ABSTRACT

After endless contemplation on the idea of ‘word and image’, the following expression of J.W.T Mitchell in *Word and Image* (1996: 56) brought insight:

‘[W]ord and image’… a pair of terms whose relations open a space of intellectual struggle, historical investigation, and artistic/critical practice. *Our only choice is to explore this space* (own emphasis).

I shifted my position from the forlorn act of peeling to one of creative exploration. Not necessarily exploring the specific space between word and image, but rummaging ‘the space between’; always hovering amid opposites. This space provides an opportunity to confront and debate the many issues that stem from the relations formed in its fluidity. It is a space that informs my thinking. It is a space of conversation. I see not only my writing, but also the art that I scrutinize as conversation. *My* conversation is captured in the linear structure of this thesis, but the conversation of art is dynamic. It is informal and flexible – following not one path, offering no answer, giving the potential at each moment for surprises and transformation. The idea is to ponder contemporary art’s dialogue, the manipulators thereof and the indispensable factors constituting this notion: space, grammar, medium, criticism.

The notion of dialogue assumes a **listener**, a **participant**, an **audience**. But who is this audience with whom ideas are conversed, and what language do you (presumably) use to communicate the necessary? I have chosen to investigate these questions, the purpose and plan of art, with relation to a selected group of artists: an individual, Terry Kurgan and a collective – Stephen Hobbs, Marcus Neustetter and Kathryn Smith, known as The Trinity Session.