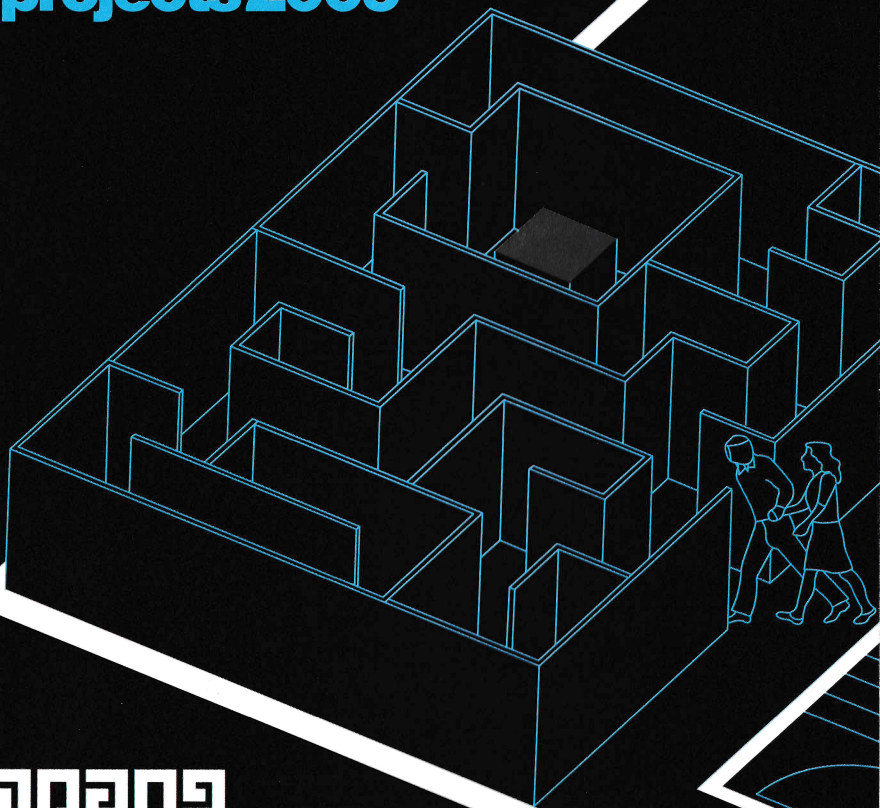


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simpan
DANIEL DORALL

SIMPANG

by simon soon

The *simpang* or junction, where paths meet or diverge, makes up the irreducibly basic component of Daniel Dorall's sculptural objects and room-size installation. They exist as hinges that transact the human drama played out with the figurines that populate the many narratives within the artist's mazes. In Dorall's first solo exhibition in Malaysia, the *simpang* is projected against a body of waters that shape and define our past. Looking to specifically address the country's cultural geography, Dorall has chosen in this project to reread his interest with space in relation to the pre-modern maritime history of the Malay archipelago. In this instance, the artist subverts the notion of the sea as an endless and boundless expanse, casting the sea as central to the surreal imagining of our geography. As a negative space corresponding to the land, conventionalised imagination of the sea as an open space is deconstructed, leading us to consider how our maritime roots as a space, shape our culture and history.

There are two components to SIMPANG. The first is the navigable room-size maze installation where the viewers are invited to enter and explore. The second is a nine piece miniature maze sculpture that is located within the maze installation. Both parts show the artist's increasing obsession towards realising John Ruskin's notion of an aesthetic of labour. The Ruskinian belief that an increase in labour, and therefore sacrifice, is equitable to more beauty, resonates with the possibility of multiplying the junctions, revealing the maze's property as a devilish game of possibilities.

Dorall's practice is twinned by a formal exploration of architectural model-making in relation to its sculptural property as well as a critical revision of an installation space. Though informed by the discipline of architecture in which Dorall was trained in, his works are strategic subversion of architecture's utilitarian values, achieving clarity of thought and resolution of their functionless form. As such, maze as a constructive form of choice, flaunts its axiomatic structure as a space for fun, folly, mystery or sorrow, contrary to the most elementary notion of a building construction - which is to provide shelter.

The maze presents forking possibilities. Like Jorge Luis Borges's Garden of Forking Paths, in which the author considers the maze as a 'labyrinth that folds back upon itself in

infinite regression', the junction in Dorall's mazes makes us aware of the possible choices we make in life. Within the maze construction, one encounter by peering in from above like God's eye view, the dramatic cycle of human existence and its emotional range - loneliness, joy, fear, serenity, etc. - are mapped out within a physical geography that sets the stage for the ensuing encounters.

The construction of a human scale maze, as an entry point, further complicates the notion of access to these sculptural dioramas. Inverting the commonplace idea of scale in architecture, Dorall's room-size installation is considered as studies complementing his smaller scale works. The artist explains, *"The viewer first enters the room and meanders through the full-size maze, to eventually arrive at the focal point: a table on which is a selection of miniature mazes. This layout would allow the viewer to have first-hand experience walking through a real maze and to therefore, upon reaching the miniature mazes, have a closer understanding of the emotions of those figures playing out the narratives within them."*

This performative element, whereby experience is enacted through the immersion of the viewer, underlines the formal property of installation as a medium, locating the form as a phenomenological encounter with space that actualises emotion through empathy. Arriving at the miniature mazes, we arrive as God's peering into the human stories of our existential make-up. The miniature mazes complete this experience, a summation of our journey, abstracted and distanced from the viewer.

From above, we see the myriad of narratives that unfold within Dorall's mazes, just as we see within each narrative, entrance or exit points that allow us to alter our fate or escape from a situation, while at the same time, only to lose ourselves within the labyrinthine web to eventually reach another junction and face another consequence. In many sense, Dorall maintains a willfully ambiguous stance in the dichotomous debate between free-will and destiny. Perhaps this is hardly relevant to the mystery of the courses of our action that is constitutive of the *simpang*. The junction is what we face everyday, as a nation or as an individual, shaping the course of our future just as its endless possibilities evoke and renew our experience of awe and wonder at each divergence on those forking paths that take us towards nowhere and everywhere.

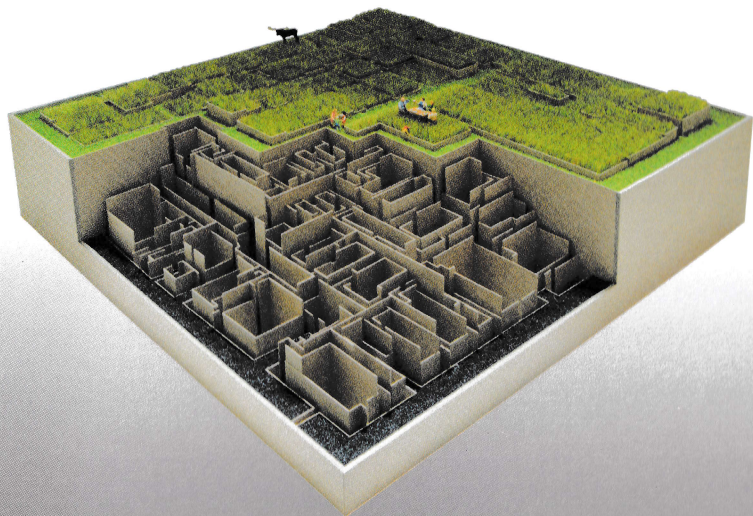
DANIEL DORALL completed a Bachelor of Architecture at the University of Melbourne in 2005 having previously earned a Bachelor of Science in Architecture with honours at the University of Malaya in 2002. He held his first solo exhibition *Maze* at the George Paton Gallery in 2005 and was awarded the University of Melbourne Student Union arts grant. Since then, he has held solo exhibitions in Melbourne including *Lemmings* at Mailbox 141, *Corridor* at Red Gallery and *Slide* at Gertrude Street Contemporary Art Space. Recent group exhibitions include *Artefact* at Melbourne City Museum, *Size Matters* at Albury Regional Art Gallery, *Something Old Something New: The Sculpture Show* at John Buckley Gallery, *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* at Yarra Sculpture Gallery and *Small World* at Blindsight A.R.I.

He is also currently undertaking Master of Fine Art in sculpture at Monash University.

In 2008, Dorall exhibited his solo works at The Physics Room (Christchurch, May), Platform Artist Group (Melbourne, July) and a solo exhibition *Shaft* at Dianne Tanzer Gallery – where he is now represented. He was also awarded the New Works Grant by the Australian Council for the Arts and a Research Publication grant by Monash University.

*b. 1979, Malaysia
Arrived in Australia in 2003
Currently lives and works
in Melbourne, Australia*

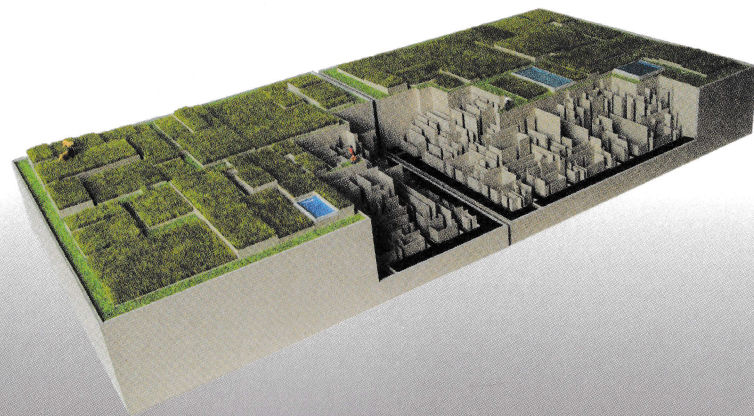
In November 2009, Dorall had another exhibition of drawing and sculpture at Dianne Tanzer Gallery. *SIMPANG* is his second solo international exhibition for which he received the Bombay Sapphire Art Projects 2009 grant.



Picnic

2008 cardboard, sand, plastic, hydrocyl 40 x 40 x 12 cm

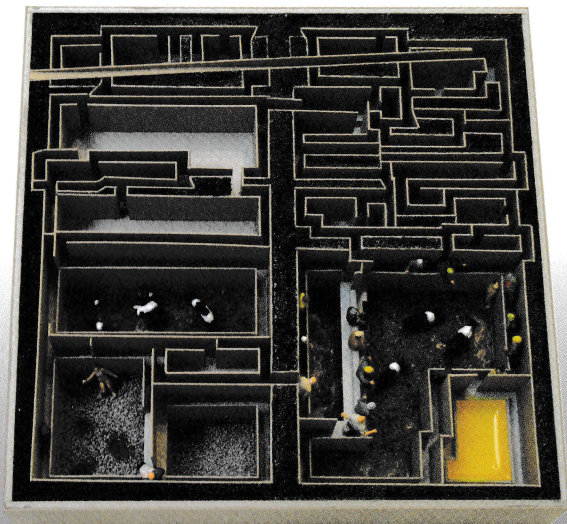
[This artwork was shown in Shaft exhibition in 2008]



Distance

2009 cardboard, sand, plastic, hydrocyl 80 x 40 x 15 cm (diptych)

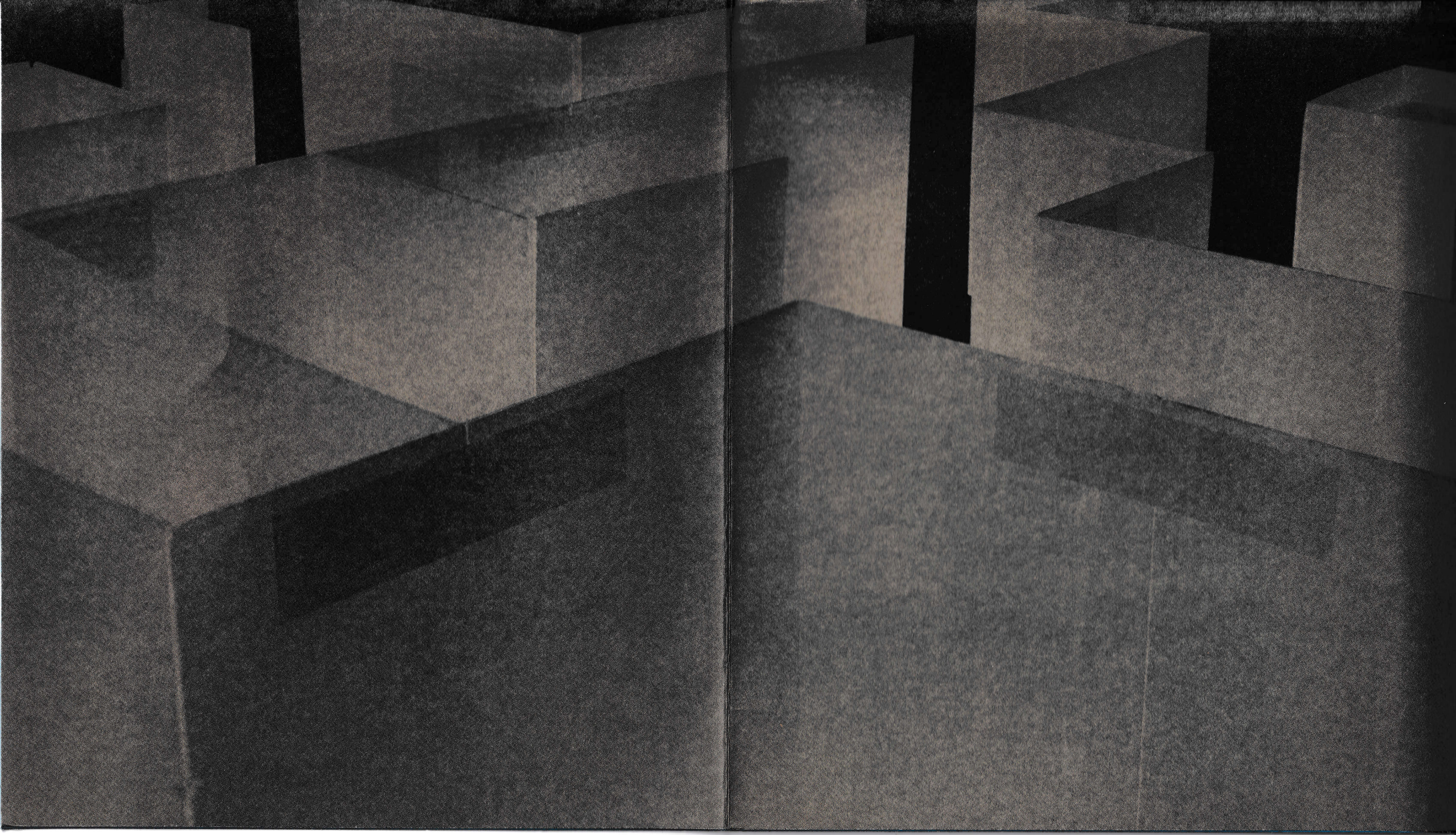
[This artwork was shown in Distance exhibition in 2009]

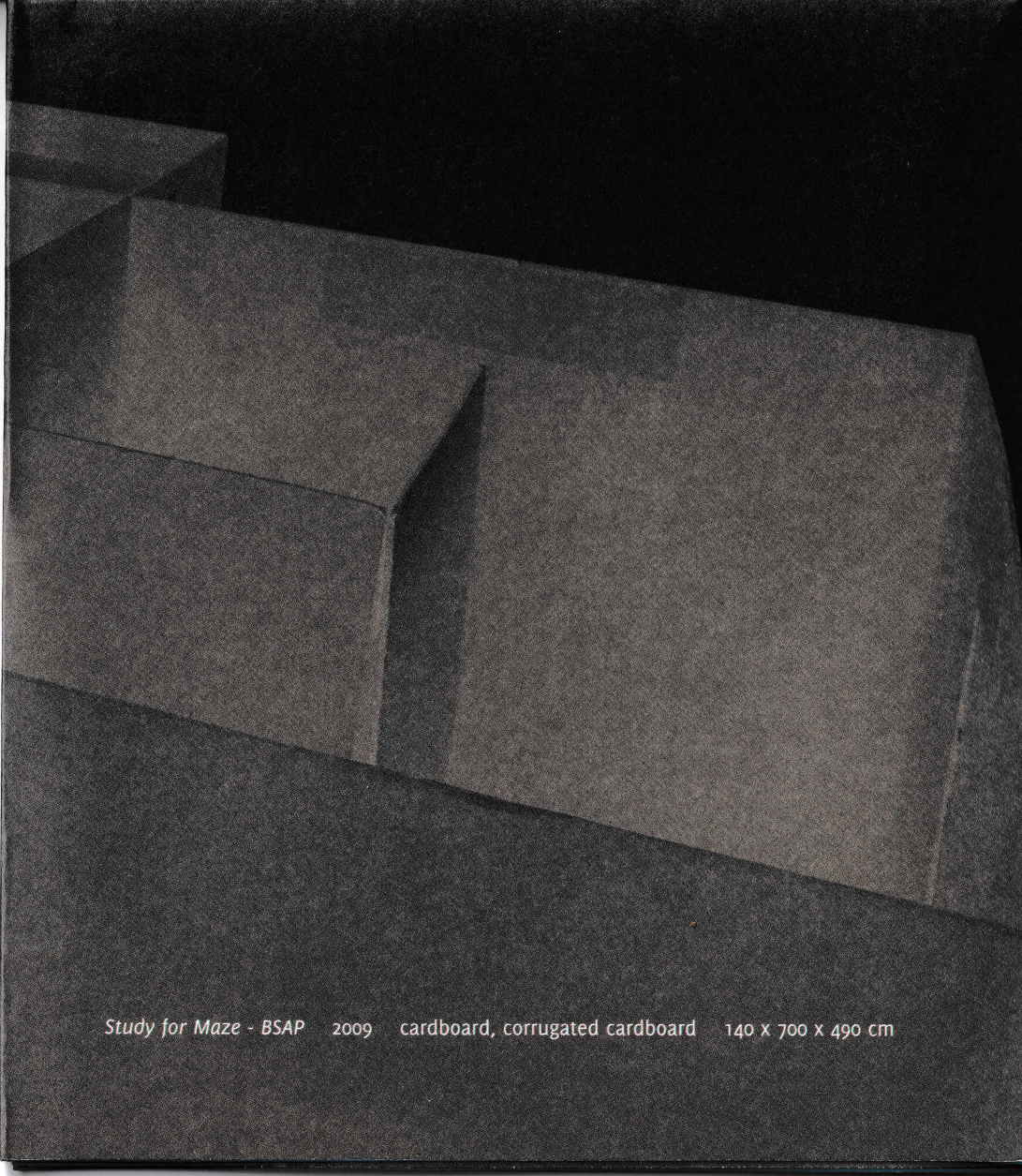


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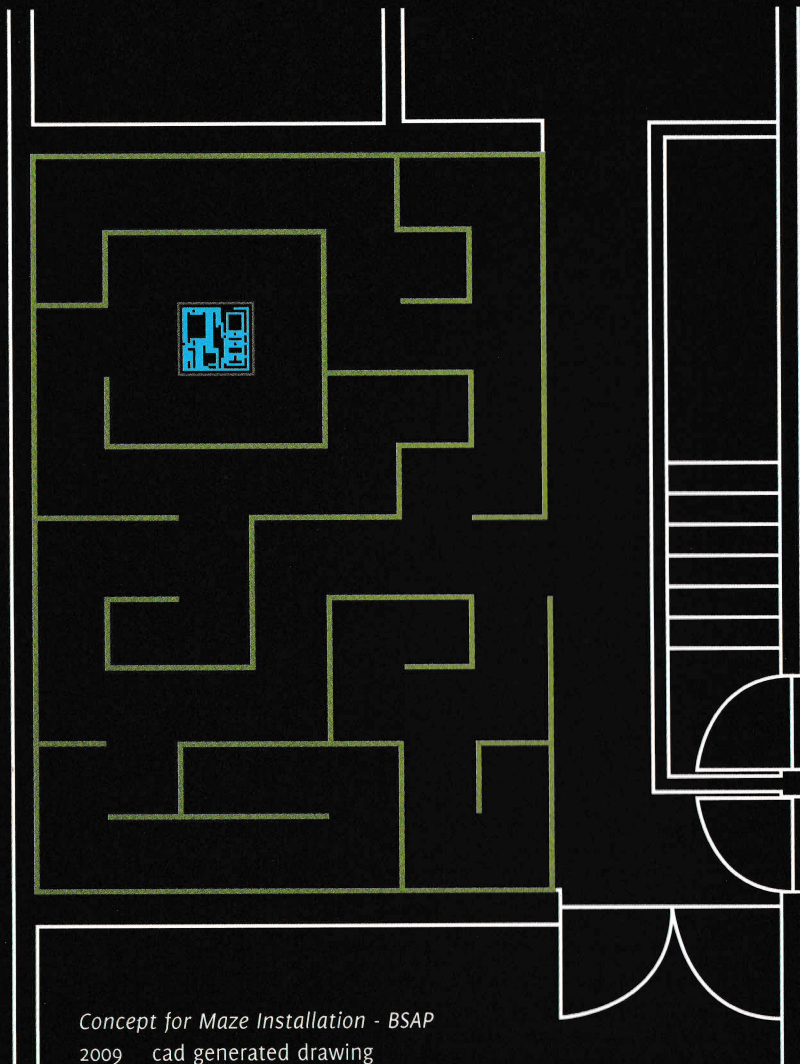
2006 cardboard, sand, plastic, hydrocyl 20 x 20 x 4 cm

[This artwork was shown in Arcane exhibition in 2006]





Study for Maze - BSAP 2009 cardboard, corrugated cardboard 140 x 700 x 490 cm



Concept for Maze Installation - BSAP
2009 cad generated drawing

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SIMPANG

curated by Simon Soon 3 - 19 December 2009

Valentine Willie Fine Art cordially invite you to the
exhibition opening on Thursday, 3 December 2009, at 8pm.

cocktails will be served.
RSVP: erna@vwfa.net
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Gallery, Project Room
& Resource Room
opening hours:
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Saturday 12noon to 6pm
Closed on Sundays and
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Recover Records will be
performing at 8.30pm