

Impossible to prove

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Bed of grass, digital still, 2011

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extension has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements, or where I have previously written it myself under these same conditions.

Photographs

All photographs are taken by me. Some are studio shots or documentation of my sculptural work. When the photograph is a work in itself, I have included the notation 'digital still' in the caption.

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...thanks everyone! x

Abstract

This practice-based research explores the strangeness of the ordinary, through a photographic and sculptural investigation of familiar objects and materials. Photographically, I am looking for slight rifts in the expected. Sculpturally, I use found imagery, readymade objects and craft and office materials to create image-objects that operate in relation to each other as collage in space.

I am looking for a transformative interaction of objects and comprehension, in order to examine assumptions of knowledge and create new possibilities in worldview. Like a shift in perception caused by a paradox or a pun, my work is a place to hold mystery and comedy. Each image or object contains a set of personal and cultural references, and I am looking for a multiplication of associations within the spaces between.

Introduction

This exegesis is divided into sections that deal with the concerns of my art practice in both literal and metaphorical ways. My practice is essentially a collage practice, and aspects of my methodology run throughout the text. This text can be seen as a kind of collage in itself, a set of ideas brought together in juxtaposition to form "a symbolic whole... articulated by lacunae" (de Certeau, 1984, p107).

Underlying my work is the understanding that the experience of a life is built up through living every day, and that there is no system, no structure that can fully encompass this. Experience might be summed up more successfully in a story than a graph, but both forms demand a heavy editing process. The experience itself is not replicable. I have a feeling for the supremacy of experience, for a wordless knowing, and my art practice encourages the viewer to participate in this.

The rational and determinate tend to dominate many aspects of our lives. There seems to be a general view within our culture that if we can measure things (pollution, ocean temperatures, the stock market) with enough precision we can have control over them, and be able to bend them to our will.

"The true system, the real system, is our present construction of systematic thought itself, rationality itself, and if a factory is torn down but the rationality that produced it is left standing, then that rationality will simply produce another factory."
(Pirsig, 1999, p102)

Art has the potential to open up the possibilities between cause and effect, and to reorient us, give us a window into the unknown. Working intuitively, trying to elude the rational and determinate, I am looking for strangeness in the everyday. The objects I use are familiar, but I want to see them anew. Freshen my gaze, change the future.

My materials are tools for dislocating logical spatial relationships, a way of throwing the viewer between perspectives. Humour is encountered in the rift between the expected and the encountered - it is a territory of dislocation, and my sense of the absurd permeates my approach to my work. The intent is political, because worldview is everything to do with how you operate on a daily basis.

Michel de Certeau argues that while the dominant system asserts its authority strategically, individuals personalise this culture through various tactics employed to make the system work for them:

"...a way of using imposed systems constitutes the resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations. A practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneuvers of unequal forces and for utopian points of reference." (de Certeau, 1984, p18)

In my art practice I am looking for a play between image and space, and to test out the borders of meaning. In Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, she utilises the suspicious part-human/part-machine body of the cyborg in a search "for the trickster figures that might turn a stacked deck into a potent set of wild cards for refiguring possible worlds" (Haraway, 1991, p4). In my practice the material processes of cutting and attaching open up possibilities for this refiguration.

"Cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly." (Haraway, 1991, p176)

Mieke Bal writes of a moment of transformation during an interview where her subject lapsed into his own language: his whole body changed, he came alive. This "moment of mutual non-understanding was the most communicative moment of the encounter" (Bal, 2007, p113).

I identify with this subversive struggle: wanting to communicate through developing my own particular language, aware of the possibility of remaining beyond understanding. I like to see representations out of context, unable to be decoded in a familiar way. At the same time they make me uncomfortable. I am interested in a visual appeal that holds its presence through time. A distilled moment of (mis)understanding.

"Oh yes, I have filing cabinets and folders to put things in, but life isn't that simple and there are always papers that hide themselves in odd places or in wrong folders."

(Hoban, 1987, p134)

I have the persistent desire to tidy life up, put everything in boxes - labelled correctly, sorted and stacked. But when I actually try to do this, I find that it is impossible.

Part of the reason for this is that until I have a collection, I don't know what the parameters are. Everything is miscellaneous until obvious categories start to form. Another part of the problem is that things can fit in to more than one category, depending on how you see them. Or, despite a good-sized collection, the things are all still miscellaneous.

And so in my art practice, I give up the attempt. I collect images and objects that don't quite fit. I take a particular interest in the not-fitting.

The impossibility of perfect categorisation has become a political action for me. I think my desire to tidy up life comes through a cultural inheritance of rational thought. And so the politics of the ill-fitting is aligned with a way of perceiving.

I like to work with low-key materials: found, natural, or commonplace. In my studio practice I accumulate collections: objects that call up memories of learning and play - such as plastic dinosaur play sets or paper models of dodecahedrons, iconic images such as flowers, maps or hearts, and the familiar tools of categorisation and connection of the home and office - paperclips, staples, pins, thread, blu-tak, sellotape. I combine these elements to create objects that I can then position in a macro-composition in space.

The familiar and low-cost nature of these items is an important part of the politics of my practice. My objects are often created from an image - a photocopy or a cutout. These reference the processes of printing and duplication, technologies that (pre-internet) exploded the possibilities of communication, both official and personal, giving us access to multiple views and versions.

The photocopier in particular enabled a whole genre of DIY punk zine-making. Punk encouraged art-making outside the boundaries of technical skill, with a commitment to cheap, readily available materials. Imagery was wilfully appropriated for satirical ends. Using my own versions of photocopied multiples in sculptural installation I am able to create a space with boundaries that are not clearly defined: the ideas can infiltrate the everyday world of the exhibition space and the viewer's bodily experience of the work.



Studio, 2012

My valuing of the DIY attitude also comes from the classic New Zealand No. 8 wire mentality⁽¹⁾. My dad always collected offcuts, saved old screws, had a workshop bulging with 'doofers' - bits and pieces that would do for some job, some day. This way of working is tactile and direct. I have inherited this approach, and my collections of images, strings, sellotape and plastic flowers is a more brightly coloured version of the doofer department of the workshop.

In this way I identify with Thomas Hirschhorn's use of materials, with his insistence on their multiple readings:

"All the materials that I use are not only used in the realm of art. Every time I work with a given element, I try to check whether there are possibilities of linking it with a reality that exists elsewhere. I have always tried to make this bridge to something that has a reality elsewhere. That is very important to me."

(Buchloh, 2005, p96)

(1) "Through the first half of the 20th century No. 8 wire (named for its gauge, equivalent to 4 mm) was the most widely used fencing wire. It is also used for a huge range of tasks and fix-it jobs, leading to the notion of New Zealanders' 'No. 8 wire mentality' - where anything can be made or repaired with basic materials." (Peden, 2009)

The knots of my threaded connections and the blu-tacked joins of my paper objects are not hidden behind a surface. I want them to offer a visibility and intimacy, to show my workings. I want to create a viewer experience that is intriguing and intimate. I use found images and objects in order to utilise preconfigured systems of visualisation, and shift their status within my own metaphoric ecologies. The formal qualities of the objects matter, and their cultural associations are equally important.

"A material has to hit many notes, fit between many ideas, so your experience of it is: It's doing that, no it's doing that, no it's doing that."

- Interview with Sarah Sze (Mendelsohn, 2010)

I see my work as expanded collage. Collage contains multiplicities on the open plane, allowing the juxtaposition of elements that cannot exist together in the outside world. Collage "intervenes in a world, not to reflect but to change reality" (Ulmer, 1998, p95). My use of pre-existing images and objects leaves the work open for interpretations and associations from the viewers, creating an active experience rather than a static idea or form.

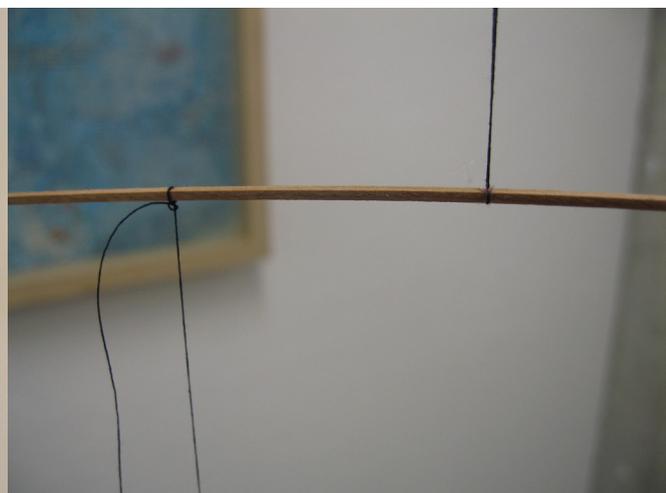
"The trick of collage consists also of never entirely suppressing the alterity of these elements reunited in a temporary composition. Thus the art of collage proves to be one of the most effective strategies in the putting into question of all the illusions of the representation." (Ulmer, 1998, p88)

Collage questions the idea of unity in an artwork, and makes visible the layers of meaning within each element.

"A rhizome never ceases to connect semiotic chains, organizations of power, and events in the arts, sciences, and social struggles." (Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983), p12)



Studio, 2012



Studio, 2010

The propositional nature of my setups asserts a contingency that refutes a permanent and rational knowing. In my sculptural works, I am trying to capture a moment where objects are brought together to create an interplay of ideas and sensations. Connections are made in the eyes and the brain, and the body as it moves in the room, activating the kinetics of the objects, making apparent the essential status of the viewer. I think of my work as bricolage, an impure system, a making do.

My photographs are a conduit for memory, snapshots of a moment of lived experience that open up a rift in the hard edges of the singular perspective. Often the images are taken on my daily urban walks, and the rifts can be caused by the growth of plants or a piece of debris, disrupting the order of the constructed pathways of the built environment.

I am always looking for imagery that is iconic, evoking a strong cultural resonance:

"My alter ego believed in the imagination, in creation - in the discovery of new metaphors; I myself believed in those that correspond to close and widely acknowledged likenesses, those our imagination has already accepted: old age and death, dreams and life, the flow of time and water."
(Borges, 1998, p8)



Sign, digital still, 2011



Rootbound, digital still, 2011

Borges's story *The Other* lines up his youthful self alongside the main protagonist, his current older self, and highlights the other-ness possible even in one's own life. These shifting structures are inherent in the speculative nature of my work, modular and lightly connected, acknowledging a commitment that shifts with new information or perception.



Direct control, digital still, 2011



Studio, 2012

Loose ends refers literally to the strings I use and the particular length that is left after tying. Trimming too closely makes the knot vulnerable, and so I leave a length of string to maintain the tie.

In computer science, coalescence is defined as "the merging of adjacent blocks of memory" (Wikipedia: disambiguation page, 2012). This is a useful metaphor for me in thinking about the culturally loaded objects I use. I aim to combine them in new ways, to form a future memory, a situation that will now exist - a new set of neural connections.

My work contains sets of oppositions between the represented and the real, and I am interested in the paradox of very ordinary things being charged with associations that are universal and archetypal. I choose to retain conflicting elements in my work in order to allow room for paradox.

"I absolutely refuse," writes Derrida, "a discourse that would assign me a single code, a single language game, a single context, a single situation; and I claim this right not simply out of caprice or because it is to my taste, but for ethical and political reasons." (Morrissey, 1999)

Paradox was once considered by the ancient Greeks to be a problem of not having all the information, but now we see paradox as an inherent aspect of life. The centre of a paradox is a container for incompatible truths. Contemplating a paradox is a particular feeling, a state between known and altered reality. Humour can be a container for paradox, creating a distance from the serious concerns that I have about the world, but in that distance allowing a closer contemplation.

"Eternity is a mere moment, just long enough for a joke."

Goethe speaking to Steppenwolf (Hesse, 1929, p111)

A joke is what happens when the thing you expect is not the same as the thing you encounter, and (for some mysterious reason) this makes you laugh. For example, an IRD form called 'Congratulations on your new baby IR753' (Inland Revenue, 2011) juxtaposes a personal, very intimate wish with an impersonal document number, and I find this hilarious. There's also something dark about it, indicating a kind of futuristic numbers game with people. And it is also incredibly banal - it's a form, from the tax department. All these clashes constitute the humour.

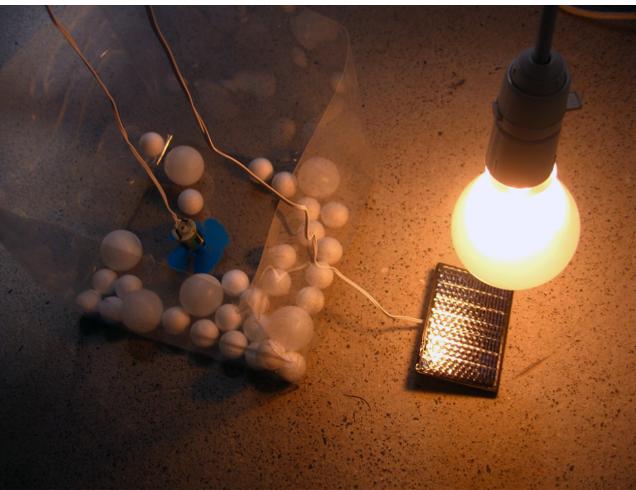
"For the comic spirit has a logic of its own, even in its wildest eccentricities. It has a method in its madness. It dreams, I admit, but it conjures up, in its dreams, visions that are at once accepted and understood by the whole of a social group. Can it then fail to throw light for us on the way that human imagination works, and more particularly social, collective, and popular imagination? Begotten of real life and akin to art, should it not also have something of its own to tell us about art and life?"
(Bergson, 1913, p3)

Bergson analyses humour as requiring three conditions:

- humanity: animals can be funny, but only through anthropomorphosis; a landscape doesn't tend to be funny at all
- appeal to the intelligence rather than feeling: if we are connected emotionally with the situation, we will not tend to respond with humour - "...step aside, look upon life as a disinterested spectator: many a drama will turn into a comedy."
(Bergson, 1913, p5)
- a social function: a complicity, an insider quality

I set up scenarios that contain the extremely well-known, the cliché, the semiotic connectors to a whole history of cultural experience and expectation, and I want to take another look at these icons. I want to re-investigate a cultural memory, and create a setup that allows for neural connections to be made across a terrain of space and time.

The humour comes in when familiar objects are placed in unexpected situations (a small plastic dinosaur waiting in line to enter the gallery space), or in playing with cause and effect (a solar panel powered by a light bulb running on mains electricity).



Bulb-powered solar panel and fan, 2011

"From the earliest examples of collage, the role of humor and irony, notably through the uses of visual and verbal puns, has been an important element... [acting to] destabilize notions of "fixed" meanings or dominant distinctions between "real" and "false" connections" (Frascina, 1993, p89)



Dinorama, 2010

My intention is to offer unexpected or unseen connections that catalyse a more inclusive understanding of the intertwined strands of politics, language, behaviour and subtle undercurrents of cause and effect that are often ignored in a materially focused world.



Roadworks, digital still, 20

"Joking was my response to misery I couldn't do anything about." (Vonnegut, 1965, p146)

The politics of the joke is often a balm to an impossibly difficult situation. I find myself powerless in the world to make the systemic changes that seem so necessary to me, and so my humour is a way to negotiate this. I use kitsch objects in my sculptures, representatives of mass-production in a consumer society, as a way to acknowledge my inextricable involvement in a system that I find problematic.

Entertainment

Old French: entretenir < entre (among) + tenir (to hold) < Latin inter + teneō (hold, keep).

The entertainment value of my work is important to me, politically and conceptually. Entertainment has become devalued. It is not seen as useful or progressive. But the etymology of entertainment tells me that there is something delicately balanced there that is worth investigation. "To hold among" is the literal purpose of my installation practice, and I want to maintain a tension between ordinary and unexpected. I also want to hold the attention of the viewer in a playful and entertaining way.

"Play exists in all mammals, and it appears to reshape minds and bodies to cope with both the expected and the unexpected in a particular species repertoire ...establishing new synaptic connections" (Boyd, 2007, p17)

Boyd argues that art-making is an evolutionary activity, fulfilling the need for play in the cognitive niche that we inhabit. Many of my materials are closely associated with childhood. Toys, "How-to" books and popular reference guides are important models, helping me to see the ways in which our thinking is structured by our resources. Educational toys teach particular patterns. By using readymade objects, I can juxtapose different visual languages, multiplying the cognitive fields of interpretation.

Other materials are basic household or office materials that have a deep, tactile familiarity. I enjoy using blu-tak for its impermanence, and its associations with school classrooms and posters in teenage bedrooms or student flats - times of flux and expansion. Paper and thread are other basic materials that I use to connect my work to everyday living, and the materials with which most people have an intimate connection.

"...the rhizome connects any point with any other point... It puts into play very different regimes of signs and even states of non-signs." (Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F., 1983, p47)



TV, digital still, 2011

In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière stresses that both art and politics reconfigure what is possible to say at a given moment - a reconfiguration made possible by "undoing the formatting of reality produced by state-controlled media" (Rancière, 2006, p65). The real politics of everyday life for me is whatever most people are watching on TV.



Shoes, digital still, 2012

Henri Lefebvre's critique of everyday life in a consumer society sees the segregation of work and leisure as antithetical to the ideal 'total man', but recognises entertainment as an avenue in which the individual is free to follow their own particular interests. (Dant, 2003, p72-3)



Black boa hibiscus, 2011

Cultural memory [kitsch]

"In the realm of kitsch, the dictatorship of the heart reigns supreme." (Kundera, 1984, p250)

I use kitsch for the heart these objects bring: they have an immediate appeal that is non-intellectual, that bypasses rationality and good taste. Sentimentality is a sweetness that is not trusted to be deep or important enough. But I am interested in reclaiming an innocent, open-hearted response as a necessary perspective. In his article, *On Kitsch and Sentimentality*, Solomon defends kitsch:

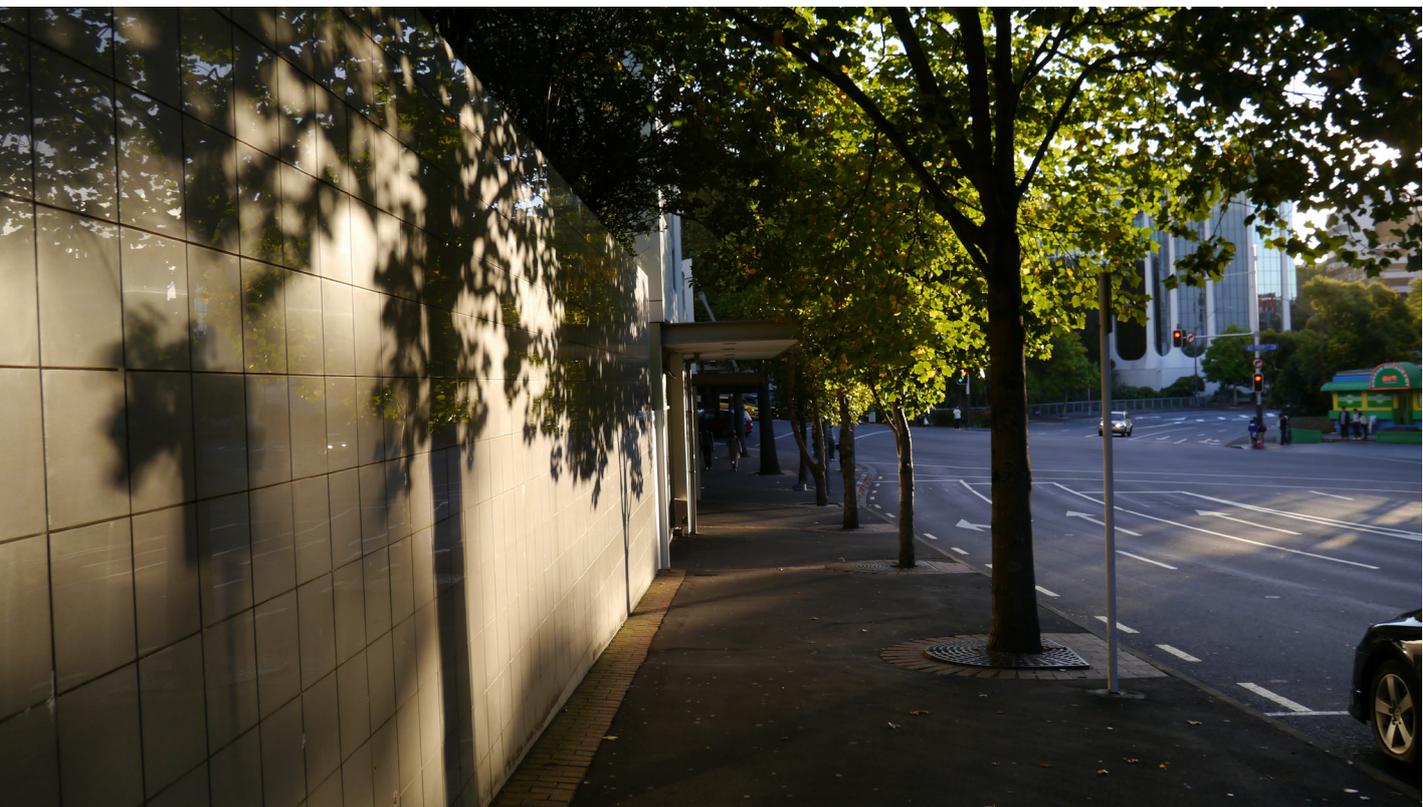
"What underlies [the] objections [to kitsch], I believe, is a deep but undeserved suspicion of emotions, especially those tender emotions that would seem to be most humane." (Solomon, R. C., 1991, p2)

The nature of a plastic flower is that it can't die, only get dusty. The lifelessness is kitsch, even if the replication is beautiful. The true beauty of flowers is in the impermanence of the living materials they are made of.

Many of my raw materials are readymades, particular containers of reproduced beauty, made in factories in China, carrying the weight of the plastination of the planet. These objects contain the particular second-hand beauty that is kitsch. They set up echoes of the real thing, a yearning perhaps for true beauty, but at the same time an appreciation of the imperfect and disconnected conditions of our real lives.

There is an assumption of low value with kitsch objects - they are cheap and disposable rather than rare and prized. I use this purposely to allow a more familiar and interactive response from the viewer.

"If works of art were judged democratically - that is, according to how many people like them - kitsch would easily defeat all its competitors." (Kulka, 1996, p17)



Avenue, digital still, 2012

I want to make use of the immediate appeal of kitsch, and try to take a closer look at cultural icons that have become clichés. When I reframe the kistch objects in fine linework of thread and wood I want to offer a refreshed view of the essence of the cliché contained within. The short, sweet life of a flower provokes a sentimental response, a feeling for a sense of time measured against our own lives.



Vine curtain, 2011

My sculptural work tends to be literally light in weight, and also I am looking for a lightness of touch. I don't work into my materials, but watch them for a while, and then do the thing that needs to be done. I prefer to do it once. There is this muddiness that happens the second time you tie a knot. The string is already bent out of shape from the first time, the paper bears creases from a previous fold. The materials start to become heavy with the weight of their own history.

My sculptural installations usually rely on the framework of the room they are set up in: walls, ceilings, posts, beams etc. And so without that room the setups don't exist, only the objects exist. The setups are in that way ephemeral, and the energy of the work is dependent on time and place.

I use available attachment points within a room in order to create a threaded network. In St Paul St Gallery Three I used pre-existing ceiling hooks to set up my work. This strategy allows me to connect to the specific site, but also makes it difficult when there is not such a clear set of attachment points. At Artstation, I found the freedom of choice in placement ended up feeling much more arbitrary.



Biscuit mandalas, *Future Imperfect* opening, 2011

The scenes I respond to photographically have similar dependencies. Often the setups I photograph are transitory and will not exist the following day. My camera is a mid-range point-and-shoot, lightweight and easy to carry with me everywhere. The quality of the image is non-professional - it is quick, it is an impression.

My photographic practice is tied closely to the approach I have in my sculptural installations: the slightness of the observed phenomena in my photographic images gives a certain weight or security of intention to the sculptural works, assuring my viewers that this is what I am interested in, that any failure of weightiness is a success of lightness.



Trolley, studio, 2011

Lightweight is a term often used negatively, indicating a lack of depth or strength or stamina. But I want to claim lightweight for its gravity-defying properties. I am asking you to value the delicate efforts I make, and at the same time to value the non-effort, the holding back.

Marcel Duchamp famously entered a work entitled *Fountain* into an exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917, articulating the beginning of a century's worth of questioning of the value of effort in art.

Is effort a basic moral good, or is it a cultural phenomenon that marks a historical period of expending enormous effort in the hope of conquering nature and each other?



Light switches, digital still, 2012

"Duchamp's readymade gesture is both an act of inscription and a ruthless act of decoding: the thing loses its identity only to gain another... and another." (Joselit, 1998, p109)

If effort equals value, then the goal is to try hard, regardless of the results. I am interested in not trying too hard, but on cultivating my skills of observation and sensitivity of touch. This isn't always easy, and my clumsiness, ignorance and heavy-handedness is what I am working in opposition to. There is a kind of paradox here, and the product of this opposition is what I am interested in.

My method involves setting up parameters in which things can occur. I need a collection of materials available, not knowing exactly what I will use. I also need time to think and observe before I decide what I will make.

As I work, ad hoc decisions can be made in response to chance placements or unexpected outcomes from an intended goal. The low-tech, lightweight nature of my materials allows for a quick and playful making process. The modular nature of the objects allows for response within the process of making: if an accident of positioning in the studio sets up a new and interesting set of relationships, I can incorporate the image/object into the situation, or create a new object that satisfies similar correlations.

The politics of my practice also involves a lightness of materiality, in my use of found objects and cheap materials. Thomas Hirschhorn's practice informs my understanding of the way I work: "I believe that as an artist, I want to make my work political, to be responsible for each of my actions." (Buchloh, 2005, p89)

Because of this I struggle with the wastefulness of an installation practice - items that are used in one exhibition are often destined for the rubbish bin, although I try to recycle them as much as possible. Sometimes I am overwhelmed with the amount of "stuff" I accumulate and yearn for a cleaner, more conceptual practice.

But I seem to need to test scenarios out materially. Sometimes I borrow items, like an old venetian blind, or use materials that can be made and remade with no loss, like sand - and these solutions feel like the right direction for me.



Venetian camo, 2011



Sandcastle (after opening night), 2011

We define things by their edges, the boundary line between is-that-thing and isn't-that-thing. This definition gives us a context and a shape for understanding. In my work I like to investigate the edges of things.

Photographically I look for transgressed edges as I find them on my daily urban walks. The interventions I am intrigued by are small, almost inconsequential, but have a boundary-blurring quality that I value.

In my sculptural work the edges are often defined loosely in the space between objects, and the boundary of the entire work can be defined by each viewer on their own terms.



Sand border (after opening night), 2011

Jim Hodges is quoted saying, "Installation seems to be a material as much as anything else" (Buskirk, 2003, p153). The materiality of installation is an active space between.

The places where the artist's work meets the gallery walls, floors, ceilings, are important junctions. I prefer to use pre-existing nodes such as hooks, beams and air conditioning units. These give me a framework for beginning my setup, and operate as connections between the work and the structure that is already in place. This works to reveal the 'empty' space to be more cluttered and coded and pre-determined than we might assume.

I am interested in what exists in the invisible. Using visible objects, I want to see what they do to the space around them, how much space can they activate. As a mobile rotates, it takes up a changing radius which over time may describe a full circle.

My work uses some of the connective functions of the diagram, while disrupting the possibilities of a unified code of meaning. I am interested in the ways in which information is managed visually and particularly in compacting layers of information into a situation where "full meaning is not allowed to break through" (Berkel & Bos, 1998, p20). I want to find ways of seeing the complexity of systems we inhabit, often invisible or taken for granted. I am also interested in the aspects of experience which can never be contained within an ordered structure at all.

"The networks aren't all-powerful, they're interrupted in a million ways. You can get flicker feelings: one minute they look like they control the entire planet, the next minute they look like a house of cards. It's because they are both... A whole lot is going on that is never named by any systems theory, including the informatics of domination."
(Gane, 2006, p151)

When I exhibited in St Paul St Gallery Three in 2011, I hung a curtain of plastic vines as an entry point, a dividing line between inside and out. Walking through the vines provided a rare experience of touch in the gallery context, and was the causative movement for other mobile works, connected to the movement of the vine by 'Super Strong' grey thread. The threads were about twice as thick as standard sewing cotton, and almost unbreakable. They were fine enough to look fragile and at times would be difficult to see at all.

In this setup, the threads interconnected across the ceiling to create movement in other works in gallery. One work was a solar-powered fan which set a plastic bowl of ping pong balls in motion, in a kind of parody of a closed system. I was interested in holding some mystery around the cause and effect between the movement through the curtain and the movement of the fan amongst the ping pong balls, and many viewers didn't notice that they had set off the fan by walking through the vines. Michel

Foucault introduced "the notion of the diagram as an assemblage of situations, techniques, tactics, and functionings made solid" (Berkel & Bos, 1998, p21). Meanings are not fixed and can unfold in multiple ways. The diagram is a delaying tactic, resisting direct symbolic interpretation, constructing "a real that is yet to come" (Berkel & Bos, 1998, p21). A diagram excludes the non-specialist from its particular meaning, while expressing a powerful aesthetic of order.

"Discourse theory introduces the notion that meanings are not transferred from one agent to another but are constituted in the interaction between the two agents" (Berkel & Bos, 1998, p23).

This interaction is both within the diagram itself, and also between the work and the viewer. I am interested in the space between elements, both in meaning and physically in space. I understand these spaces to be the diagrammatic activators, "the intersubjective, durational, and operational field where meanings are formed and transformed interactively" (Berkel & Bos, 1998, p23).



Path, digital still, 2011



Growth, digital still, 2011

Lines of desire

The desire line is a path worn across shortest route between origin and destination, usually made where the constructed path takes the long way. The desire line is a tactical approach, created not by city planners but by the people who walk through the city every day.

Through the selection and placement of objects, I can create a new line of desire, a new shortest point between A and B. And that new line is the first crossing point of potentially a series of crossings between those points.

Scale

A shift in scale is a shift in perspective and a rift in reality. Fine detail encourages, or even requires, a closer look.

"That the world of things can open itself to reveal a secret life - indeed, to reveal a set of actions and hence a narrativity and history outside the given field of perception - is a constant daydream that the miniature presents."
(Stewart, 1993, p54)

Large objects insist on their specific place in our awareness, making our human scale less significant.

"Imagine how you would relate to your dog if it was six times bigger than it actually is." (Thompson, 1994)

Using varying scales creates a hybrid context that enables an investigation of the objects' existence and place, inviting the viewer to hold the space of paradox. I use scale to offer several different ways of looking at once. When I use thread to install, it requires a very different way of looking from the objects that it connects, and so create a physical perspective shift.

In *Hypnodisco Rose*, the rose is gigantic, and yet still easily contained within the human frame of view. It is smaller than our bodies and so still invites a closeness.

Using Susan Stewart's idea of the gigantic as container, the rose is a metaphorical container through many cultures, a history of the human cultivation of our environment. The cultural data encoded into a rose: love, friendship, the thorn, duality: beauty/cruelty, a gift, abundance, potential and loss.

I like my work to suggest more detail than exists in the setup itself, providing only reference points in the structures of existence. My objects are modular and the threaded connections scalable, allowing me to work in response to the installation site.



Hypnodisco Rose, 2011



Dinorama, 2010

Fractal

Fractals are familiar through computer animations - they contain the concept of infinite regression in scale and time, and also the idea that the boundary of a shape has a ripple effect through these layers of scale and time.

The fractal world is immeasurable - the level of detail along the edge of the fractal shape is endless. Shifts in scale produce infinitely more detail. I want my work to exist fractally in the world, changing (in even the smallest way) the shape of the world we live in.



Tomatoes, digital still, 2012



Mirror garden, digital still, 2012

Holographic

"The Surrealists' Paris, too, is a "little universe". That is to say, in the larger one, the cosmos, things look no different. There, too, are crossroads where ghostly signals flash from the traffic, and the inconceivable analogies and connections between events are the order of the day." (Benjamin, 1986, p183)

In a hologram, the whole is contained in every part, and this contains the idea that changing a small part changes every fraction of the whole. I'm interested in this containment of multiple ideas in my work, and also the idea that my work can create a ripple effect out into the world.

Like Thomas Hirschhorn, I want to claim a politically conscious art practice that is focused on personal responsibility and holographic perception.

He says of his work *It's burning everywhere*:

"It's a work which wants to give form to the idea that the world is not splitted off into conflict, which are always conflict zones where the other is living, not myself... I am a part of the conflict... I am a part of the fire." (Stiteler, 2008)



Cat park, digital still, 2011



Foundations, digital still, 2011

Revolutionary

"The nature of things is in the habit of concealing itself."
- Heraclitus (Fragment 123)

As a mobile turns it reveals and conceals simultaneously, drawing together the forces of motion, gravity, perspective and balance. A mobile can carry a plastic dinosaur or a paper planet with dignity. A mobile responds to the movement of the body through currents in the air.

The mobile is a revolving object. In the etymology of revolution, geometry and social change metaphorically collide in a way that expresses my own understanding of the intertwining of language, lived experience and abstract conception.

I am also interested in this metaphor because it goes beyond the idea of a fundamental change, and into realms of cycles of time. Revolutions that seem so disruptive in their own time keep turning, into something that might resemble the original order. But each orbit is a new layer of lived experience, and in the substrata are all the previous historical and momentary events that precede.

Lakoff and Johnson assert that metaphors structure our most basic understanding of our experience.

"Because our conceptual systems grow out of our bodies, meaning is grounded in and through our bodies. Because a vast range of our concepts are metaphorical, meaning is not entirely literal and the classical correspondence theory of truth is false." (Lakoff & Johnson, p6)

I'm interested in perception as a frame of reference that is constructed as we learn and grow. How much room to move do we have in our identities? How can we see our own patterns? What we learn is not necessarily true, and everything is dependent upon the bodily ways we perceive.



Hypnodisco pingpong, 2011

Our languages hold cultural memory and concepts. The metaphors we use show us how we think. In the movie *In Time*, the metaphor of time as a tangible object ("Give me a minute", "I don't have time") is taken literally and used as the framework for a futuristic Robin Hood/Bonnie and Clyde caper where the amount of time a person has left to live is a tradable commodity.

"By most accounts, collage is the single most revolutionary formal innovation in artistic representation to occur in our century." (Ulmer, 1998, p84)

My compositions move out into space, offering an exploded view of the collaged picture plane, often creating literal revolutions in the process.

I want my installations to offer a view into something we can't quite access, exploring ideas of connection and structure using symbolic imagery and an abstracted framework. Like Mark Lombardi's political diagrams, I want "to play with elaborate spatial constructs that justify themselves in abstract terms, but also read as maps of social information and personal activity" (Richard, 2001).



Paper planet, studio, 2011

Braque and Picasso brought the outside world into the picture plane in early experiments with the paper ephemera of modern life, creating "intrusive new entities with a hybrid ontology all their own" (Taylor, 2004, p19). In contrast, a few years later Hans Arp was making collages from cut paper in which he wanted to erase the external world. "I would like to call these works the art of silence. It rejects the exterior world and turns towards stillness, inner being, and reality." (Taylor, 2004, p39)

Collage appeals to me in its revolutionary history, and its particular ability to contain paradox. The ordinary domestic acts of cutting and pasting in service of artistic vision. The speed with which it can be accomplished, the cheap and found materials from which it is often made, and questions of value that arise from this: the ephemeral quality of the materials alongside the intention of the artist to contribute to the permanent record of human history. The technique holds for me an essential playfulness of activity and vision within the serious concerns of cultural production.

Heraclitus was one of the first Greek philosophers to consider the possibility that paradoxes exist, truly exist - not for lack of information, but in and of themselves: that an aspect of the nature of reality is the containment of irreconcilable opposites.

In my work, I am interested in the connections that are made possible through a kind of logic that allows for this containment. I want to make transformations that open up a momentum of reorientation.

I am only one of a set of agents of this transformation. My role is to set up combinations of things that have their own momentum. Each viewer has a part to play in this set of perceptions and transformation. Each site of installation engages its own set of concerns and associations.



Parabola project, 2012



Billboards, digital still, 2012

"History is as light as individual human life, unbearably light, light as a feather, as dust swirling into the air, as whatever will no longer exist tomorrow." (Kundera, 1984, p223)

My sculptural work is vulnerable, its life is short. Every making permits and even requires a remaking. The threads are tied loosely enough to lose their quality of just-madness after a period of time, and the life of the work is soon over.

It is difficult to photograph successfully. Often the lines of connection are so fine they become almost invisible when converted to 2D and made miniature in the photographic frame.

I also find that when I am experiencing the work I tend to visually edit out the background of the room in order to perceive more directly the empty space that the work activates. When the room is photographed all the details of the walls, windows etc are brought into clear view, and the photograph doesn't capture my memory of the work at all.

As I walk around the city, I carry my camera with me and wait for my photographs - not really knowing what I am looking for, except a certain oddness or sense of comedy. I rely on the infiltration of others, often transitory changes that disappear if I don't take the photograph as soon as I see it.

If I am interested in these vulnerabilities, I have to accept the ways they limit me. My politics are embedded in my daily approach to my work, and I keep readjusting my own worldview as I learn more and become more sensitive and observant. As I negotiate my future practice, I will need to keep adapting my methods and materials, always understanding more about the choices I make and how these are understood by the viewer.

While my photography can be seen to bring certainty and weight to the intentions of my sculpture, paradoxically, the sculpture is elusive photographically. I am not only interested in trace, but also in the lightness of a freshly made knot in an unused piece of thread. I try to capture the big view, but only through selected details. These conflicts only make sense in the way experience makes sense. It's a wordless balancing act of knowing and not knowing. I might have a sense of the reality of it, but it's impossible to prove.



Final installation, 2012







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