

Awkward Formalism: The role of objects in contemporary painting installation

Ena Kosovac

This exegesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology, in partial fulfilment
for the degree of Master of Art and Design.

2009

Contents

Attestation of Authorship.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Abstract.....	5
Introduction.....	6
 1.0 Methodology	
1.1 Introduction.....	7
1.2 Self-Plagiarism.....	7
1.3 Groups and Families.....	8
1.4 Installation Strategies.....	9
1.5 Colour.....	10
1.6 Self-supported objects.....	11
1.7 Plinths, Supports, Feet, Legs.....	12
1.8 Scale and Models.....	13
 2.0 Concept and Contexts	
2.1 Sculptural.....	15
2.2 Painterly.....	16
2.3 A Constructional Sculptural Tradition.....	17
2.4 In-between Painting and Sculpture.....	19
2.5 Installation as Medium.....	21
 3.0 Final Installation	
3.1 Individual Objects.....	24
3.2 Final Installation.....	31
 List of References.....	34
List of Illustrations.....	35

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 (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

.....
Ena Kosovac

November 27, 2009

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely acknowledge and thank Monique Redmond and Paul Cullen, my supervisors, for all their invaluable support and guidance throughout this project.

A big thank you also to all the other School of Art and Design staff, as well as my studio PALS and friends, for all their help and encouragement.

Finally, thank you to my Mum, Dad and brother for their unconditional support and help. <3

Abstract

I am a painter with a huge attachment to objects. In this painting project I aim to make objects whose objecthood is formed by the collision of the different languages of both painting and sculpture – objects that negotiate the boundary line between traditional genre divisions. These objects react to one another, where an aspect of one suggests the next, so that they develop like an epidemic. Therefore this project functions in an accumulative way, where each work or body of work acts as a stepping-stone for the next, so that the objects descend from a common ancestor and have a common origin. The project is primarily installational in nature – in the sense that, although emphasis is put on the individual objects, they are viewed together in installations, not as separate entities. I aim to consider installation in terms of the language of painting, which constitutes the formal underpinning of my practice.

Introduction

This exegesis is structured into two main sections. The first section discusses my practical approach to this project. The second section maps out the conceptual and contextual framework of the project.

As a practice-based project, this exegesis comprises 20% of the entire thesis, with the studio-based work comprising 80%.

Documentation of the final exhibition presented at Auckland University of Technology in November 2009 has been included in this final library copy of the exegesis.

1.0 Methodology

1.1 Introduction

In this section I will talk about my practical approach to this project, the methods I have used to make my objects and installations and the reasons for these methods. This project is primarily studio-based. During the course of this project, I have largely used my allocated studio space. However I have also taken the opportunity to test out different installations in other spaces, namely the Test Site project in St. Paul's Street Gallery III and a joint exhibition at Room 103 (both in 2008), as well as the Visual Arts Talk Week installation, and using different rooms and spaces (such as the courtyard outside the building where our studios are located) to my usual studio space, in 2009.

1.2 Self-Plagiarism

Since beginning this project at the start of 2008, I have been aware that there is an overarching notion of 'self-plagiarism' operating within my work. This is a term that describes an aspect of writing practice, where a person might submit the same article to two different publications or re-use old writing in new papers. I do not mean to suggest that an exact parallel can be drawn between this and the method I use to make work; however re-using/ fixing/ tinkering with and re-constructing objects is of great importance to this project and is a key strategy in my practice. What I intend by using this term in the context of this project is that self-plagiarism is essentially a self-created description of the particular method I have developed to produce work, where each object or body of work comes out of the work that went previously. For example, I frequently remake a particular object once or twice to 'fix' its problematic areas. However, I would consider each of these objects (stages) to be separate works, not simply one work that has been re-constructed or made into a final copy (where the artworks it came out of could be considered only models or maquettes). This is where the idea of self-plagiarism comes in - an aspect of one object suggests the next. For example, a minor coloured part of a particular object may provide the main colour for another one, the scale of one work might suggest the same for the next, and a particular material used sparingly in one object might be used as the main body of the next. Therefore the project functions in an accumulative way. At heart, it is a methodology of a long-term 'building up,' not only on an individual basis with the construction of every particular object, but also in terms of my practice as a whole.



Fig. 1 Top Ena Kosovac
Super Colour Installation, 2009;
Cardboard, canvas, wood, MDF, clay,
expandable foam, fabric, netting, acrylic
paint, enamel gloss;
Dimensions variable

Fig. 2 Bottom Ena Kosovac
Installation, 2008;
Cardboard, newspaper, fabric, plastic,
paper, stockings, paperclips, expandable
foam, clay, wood, tape, canvas, chalk,
sand paper, acrylic paint, enamel gloss;
Dimensions variable



1.3 Groups and Families

Through the making of work in 2009, I discovered that a very productive strategy to employ within my project is to make works in groups or families, rather than simply considering them individually. Although the method of what I call self-plagiarism still operates, where an aspect of one object may be echoed in another, the method of creating objects in groups has come to the forefront. The objects that comprise these groups now seem to relate to each other inherently. This is an idea I have been interested in from the very beginning of this project. This is different to some of my previous work and installations, where each object was made individually and then essentially forced into a group with others; that is, 'forced to interact' with them, whether through the use of colour, medium or positioning. [Fig. 1]

This different approach has removed some of the attributes of my previous work that I feel were problematic. It is my opinion that most of the installations I produced in 2008 were rather contrived and had an element of a particular theatricality that I am not interested in pursuing in my work; for example, a lot of randomised colours clashing together, odd materials and an overall accumulation of 'stuff.' [Fig. 2] This almost created something that wanted to operate as a spectacle, but never really got off the ground, so to speak. It never really went to the stage it needed to for it to be successful, but instead hovered in an in-between zone of unplanned and unthought through existence. The works I have produced in 2009 and the ones I will continue to make for the end-of-year exhibition and beyond are on a more useful track. It is productive for me to view my work now as a kind of factory where one object leads to a group of objects and each group leads to the next group – there is an overall building up of objects, not only on an individual level in the way they are now constructed, but also on a group level over the course of the entire project. What I mean by this is that it is not just the number of objects that grows, but also the relationships formed between them. There is an accumulation of objects and relationships.



Fig. 3 Top Left Ena Kosovac
Talk Week installation experiment, 2009;
wood, silver spray paint, plaster strips;
Dimensions variable

Fig. 4 Top Right Ena Kosovac
Talk Week installation experiment, 2009;
wood, silver spray paint, plaster strips;
Dimensions variable

Fig. 5 Bottom Left Ena Kosovac
Talk Week installation experiment, 2009;
wood, silver spray paint, plaster strips;
Dimensions variable

Fig. 6 Bottom Ena Kosovac
Ceiling Tower - Part of installation experiment in a different space, 2009;
Wood, glue, gesso, staples;
257 x 66 x 66 cm



1.4 Installation Strategies

In regard to the issue of installation, over the course of this project I have become aware of the need for the employment of actual strategies, rather than always resorting to the 'default' option of spreading out of objects in a space without any reason behind their placement. For example, while experimenting with different installational possibilities for a group of objects produced to be exhibited during Talk Week in 2009, I once again began by spreading them out all over my designated space. However, after receiving feedback from my supervisors, I began to see that more thought about the installation of these objects was necessary, which prompted me to try out different groupings that moved deliberately away from a general dispersal of objects in a space. [Figs. 3, 4 & 5]. This was the beginning of a new approach to space and to objects in my work.

I have now pared down the groups somewhat, so instead of overfilling a space with objects, I made the decision to start using only a few select objects in a space – smaller groups of objects. This is a strategy that can still be taken further – instead of trying to see how much I can put into a space (how abundant an installation can be); perhaps a strategy that is the exact opposite of this is something that would be more productive to bring into my work, namely seeing just how much I can remove and considering the idea, when is too little, too little.

During the decision-making process about making objects and consideration of how the groups could be put together, I keep the space they are to be housed within in the back of my mind. Sometimes certain objects have a very clear relationship to an aspect of the architecture of the space; for example, an object might be made in response to the ceiling and pillars in a room. [Fig. 6] However, although the architecture of a space can be interesting in relation to the objects within it, I have come to a point where it has become apparent that the space the objects are located within is not actually all that crucial



Fig. 7 Top Ena Kosovac
Blue Tube, 2009;
Plaster strips, acrylic paint;
48 x 26 x 27cm

Fig. 8 Bottom Ena Kosovac
Close up of **Spindle 1**, 2009;
Balsa wood, wood;
153 x 25 x 25cm



or of central importance in itself in my work. What is important is a well thought out installation that allows each object space, some breathing room, even if none of them reference or respond specifically to the space they occupy.

I am not in the business of intervening in a space. Instead, the installation group acts as a kind of big painting with components that can be moved around a space at will. Just as some of the individual objects construct pictorial relationships within themselves, the totality of all the objects in a particular installation basically constructs a larger composition. The installations are a productive working method; particularly where individual objects, and sometimes the space they are housed within, all interrelate and create a body of work that can be looked at or experienced on an individual level or as a whole.

1.5 Colour

Colour is an important formal quality in my work. As a more traditional concern of painting and not sculpture, I am interested in the notion of using colour in such a way that it becomes sculptural; “a physical event existing next to physical objects.”¹ In other words, something that descends on things and takes up residence on these objects, rather than only taking up surface. [Fig. 7]

There is a difference between colour that is put onto an object like a skin and colour that is already found in the materials utilised, where the structure brings its own colour to the conversation. [Fig. 8] This “double operation”² of colour; colour that is applied and colour that exists as a material condition of whatever is being used to make an object; is a notion I have worked with during my project. Art writer, Miwon Kwon describes this way of working with colour, “the status of colour as an abstract or surface entity, with a detached and independent relationship to the world of things, collides with colour as a

¹ Quote by Jessica Stockholder, quoted in Kwon, M. (2004). p. 37

² Kwon, M. (2004). p. 37



Fig. 9 Top Ena Kosovac
Red Mache Beast, 2007;
Cardboard, fabric, glue;

Fig. 10 Bottom Ena Kosovac
Installation shot, 2009;
Wood, paint, glue, staples, hinges, string;
Dimensions variable



condition of things in themselves.”³

I find that colour can be used as a unifying structure or as a way of highlighting or diverting attention from a particular feature of an object or group of objects. In my work it frequently functions as a coding of type and coding of relationship (between the various objects).

1.6 Self-supported Objects

I am interested in painting’s relationship to the wall and installations that shift from the wall to the physical space and back again. With objects in an installation – where they navigate the wall and floor with some leaning against the wall or each other – the wall marries itself to the floor, in that both become equally important for the objects that inhabit the space. The wall in relation to a floor space becomes an instrument in allowing pictorial relationships to be created within a particular installation – it helps to underscore the interrelatedness between the individual objects.

With objects that cannot stand up on their own, the area between the wall and an object that is not fully self-supporting, and also the ‘join’ of the object to the wall, seem to me to be particularly energised. [Fig. 9] Some of the first works that started to consider these relationships still clung to the wall, essentially as a development from painting (that is picture making) undertaken during the course of my undergraduate degree. These objects that are not fully self-supporting are still related to picture making. However, in the case of completely freestanding objects, I construct pictorial relationships through the placement of objects next to each other as well [Fig. 10], rather than only within the individual objects alone, where pictorial relationships are created through formal qualities within an object.

The attachment to the wall I see as a sort of innate framing device;



Fig. 11 Top Ena Kosovac
Leg Painting, 2008;
Oil on canvas, wood, velcro;
35 x 23cm

Fig. 12 Bottom Ena Kosovac
Self-supported canvas, 2009;
Fabric;
57 x 51 x 55cm



the object ends up framing itself by acting as object and frame all in one, where the join to the wall keeps the object from becoming naked or frame-less. Through this, it claims ownership of the wall.

1.7 Plinths, Supports, Feet, Legs

One of the approaches I employ in the production of objects is to include various supports, stretchers and plinths. I enjoy the fact that they form the backbone to a traditional painting or traditional sculpture. They are something essential and therefore I do not wish to treat them as an after-thought, or overlook them entirely.

Formally, I very much enjoy the structure of a canvas stretcher; the way it looks visually but also the idea of a structure forming an object. Consequently, I frequently work with the idea that instead of only supporting a work (that is, only performing in the way a traditional plinth acts, by providing a neutral base for the object to sit on while on display) or creating a solid structure for the work to operate on, supports can become the focus in their own right.

I began this process by using chunky coloured pins to pin up certain paintings or drawings, thus allowing the pins to be a part of the work (and not just the invisible method of support). However, the definite beginning was making paintings or objects with feet, legs or pods on which they sat. [Fig. 11] During the entirety of this project, I was determined to allow supports to have a strong physical presence in themselves and to become just as much an aspect of a particular object as whatever they are supporting or holding up.

In fact, many of the objects I have produced have been support, plinth and object all in one; there is no differentiation between the content of a work and the underlying support. [Fig. 12] The power relationship between 'support' and 'being supported' is interesting territory to work within. For example, the 'hulking' form of a structure that acts like a plinth can dominate the objects placed upon it,



Fig. 13 [Bottom half of image] Ena Kosovac
Installation shot of **Originals By//**, Room 103, 2008;
Canvas, paint, plastic, clay, metal;
Dimensions variable.

reversing the traditional relationship between plinth and object.

1.8 Scale and Models

At the beginning of this project, the scale of the artworks I was producing was small. This happened as a development from picture-making, and because of my interest in creating objects that operated in an intimate way. The small scale assisted in this aim. [Fig. 13]

Moving into a more sculptural realm of production helped to underscore the fact that the constant small scale was not something that translated as well into the production of more sculptural objects. Although certain objects can function successfully on a small scale, when a large number of them is produced in a similar size by default, this becomes problematic, especially in terms of their display or installation.

These first objects became mired in their small, but not too small size, and stopped operating as individual objects and started to operate more like insignificant cogs in a large piece of clockwork. Although the idea of objects interacting and interrelating in an installation to create one whole is still something that I continue to consider while making work, the insignificant nature of these earlier objects became a problem. I needed to find a way to create an individual identity for each object produced, instead of allowing them all to languish in this 'default' zone. Varying the scale was the beginning of this process.

Even now, although the objects I make are not especially large, there is enough variation in their scale (with some being rather large – larger than human scale) that their installations become more interesting. It is important to make the point that an object does not need to be very large exclusively to have an individual identity or a concrete sense of objecthood about it. Small scale can still be productive and interesting, but in this instance it was the constant, unvarying smallness that was the problem.



Fig. 14 Top Ena Kosovac
Third installation, 2009;
Wood, clay, silver paint;
Dimensions variable

Fig. 15 Bottom Ena Kosovac
Close up of *Fig. 14*

Additionally, sculptural objects of a small size bring to mind miniatures and can perhaps be viewed as models or maquettes, rather than fully-realised artworks, thus distracting from their intended purpose; existing as sculptural objects in their own right and functioning as a full component of an installation. [*Figs. 14 & 15*]

It is interesting to consider the notion of models or maquettes forming the focus of a sculptural practice. Is the role of an artwork that of a finished object containing an idea, or of an object that simply proposes an idea? In the book, *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire*, author Mark Wigley says the architect Constant's use of Plexiglas, which was a rare and expensive material at the time (during the 1950's), "signalled the transformation of the architectural model into a polemical object designed for exhibition and discussion."⁴ Constant's use of models, with their "quality of refined artworks,"⁵ made them into an end product in themselves. The author makes the point that models are a means of exploration, which sometimes seems to mean that they are disposable, but I think they can be more or, alternatively, that this isn't such a bad thing – that exploration itself can be a kind of overarching idea of an art practice.

⁴ Wigley, M. (1998). p. 50
⁵ Wigley, M. (1998). p. 49

2.0 Concept and Contexts

2.1 Sculptural

The established understanding of sculpture in this project involves the creation of three-dimensional objects made by combining or shaping different materials into one object. Some sculptures are created by welding, nailing, gluing or otherwise joining together separate materials, while other sculptures are created by carving or moulding a particular type of material into the desired object.

When I use the term sculpture in the context of my own work and this project, I am referring to sculptural objects – sculptural because their ‘objectness’ is formed by the use of sculptural language and established sculptural conventions.

Among the formal qualities and concerns of sculpture, the following is a list of aspects that are of particular importance to this project:

- **Use of plinths and supports** – used as the content of certain works, instead of merely supports.
- **Form** – geometric and architectural forms in particular; forms that are uncomplicated to the eye, although there is leeway (and interest on my part) in terms of the project to experiment with this and other possibilities in the future.
- **Space** – particularly in terms of the installation of the objects.

- **Materiality** – especially the importance of ‘processing’ the materials used in some way (in terms of the success of the individual objects I make), whether by sanding, moulding, cutting, or joining, instead of relying on materials as they are.
- **Scale** – at the very start of the project, the objects I made began as very small, intimate works as a development from painting, however, the issue of scale has become more of a sculptural concern. I have realised the necessity of considering a wider interpretation of scale, especially in terms of the installations created outside of my studio space.

2.2 Painterly

Although the definition of painting has undergone many changes and revisions during the course of the 20th century, and even today remains under critical discourse, the traditional understanding of a painting is that it involves the application of some type of paint (usually oil or acrylic) onto a stretched canvas surface or similar.

The term 'painting' has ceased to be applicable to my work in the traditional sense, however the language of painting, and the formal conventions surrounding it, continue to be relevant to the work I make and form the backbone of my entire project.

The following painterly concerns are of particular importance to this project:

- **Colour** – using colour to code relationships between the objects, as well as highlighting certain objects or certain aspects of these objects. I am also especially interested in using colour in a sculptural way, where colour takes up not only surface, but also space, as discussed in section 1.5. Finally, colour is also used within this project to add visual interest and complexity.
- **Surface** – surfaces of the materials used operate in a painterly or pictorial way. They are sometimes left as they occur naturally in the material used. However, at other times, they are transformed, whether by sanding, polishing, painting or spray painting. Surfaces help to create pictorial relationships, much like different painterly approaches separate parts of a picture.

- **The tradition of abstraction** – in particular, the conventions of grids and repetition in Minimal Art of the mid 20th century. The objects I make can bring to mind other things that may look similar, in particular architectural forms. However, within the context of this project, I am not concerned with making objects that seek to reproduce or look similar to any outside sources.
- **The use of canvas stretchers** – the underlying wooden supports of a painting making movements into objects of their own.
- **Frames** - the structure of frames is important as a formal concern. Also, much like plinths and other sculptural supports, frames, within the context of this project, often perform as the content of certain objects, rather than only as the traditional 'support' for a picture.
- **Edges** - especially in terms of the long-accepted convention to not paint the sides of a canvas.
- **Composition** - within each object individually and within the totality of an installationw.

Within the context of my own work I use the term painting frequently, even when referring to sculptural objects. I am deeply interested in the conventions of painting and in proposing different ways to integrate those with the conventions of sculpture (or finding ways to move between the two), in order to form objects that operate in between.



Fig. 17 Top Pablo Picasso
Guitar, 1912;
Sheet metal and wire;
75.5 x 35 x 19.3 cm;
Museum of Modern Art

Fig. 16 Bottom Ena Kosovac
Close up of Spindle 2, 2009;
Modelling clay, wood;
163 x 23 x 23cm



2.3 A Constructional Sculptural Tradition

Because the objects I have made during the course of this project sit in the category of sculptural objects, by virtue of their three-dimensionality and the constructional methods used to create them, it would be useful to map out the two sculptural traditions that my practice is linked to. In the first place, through the use of various modelling compounds in this project, my practice is linked to a tradition in sculpture with a very long history; one related to modelling and moulding. Before the developments of the 20th century within the art field, traditional sculptural techniques involved moulding, or cutting away from, a solid piece of material. Although I do use a variety of modelling compounds within my work, such as clay, plasticine and plaster strips, the additive process with which I work (for example, joining 'bricks' of modelling clay into a solid object [Fig. 16], differs from these traditional sculptural techniques. Instead, like the other, parallel, methods, materials and processes used within this project, this part of the objects I make links into a different sculptural tradition altogether; one related to the constructional aspect of sculpture, developed during the course of the 20th century.

Among the many pictorial innovations of Cubism, collage and paper collé were the most instrumental in allowing Picasso and Braque to begin creating the three-dimensional objects that came to be known as Cubist Constructions [Fig.17]. These objects contrasted strongly with traditional sculptural methods. Instead of being composed of solid, durable materials, such as stone, wood or clay, they were created by joining sheets of cardboard and metal together. Frequently flimsy in appearance and functionality, they had none of the monumentality and durability that had come to be associated with sculpture. Additionally, the additive, constructional process used to create these artworks, was a new development.

These constructions were critically very important. They were a catalyst for the entire constructive current of modern 20th century sculpture. Russian artists Vladimir Tatlin, Naum Gabo and Anto-

This image has been removed by the author for copyright reasons

Fig. 18 Top Vladimir Tatlin
Model for a Monument to the Third International, 1919;
Wood and metal;
Photo credit: Réunion des Musées Nationaux

Fig. 19 Bottom Vladimir Tatlin
Corner Counter-relief, 1914;
Iron, copper, wood, and strings;
71 x 118 cm;
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg;
Photo credit: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza

This image has been removed by the author for copyright reasons

ine Pevsner are credited with ‘beginning’ the Russian Constructivist movement that would prove to be one of the most influential and productive art movements of the 20th century. Russian Constructivism rejected ‘pure’ art in favour of a more socially orientated intention of using art as a way of actively having an impact on society. However, some of Tatlin’s work such as his proposal for the *Monument to the Third International* (1919) [Fig. 18.] was derided as sitting in-between functional design and purposeless art. Although the Tower was designed as the headquarters of Comintern, Tatlin included various ‘lively’ components, such as the three geometric structures that the main body of the tower would be comprised of, and which would house various offices and other venues. These geometric structures were planned to move and rotate at different speeds; one was intended to make a full rotation in the span of one year, one was to rotate at the speed of a month and the last was to make it’s rotation at the speed of a day. It is because of ideas like this that Tatlin’s work sat somewhere in between functional construction and non-functional art. This set him somewhat apart from the other Constructivists, especially Gabo and Pevsner, who set out their ideas in the *Realistic Manifesto* (1920) - “Can art withstand these laws if it is built on abstraction, on mirage, and fiction?”⁶

This ‘spiritual’ tendency in Tatlin’s work, which, to my mind, is also found within the cubist constructions, particularly interests me. I do not mean to suggest that Tatlin created spiritual art, or that Picasso was concerned with spiritual ideas while creating his constructions. However, although these objects function in an experimental way, as research, it is precisely this that gives them artworks their humanised ‘aura.’ There is something about the intensity of their construction and hand-made feel (in the case of the Cubist objects) that contributes to this.

Tatlin, unlike his contemporaries, rejected a purely utilitarian aesthetic. Writer Laurel Fredrickson says that, “His

This image has been removed by the author for copyright reasons

Fig. 20 Top Richard Tuttle
Orange Blue Yellow, 1986;
cardboard, paper, wire, wood,
museum board, mylar ribbon,
acrylic with powdered pigments
and silver enamel paint;
48.3 x 40.6 x 10.10 cm;
Larry Qualls Archive

Fig. 21 Bottom Mikala Dwyer
Superstitious Scaffolding, 2005;
Mixed media;
Hamish McKay Gallery

This image has been removed by the author for copyright reasons

quasi-mystical approach to design owed a significant debt to pre-machine age folk and craft traditions.”⁷

I would argue that it is this approach; creating a “humanised technology,”⁸ that has left a lasting impact on artists working today, including myself. Artists such as Richard Tuttle, who creates quietly energetic constructions made of modest materials [*Fig. 20*] or Australian artist Mikala Dwyer who fills rooms with objects created by the transfiguration of ordinary materials [*Fig. 21*], are both examples of contemporary artistic practice on which the developments in sculpture during the 20th century have had a large impact.

2.4 In-between Painting and Sculpture

In the book, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*, author Martha Buskirk questions what constitutes a medium and to what extent or according to what terms the concept of medium remains relevant today. She says that, “by the 20th century’s end, categories like painting, sculpture and photography had not been effaced; but they did over the course of the century, lose both their exclusivity and their status as markers of a self-evident connection between medium and material support.”⁹

While I do not describe the rigorous questioning and testing of the concept of medium and how it remains relevant today as part of my project, I am, however, involved in negotiating the boundary line between traditional genre divisions. Therefore, the idea of shifts between what is painterly and what is sculptural (in terms of the objects I make), not an effacement of the two, is one of the core issues of this project and is the site wherein my practice lies.

⁷ Fredrickson, L. (1999). p. 49

⁸ Quote by Art Historian, Larissa Alekseevna Zhadova in *Tatlin: the Organizer of Material into Objects*, pp. 134-154. Found in Fredrickson, L. (1999). p. 50

⁹ Buskirk, M. (2003). p. 112



This image has been removed
by the author for copyright reasons

Fig. 22 Rose Nolan
Blinky Poles, 2008;
Cardboard and Tape;
Dimensions variable;
Anna Schwartz Gallery

Although I make objects that are mostly sculptural, painting and its language are laced through the backbone of my practice. Therefore I see myself faced with a painterly practice that is sculptural.

This concept informs this thesis project; the idea of a negotiable space between painting and sculpture in which the formal languages and qualities of both meet and shift, encouraging the resulting objects to operate and move within this in-between space.

The sort of space I am referring to here is not a literal space, but more of a mode of existence or operation for these objects. I could say that I make paintings that are also objects, or objects that are also paintings. However this description seems inadequate, as the collision between the two traditional categories is where these objects lie, not within the harmonious marriage or calm erasure of the two. They are not really objects I simply apply paint to - they are objects that use the fundamental conventions of both painting and sculptural practice to form their objecthood.

This not-quite-painting, not-quite-sculpture approach has been referred to as an “improvised scaffold”¹⁰ by writer and curator Max Delany while writing about the work of Australian artist Rose Nolan, whose art practice has important implications for my own project. The idea of an art practice as a scaffold is very interesting. While Nolan brings together various different methods of production, subject matter, and materials, the most interesting point is the fact that she manages to fuse them all into one, into this scaffold, to create works that are not easily categorized, and really an entire practice that is not easily categorised either. [Fig. 22]

Her self-imposed mixing of categories of work (such as Banners, Word Works and Home Works) and the mixing of disparate approaches to making (such as weaving, book making, painting,

This image has been removed
by the author for copyright reasons

Fig. 23 Top Sol LeWitt
Modular Open Cube Pieces,
1976;
Painted wood;
110.4 x 110.4 x 110.4 cm;
The Detroit Institute of Arts

Fig. 24 Bottom Donald Judd
Untitled (stack), 1967;
Lacquer on galvanized iron
twelve units (each 22.8 x 101.6 x
78.7 cm), installed vertically with
22.8cm intervals;
The Museum of Modern Art

This image has
been removed
by the author
for copyright
reasons

making banners and making sculptural objects) mean that Nolan arrives at what Delany calls an “aesthetic of corruption.”¹¹

This notion of a ‘corrupted’ or impure sensibility in a practice is of particular interest to me in terms of my project. Although some of the objects I make, especially some of the recent ones, owe a lot visually to the Minimal Art works of the 20th century (I am thinking here in particular of some of Sol LeWitt’s works such as *Modular Open Cube Pieces* (1976) [Fig. 23], and Donald Judd’s stack works such as *Untitled stack* (1967) [Fig. 24]), the conventions of formal and material purity of Minimal Art are not something that translates across to the works I have made. Instead this ‘corrupted’ mode of production that fuses disparate elements of an individual work or an overall practice together (whether that is visually, through materiality, process or a conceptual underpinning) is really the cornerstone of the territory I have aimed to traverse whilst developing this project and future work.

2.5 Installation as medium

Again, in the book *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*, artist Jim Hodges is quoted as saying that, “Installation seems to be a material as much as anything else is.”¹² Martha Buskirk questions whether arrangement itself can be described as a medium. Through this orientation, arrangement or installation is given a central role. Many artworks completely depend on their arrangement and if a component is moved or the arrangement is not respected, the potential failure of the work looms quite heavily above it.

In my own project, arrangement is vital and is one half of the work, to the extent that a single object perhaps cannot stand on its own and needs to exist with others. However, I have aimed to move away

¹¹ Delany, M. (2001). p. 8

¹² Hodges, J. Found in Buskirk, M. (2003). p. 152

from this method of dependence for the objects I have made, by taking more care in their production - by producing more complex objects and by intervening more with the materials that comprise each separate one. The care with which they are made puts emphasis on their status as objects, rather than ephemeral conglomerations of material, which also provides them with the ability to exist on their own. They can sit on the floor unambiguously, with a new sense of confidence and without a multitude of other objects around them; without needing to rely on other objects to keep them company. It is likely that their new found sense of purpose, and confidence, and ability to inhabit a space calmly and without anxiety, came from this relatively new approach of a lot more care taken in their production. Rather than quickly making a lot of things with a limited or almost unreal sense of form and identity, the objects I am now producing have more purpose behind them and therefore a greater sense of purpose when being observed within each separate installation. This is likely linked to an assertion of the shifts between what is painterly and what is sculptural within these objects.

Buskirk makes the point that re-arranging could be seen as re-making. This is particularly relevant to my own practice. I work under the assumption that each installation I produce could be considered a different work, even though they may contain the same components. In the context of this project, the installations act as compositions on a large scale, where the relationships constructed locate both painting and sculpture in the same space. An artist whose practice is particularly relevant in terms of these ideas is Jessica Stockholder, whose large-scale installations position themselves between "the two-dimensional, pictorial flatness of painting and the three-dimensional spatiality and scale of architecture."¹³

In terms of my practice, her formalist orientation and pictorial viewpoint are especially interesting. Through combining painterly approaches to material and colour, with sculptural concerns such as

This image has been removed
by the author for copyright reasons

Fig. 25 Jessica Stockholder
**Growing Rock Candy Mountain
Grasses in Canned Sand**, 1992;
Installation view, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster, Germany;
23 x 12 m piece of violet bathing suit material, sandstone native to Münster, gaseous concrete building blocks, plaster, basket material, electrical wiring, 3 very small lights, newspaper glued to the wall, acrylic paint, metal cables and Styrofoam;
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

form and scale and weight, through the medium of installation that uses the existing architectural space as a framing device, Stockholder's work seems to affiliate itself equally with all three 'disciplines' - painting, sculpture and architecture. [Fig. 25] For the viewer, Stockholder's installations oscillate between a protracted moment that unfolds during the viewer's walk through the work, and between a single static, pictorial moment or image whilst standing in any particular point of the installation, thus getting a pictorial view from any particular angle. In this way Stockholder's installations shift from "picture to object to architectural construction."¹⁴ Stockholder says that a pictorial way of looking at things is something that particularly interests her. In terms of my practice, this is an idea that is particularly relevant also - "Viewing through pictures is part of our experience of the world, an experience that happens to be often associated with art."¹⁵

14 Kwon, M. (2004). p. 20

15 Stockholder, J. (1990).

3.0 Final Installation

The final MA exhibition consisted of six objects, titled:

1. **Skinny Tower**; wood, acrylic paint, staples, acrylic gel medium; 2009 [figs. 26 & 27]
2. **Blue Tube**; plaster strips, acrylic paint; 2009 [figs. 28 & 29]
3. **Spindle 1**; wood, balsa wood, staples, hot glue; 2009 [figs. 30 & 31]
4. **Spindle 2**; wood, balsa wood, modelling clay, staples, hot glue; 2009 [figs. 32, 33 & 34]
5. **String Frame**; string, wood, staples, staples, hot glue; 2009 [figs. 35 & 36]
6. **Brick Box**; wood, clay, modelling clay, staples, hot glue, liquid nails, home-made salt clays; 2009 [figs. 37 & 38]



Fig. 26

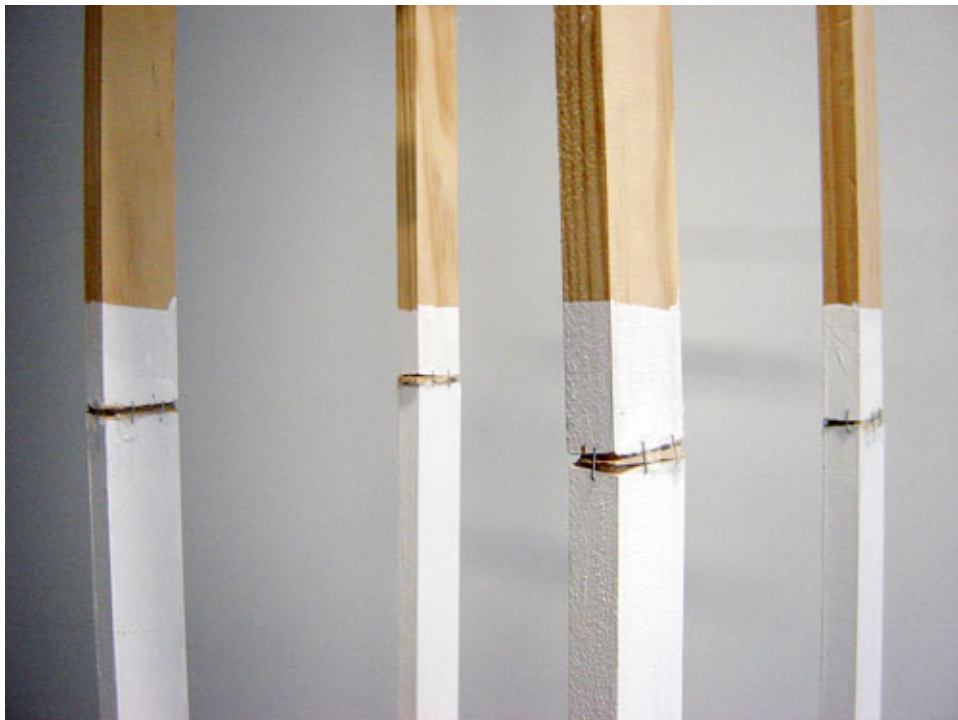


Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31



Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36

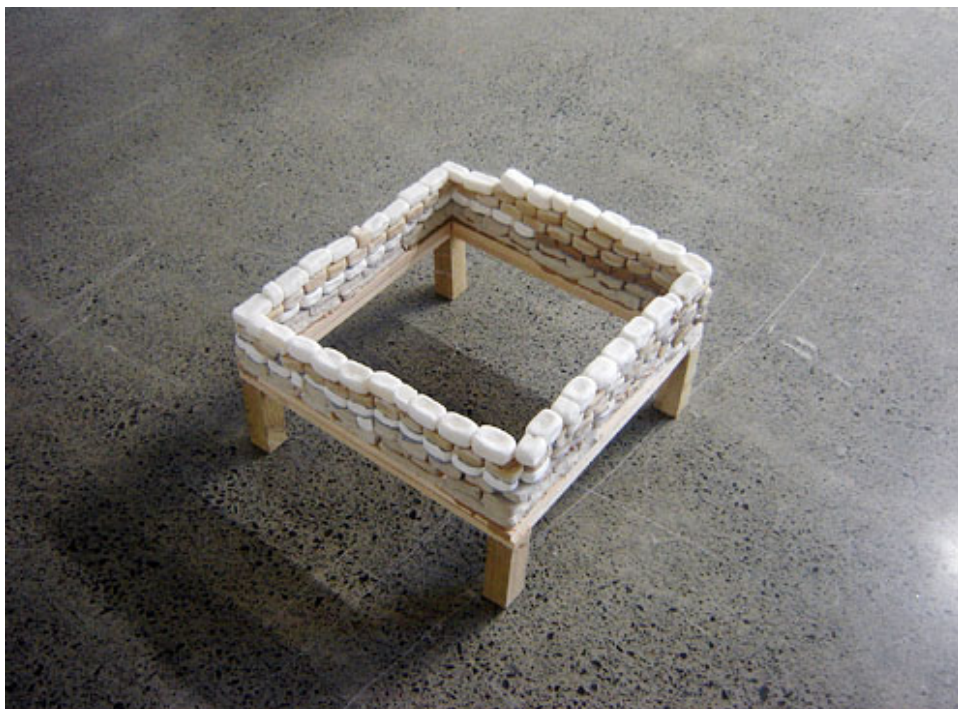


Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Figs. 39 & 40 Ena Kosovac
Final MA&D Installation, 2009
 wood, balsa wood, clay, modelling clay, home-made salt clays, acrylic paints, plaster strips, staples, hot glue, liquid nails.
 St. Paul's Street Gallery II



Figs. 41 & 42 Ena Kosovac
Final MA&D Installation, 2009
 wood, balsa wood, clay, modelling clay, home-
 made salt clays, acrylic paint, plaster strips,
 staples, hot glue, liquid nails.
 St. Paul's Street Gallery II



Fig. 43 Ena Kosovac
Final MA&D Installation, 2009
 wood, balsa wood, clay, modeling clay, home-made salt clays, acrylic paints, plaster strips, staples, hot glue, liquid nails.
 St. Paul's Street Gallery II

References

- Baldassari, A. (Author). Lavin, I., Steinberg, L., Daix, P. & Karmel, P. (Contributors). (2007). *Cubist Picasso*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Bann, S. (Ed.).(1974). *The Tradition of Constructivism*. New York: De Capo Press.
- Buskirk, M. (2003). *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Carruthers, E., Doll, N., Sultan, T. & Kwon, M. (2004). *Jessica Stockholder: Kissing the wall – works 1988-2003*. University of Houston: Sarah Campbell Blaffer Gallery.
- Delany, M. (2001). *Rose Nolan: Dressing up and sizing down*. Rose Nolan exhibition catalogue. Melbourne. pp. 7-11
- Donovan, M. (2006). *Richard Tuttle and the Comfort of the Unknown*. Retrieved May 7, 2007, from <http://www.speronewestwater.com/cgi-bin/iowa/artciles/record.html?record=472>
- Fer, B. (1999). Objects Beyond Objecthood. *Oxford Art Journal*. 29(2), 27-36. Retrieved July 23, 2008, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1360633>
- Fredrickson, L. (1999). Vision and Material Practice: Vladimir Tatlin and the design of everyday objects. *Design Issues journal*. 15(1), Spring 1999. pp. 49-74. Retrieved September 14, 2009, from <http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz>
- Kelly, J. (2008). The Anthropology of Assemblage. *Art Journal*. Spring 2008 Issue. Retrieved August 7, 2008, from http://find-articles.com/p/articles/mi_m0425/is_1_67/ai_n26670569/
- Michael, L. (2001). The Little Temples of Love for the Dead Things. In Michael, L. (2001). *Mikala Dwyer*. Sydney: The Museum of Contemporary Art.
- O'Doherty, B. (1999). *Inside the White Cube: The ideology of the gallery space*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Ottmann, K. and Stockholder, J. (1990). Jessica Stockholder. *Journal of Contemporary Art*. Retrieved June 10, 2009, from <http://www.jca-online.com/stockholder.html>
- Poggi, C. (1992). *In Defiance of Painting*. Yale University Press.
- Railing, P. (1995). The Idea of Construction as the Creative Principle in Russian Avant-Garde Art. *Leonardo journal*. 28(3). (1995). pp. 193-202. Retrieved September 13, 2009, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1576074>
- Wigley, M. (1998). *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-architecture of Desire*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.

print?tag=artBody;col1

List of Illustrations:

Fig. 1

Ena Kosovac

Super Colour Installation, 2009;

Cardboard, canvas, wood, MDF, clay, expandable foam, fabric, netting, acrylic paint, enamel gloss;

Dimensions variable

Fig. 2

Ena Kosovac

Installation, 2008;

Cardboard, newspaper, fabric, plastic, paper, stockings, paperclips, expandable foam, clay, wood, tape, canvas, chalk, sand paper, acrylic paint, enamel gloss;

Dimensions variable

Fig. 3

Ena Kosovac

Talk Week installation experiment, 2009;

wood, silver spray paint, plaster strips;

Dimensions variable

Fig. 4

Ena Kosovac

Talk Week installation experiment, 2009;

wood, silver spray paint, plaster strips;

Dimensions variable

Fig. 5

Ena Kosovac

Talk Week installation experiment, 2009;

wood, silver spray paint, plaster strips;

Dimensions variable

Fig. 6

Ena Kosovac

Ceiling Tower - Part of installation experiment in a different space, 2009;

Wood, glue, gesso, staples;

257 x 66 x 66 cm

Fig. 7

Ena Kosovac

Blue Tube, 2009;

Plaster strips, acrylic paint;

48 x 26 x 27cm

Fig. 8

Ena Kosovac

Close up of **Spindle 1**, 2009;

Balsa wood, wood;

153 x 25 x 25cm

Fig. 9

Ena Kosovac

Red Mache Beast, 2007;

Cardboard, fabric, glue;

Fig. 10

Ena Kosovac

Installation shot, 2009;

Wood, paint, glue, staples, hinges, string;

Dimensions variable

Fig. 11

Ena Kosovac

Leg Painting, 2008;

Oil on canvas, wood, velcro;

35 x 23cm

Fig. 12

Ena Kosovac

Self-supported canvas, 2009;

Fabric;

57 x 51 x 55cm

Fig. 13 [Bottom half of image]

Ena Kosovac

Installation shot of **Originals By//**, Room 103, 2008;

Canvas, paint, plastic, clay, metal;

Dimensions variable.

Fig. 14

Ena Kosovac

Third installation, 2009;

Wood, clay, silver paint;

Dimensions variable

Fig. 15

Ena Kosovac

Close up of *Fig. 14*

Fig. 16

Ena Kosovac

Close up of Spindle 2, 2009;

Modelling clay, wood;

163 x 23 x 23cm

Fig. 17

Pablo Picasso

Guitar, 1912;

Sheet metal and wire;

75.5 x 35 x 19.3 cm;

Museum of Modern Art

ARTstor Collection

Fig. 18

Vladimir Tatlin

Model for a Monument to the Third International, 1919;

Wood and metal;

Photo credit: Réunion des Musées Nationaux

Fig. 19

Vladimir Tatlin

Corner Counter-relief, 1914;

Iron, copper, wood, and strings;

71 x 118 cm;

State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg;

Photo credit: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza

Fig. 20

Richard Tuttle

Orange Blue Yellow, 1986;

cardboard, paper, wire, wood, museum board, mylar ribbon, acrylic with powdered pigments and silver enamel paint;

48.3 x 40.6 x 10.10 cm;

Larry Qualls Archive

ARTstor Collection

Fig. 21

Mikala Dwyer

Superstitious Scaffolding, 2005;

Mixed media;

Hamish McKay Gallery

Fig. 22

Rose Nolan

Blinky Poles, 2008;

Cardboard and Tape;

Dimensions variable;

Anna Schwartz Gallery

Fig. 23

Sol LeWitt

Modular Open Cube Pieces, 1976;

Painted wood;

110.4 x 110.4 x 110.4 cm;

The Detroit Institute of Arts

ARTstor Collection

Fig. 24

Donald Judd

Untitled (stack), 1967;

Lacquer on galvanized iron

twelve units (each 22.8 x 101.6 x 78.7 cm), installed vertically with 22.8cm intervals;

The Museum of Modern Art

ARTstor Collection

Fig. 25

Jessica Stockholder

Growing Rock Candy Mountain Grasses in Canned Sand, 1992;

Installation view, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Munster, Germany;

23 x 12 m piece of violet bathing suit material, sandstone native to Munster, gaseous concrete building blocks, plaster, basket material, electrical wiring, 3 very small lights, newspaper glued to the wall, acrylic paint, metal cables and Styrofoam;

Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

Fig. 26
Ena Kosovac
detail of **Skinny Tower**, 2009
wood, acrylic paint, staples, acrylic gel medium
approx. 300cm x 40cm x 40cm

Fig. 27
Ena Kosovac
detail of **Skinny Tower**, 2009
wood, acrylic paint, staples, acrylic gel medium

Fig. 28
Ena Kosovac
Blue Tube, 2009
plaster strips, acrylic paint
48 x 26 x 27cm

Fig. 29
Ena Kosovac
Blue Tube, 2009
plaster strips, acrylic paint
48 x 26 x 27cm

Fig. 30
Ena Kosovac
Spindle 1, 2009
wood, balsa wood, staples, hot glue
153 x 25 x 25cm

Fig. 31
Ena Kosovac
detail of **Spindle 1**, 2009
wood, balsa wood, staples, hot glue

Fig. 32
Ena Kosovac
Spindle 2, 2009
wood, balsa wood, modelling clay, staples, hot glue
163 x 23 x 23cm

Fig. 33
Ena Kosovac
detail of **Spindle 2**, 2009
wood, balsa wood, modelling clay, staples, hot glue

Fig. 34
Ena Kosovac
detail of **Spindle 2**, 2009
wood, balsa wood, modelling clay, staples, hot glue

Fig. 35
Ena Kosovac
String Frame, 2009

string, wood, staples, staples, hot glue
approx. 80cm x 80cm, the string length approx. 2m

Fig. 36
Ena Kosovac
detail of **String Frame**, 2009
string, wood, staples, staples, hot glue

Fig. 37
Ena Kosovac
Brick Box, 2009
wood, clay, modelling clay, staples, hot glue, liquid nails, home-made salt clays
approx. 30cm x 100cm x 100cm

Fig. 38
Ena Kosovac
detail of **Brick Box**, 2009
wood, clay, modelling clay, staples, hot glue, liquid nails, home-made salt clays

Figs. 39 - 43
Ena Kosovac
installations shots of **Final MA&D Installation**, 2009
wood, balsa wood, clay, modelling clay, home-made salt clays, acrylic paints, plaster strips, staples,
hot glue, liquid nails.
St. Paul's Street Gallery II
Dimensions variable