

What do I want? Where do I stand?

an exhibition

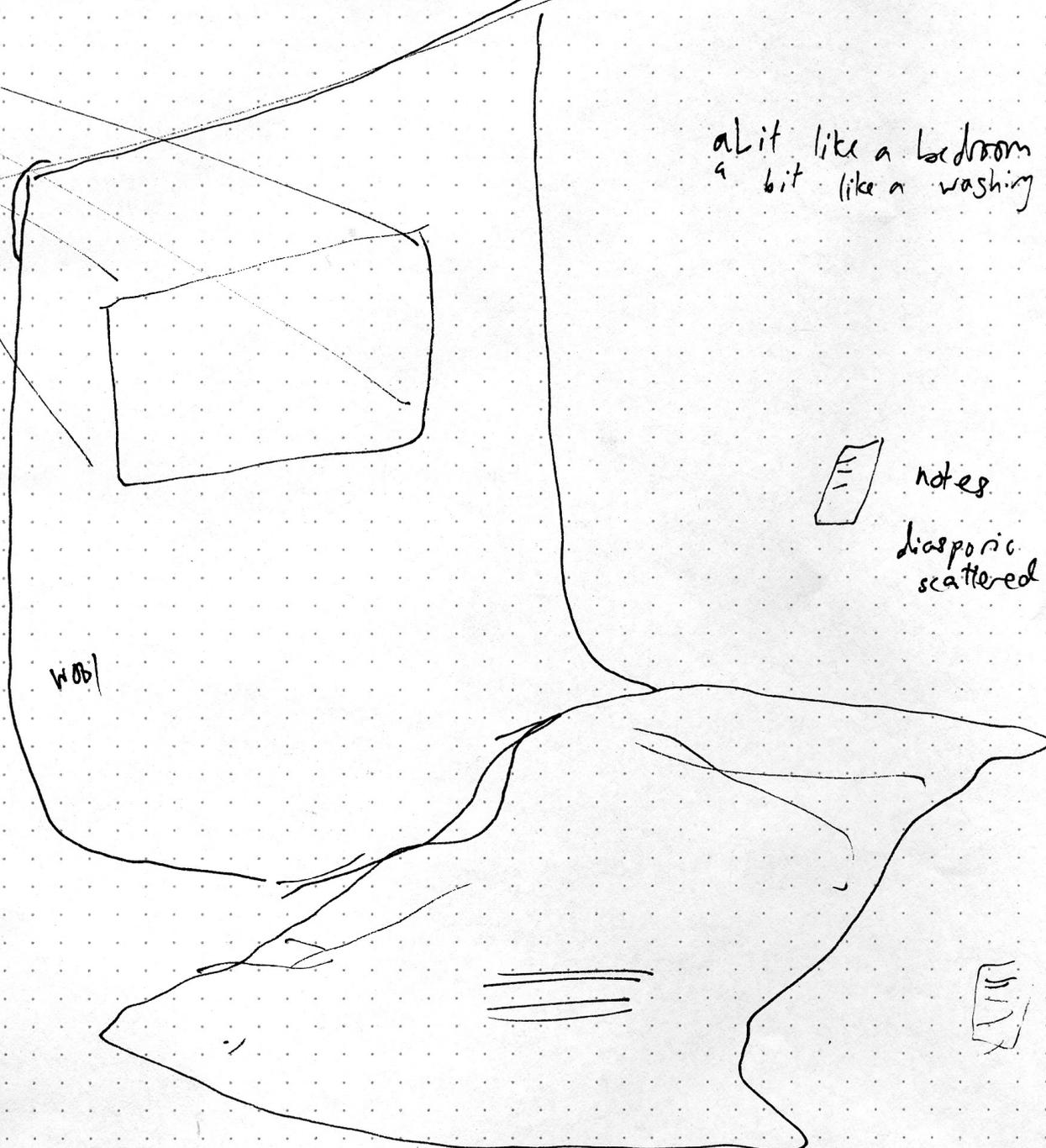
Elam final year BFA and BFA(Hons)
Auckland, New Zealand
September 2016

www.offsite.org.nz

A selection of essays and interviews

Editor Lucille Holmes

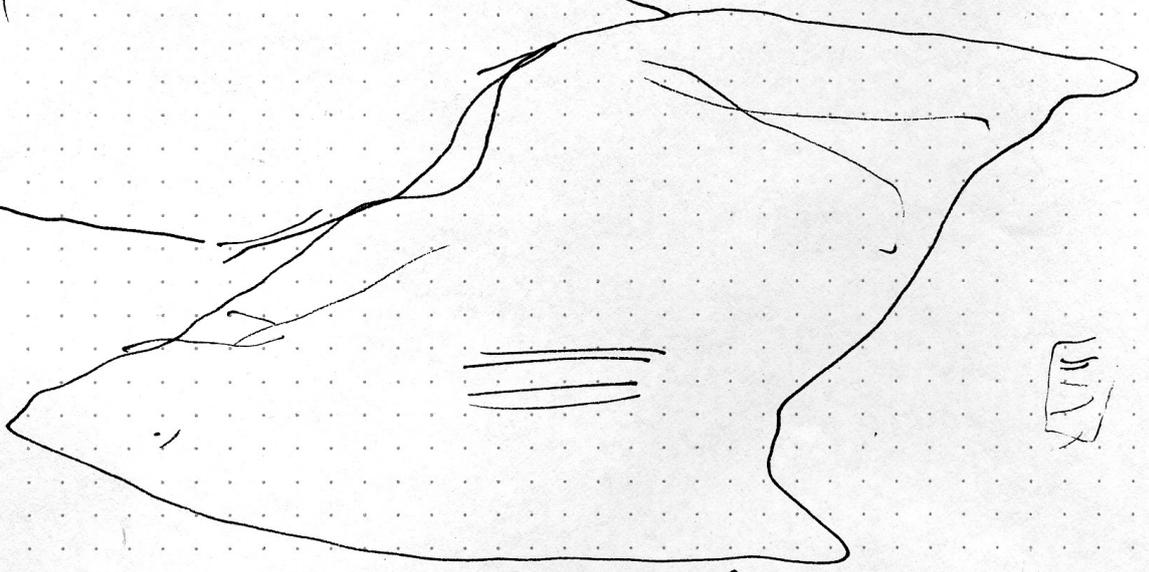
a bit like a bedroom
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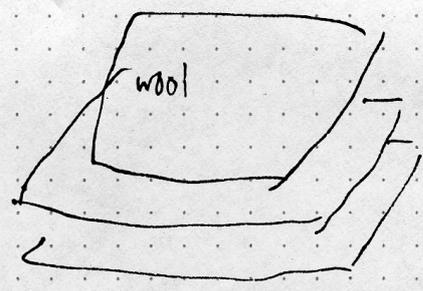


too close for comfort

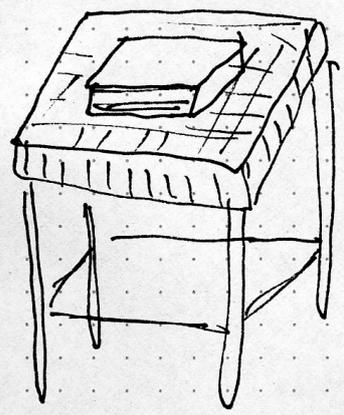


what does each
flower mean?

smells like wool and jasmine
oranges



stack of cushions
so one person can sit or more



publication
wicker stool

watch for
hierarchy

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Letter from one of the curators

Talei Yates

It has been one of the greatest highlights of my year having the opportunity to help curate this exhibition along with the curatorial team Felix Pryor, Avigail Allan, Hazel Ellis and Kate Cox. With that said, we are in debt to the hard work that our fellow students have contributed in order to make this show. As a tribute to our understanding of our own practice you can expect that the works within the show do not thoroughly present a strong theme, but it is notable that what it does contribute is a great deal of consideration of our future endeavours as artists.

I think it is important to recognize that it is the end of our time at Elam School of Fine Arts and that this is our first function as a cohort outside the university. I will aim to discuss some of the site-specific works in the exhibition, as well as works that speak about the significance of this time as our last year and of our future beyond Elam. In addition, I will acknowledge how certain works allow for a newly-formed community through their invitation to participate.

A key work which highlights the idea that it is our last year as a cohort can be seen on the top floor of the exhibition. Kirsty McNeil's *Your space, or mine* (2016) involves 95 miniature cardboard boxes appropriating spaces within themselves: the number of boxes each representing the number of students in our year. The work asks us to consider the spaces we have shared over the past four years together and our future art spaces. Originally Kirsty and I had decided that the work would be best in a grid format on the floor, however, it seemed more fitting to place them on top of the tables that we make work on at Elam. Underneath these tables McNeil presents some rogue boxes to address the concern that some of us may no longer continue a studio practice after Elam. This can make us consider how we may think about our lives after art school, which seems fitting for a show such as this one.

In considering spaces and how we may be accustomed operating within the institution, I found it particularly interesting when artists chose to work site-specifically for this exhibition. When walking upstairs, viewers are immediately met by an airy waterfall of pink fabric draped over two rafters, a collaborative work called *I'm leaving tomorrow, but I could leave today* (2016) by Mia Morris and Felixe Laing. Not only does the work address the viewer in its scale and response to the site, but it also attempts to make a comment on collaboration. In considering how collaboration is usually difficult because of the marking schedule at Elam, they saw the opportunity of this exhibition as a way of working together to create something ambitious. Morris and Laing have written on the fabric extracts of conversations about the title of the exhibition: giving the viewer a moment to slow down, read, and reflect perhaps on their own lives. Choosing oblique phrases such as, "holding on, letting go, letting on, holding go", allows for any viewer to apply these terms to their own experiences. However, in this context we may consider how we are letting go and holding onto our experiences at Elam.

Another work which addresses site-specificity is Jerome Van Rijn's work *Yu- Ki-eh (the floating world)* (2016). In negotiation with myself and the organisers, Van Rijn was given an area of the space by the stairwell where he has illustrated his ambiguous figures on the walls, surrounded by his painted canvases. Translating street culture and character-based imagery, Van Rijn draws parallels between his everyday life and

the culture easily recognised outside the walls of the exhibition on the busy Symonds Street; both bridging and acknowledging the divide between street art and fine art.

Another work to address the external space of the exhibition is Tommo Jiang's *Mirror, Mirror* (2016), employing a portrait TV screen, visible from the street behind a window panel of the exhibition space. Mimicking the advertising signs and screens that populate Auckland's bus stops, Jiang's work aims to subvert the ubiquity of consumer-focused screens in everyday life. Played on a loop of high contrasting colours and text, the enticing features adopted speak to the act of seduction commonly seen in advertising. However, Jiang's work becomes almost an advertising piece in its own right by reaching out to the passing viewers and calling attention to the site and its current occupation. *Mirror, Mirror* suggests that we should be aware of living in a world of fleeting pleasure: that rather than being accustomed to these advertising methods, we should consider living our lives in protest of these accepted hierarchies.

A notable work which plays on the exhibition's architecture is Java Bentley's *Immigrating Spaces* (2016). Travelling downstairs, spectators of the show are confronted by a liminal hallway of luminous aluminium foil. We immediately get the sense that we are in a construction site as the foil reminds us of an unfinished building. The work acts as a transformative quilt for the mundane hallway, closing around the viewer and drawing attention to the space itself. Acting as a device to place bodies in a space and acknowledge the hallway, Bentley gives attention to an area that wouldn't typically be addressed. With further observation, *Immigrating Spaces* can be thought of as a commentary on the exhibition site itself: how Black Note as a previous bar, and not your-general-white-wall-gallery, is not a traditional site for art students to occupy and address.

A sense of community seems highly important for a lot of the works within the show, particularly with *On the moment of change, there is always a cup of tea* (2016), comprised of many individually unique, ceramic cups by the collective of artists, Many Hands. As a whole the cups serve not only as artworks but as functional objects for events and discussion groups throughout the show. The beauty of this work is in its sense of invitation, an offering to the viewer, allowing a sense of extended community for anyone who enters the exhibition.

However, what happens when the viewer is asked to give something? Elisa Barczak's *Trading Table* (2016) acknowledges a sense of community both through the exchange of objects and through its reliance on the viewer to participate in order for the artwork to remain continuous. Barczak will begin the trading table with artworks and other objects from the people involved in the exhibition. My own interest lies in Barczak's aim for the trading table to operate like an honesty box where, with no organiser watching the table, she places trust in the community, leaving the trading to happen by chance. To document the work, Barczak intends to take a daily photograph to record the changes in the trading table, and these photographs will function both as an archive and a work on its own. The *Trading Table* raises such questions as: How do we negotiate the value of an item in exchange for another? How do we attribute value? Are these the kind of questions that we will soon be asking ourselves post-Elam, if we are willing to compromise our principles in order to make saleable art? What do I want? Where do I stand? Are these the very questions many of us as artists will continue to ask ourselves throughout our lives?

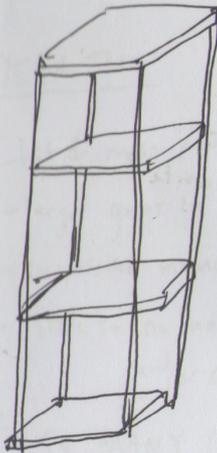
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How → identify your field

Documentation



SHOW YOUR
WANDERING





Offsite Online:

Casey Carsel in conversation with Hazel Ellis and Mano Rankin

Hazel Ellis started and led the effort to create [Offsite](#), the online platform for *What do I want? Where do I stand?*. Mano Rankin joined in soon thereafter and has been a key collaborator to the project. Both Hazel and Mano are in their BFA Honours year at Elam School of Fine Arts.

Casey Carsel: First off, could each of you discuss your practice and what led you to the idea of an online exhibition space?

Hazel Ellis: I'm interested in digital and online spaces and how they relate to the networked environments we exist within. Given how integrated these technologies are to our lives, it was necessary for the show to have an online component.

Mano Rankin: This year I've been looking at place in a virtual or simulated sense. Specifically, working with game engines. Acting as a collaborator in the creation of this online space has been an extension of what I've been doing. I think digital spaces can be kept in a particular state - people play with it but (with exceptions) they can't alter it. A game is more like a private property - you can play, but you can't fundamentally change it. All of the background stuff that makes it work is locked away. But I think with the Internet, it's a little bit different. You can participate to a higher degree.

CC: But I wonder if people do. It seems that platforms such as Tumblr nowadays are used more than building websites from scratch. When I discuss web design with people, often the '90s webpage aesthetic comes up, and I wonder if that was a peak of independent webpage creation, whereas now it's set formats and layouts that people slot into.

HE: I think in the earlier stages of the Internet the people using it were also the people who understood it, and who were able to create their own spaces. Now it's so much more ubiquitous, but also you don't necessarily need to know how the Internet works - how to code or anything - because of platforms such as Wordpress or Tumblr. There were earlier conceptions of online participation, where it seemed relatively easy to go and create your own website independently, but the model seems to have shifted away from that.

CC: That was probably back when the Internet was a small town. In the recent Werner Herzog documentary about the Internet, [Lo and Behold, Reveries of the Connected World](#) (2016), one of the original users had a phonebook-sized book from the early days of the Internet that listed every Internet user twice. It's certainly not that way anymore.

MR: That's interesting, because the Internet is known today as quite an anonymous space. Well, in some respects, it's anonymous, but in others it's all about personalities (YouTube, for example).

CC: Often physical spaces are still treated as more legitimate than online spaces. Even this online space will act as a support to the physical space, but what do you think is the relevance of online spaces as autonomous of physical spaces?

MR: [Rafael Rozendaal](#) [a Dutch-Brazilian digital artist who lives and works in New York] made an online gallery space of web pages that featured GIFs and images, and each web page was available for sale. Online spaces can exist as autonomous and different to physical spaces, but it depends on the kind of work featured there.

HE: Digital things can inherently be copied as many times as possible, they can be downloaded, and they can exist in so many different copies, but how would you sell this kind of thing, and keep it singular or within an edition? How would it happen? Maybe you'd have to have it on a computer that wasn't connected to anything. That seems like overkill but...

MR: I think that makes perfect sense. I was going to say you'd have to come up with some kind of image format that would break the image as soon as you copied it.

HE: But even then, it could still be captured in a screenshot.

MR: I guess if it was on a computer that was connected to nothing, that image is going to go nowhere, even if you screenshotted it.

CC: But then, why are we trying to fit these conventional commercial modes?

HE: It does seem weird that you would try to fit it within those established art systems. Because when digital and online art engages with the medium well, it understands the medium's conditions. If it's going to be online, it's generally going to be public, and anyone can see it or download it. I've been thinking a lot recently about online spaces being inherently flat. You can model a space, or create a sense of three dimensions, but it's still flat, coloured pixels made up of red, green, and blue light. If you have an exhibition of paintings that someone has painted physically, in a room, in a space, it changes things to put them in an online show. Even just the decisions of photographing or reproducing the works for a digital space change a lot. For example, whether it's photographed on a wall, or the wall is "clear cut" [a digital manipulation method that erases the background surrounding an object] out.

CC: I think where many online attempts are currently failing is when they expect physical works for a physical space to function the same when put online, not understanding what is lost and gained in the translation. It comes back to the idea of dematerialisation as an idealistic notion that you can have a concept with no form. You can clear cut the wall, but then the wall is digital and made of pixels. The texture doesn't disappear, it just morphs.

MR: By virtue of the screen being flat, you are going to have a flat space as well. I think there are a few museums that are investing in having some of their artefacts turned into three-dimensional models. Is that still flat in your mind?

HE: It is because it's still based on a screen, but it has interactivity to it. [The British Museum](#) has started doing 3D scans of their artefacts, which exist within a web player-type functionality - you can drag them around and zoom, and they have the colour and texture wrapped onto it, but it's rudimentary. Even with the images 3D-wrapped onto these objects, it's still just an image skin. They don't quite sit together.

MR: It depends on what technique they're using. There's a technique called photogrammetry, where you take heaps of photos of an object and a program spits out a 3D model of that object by stitching the images together. I think that's how they're mostly doing it. It would be different if you were 3D modelling it. It's kind of weird if you 3D model it, because it's just something you made on a computer. But if you 3D scan it

and use photogrammetry, you're actually physically taking readings from that object.

HE: I think flatness is still relatable to these objects, because it's just the image skin. It's more like an articulation of space than an object. The image layer doesn't have a dimension to it, it might articulate the shape of a surface but there's no internal dimension. The great part, though, is that you can download them. I think online things function best when they act as a resource free to the public.

CC: What do you think is the current public perception of online spaces and how do you think this perception will change in the future?

MR: It's hard to foresee, things are moving quite quickly. I think it could go in multiple directions.

HE: It's not like online spaces are new, especially as supplementary spaces, resources and archives, but I still don't think it's something that people are considering enough. Relative to how pervasive these technologies are, there isn't that much going on.

MR: It's definitely something taken for granted.

HE: With all these technologies becoming more popular, or normal, people start thinking that it's going to get rid of the need for real spaces, but virtual things aren't ever going to totally replace the physical experiences.

MR: It wouldn't be possible for particular media, but as a general trend, I think things will migrate more online. Right now these online spaces often operate as secondary spaces but soon they'll become more of the focus. We've seen that in commercial areas, with online stores, it's much cheaper than a physical store. Already in the next generation, some kids will be more used to reading on their iPads than reading a physical book. For them, the book is the foreign object. This won't be the case for everyone, but the trend will keep heading toward the new technology.

HE: That's something to think about with art as well, the physical objects are still going to have to exist, and having exhibitions of art is still relevant, but having both is important, and one shouldn't necessarily be secondary to the other, especially with the benefits that online spaces have. For one, the ability to remove geography from the conversation - if you can't get to the exhibition site, you can still interact with some of it online. My experience on the larger committee also made me realise the difficulty of finding and coordinating a physical site. Especially in Auckland. Our supervisors tell us how they managed to organise a space when they were at art school and they had a whole warehouse to work and exhibit in. I get the sense things like that were easier back then than they are now. Even with the help of the Auckland Council and Auckland Transport (we couldn't find anywhere before contacting them), it's been a battle with building regulations. However, the Internet is also a capitalised space - you do have to pay for domains, or hosting services, but it's also a very small amount compared to the work and money involved with a physical site.

CC: What do you think are other digital gallery space futures and alternatives?

HE: If it's not online, you'd have to travel somewhere to get to the digital space or the file.

MR: If I were to do something like that, a virtual gallery, it would be a distributable file.

CC: File-per-show download.

HE: But again, we're discussing the virtual as a simulation of real space.

CC: It's hard to get away from. I'm so used to reality.

MR: I'm thinking of both - walking through real space, that moves you through virtual space.

HE: There's a rudimentary version with [Google Arts & Culture](#). They have high quality art scans you can zoom into, and Museum Views, which is like Street View, but inside a museum. But that's all in relation to the sensibility of a screen and viewing through a screen.

MR: And without the body connection.

HE: There's a conservation project in the Harvard Art Museum, for Mark Rothko's [Harvard Murals](#) (1962) which had suffered sun damage. They decided to act non-invasively, and digitally project the painting's original colours onto the surface of the painting, and that's how they present it in the museum. At 4.00pm every day, they turn the projectors off, and the viewer can see the original painting.

MR: It's two paintings for one.

HE: But if you can project the colours back onto a painting, how much difference is there then, to projecting entire paintings onto blank canvases on the walls?

MR: But a projection misses the physical qualities.

HE: A little bit. It's half-there.

CC: How are we seeing offline styles (white cube, etc.) translated into online formats?

MR: Rafael Rozendaal is one example of how those formats have seeped into the online space.

HE: Some people thought when we were proposing the online component that it would function as a web simulation of the space, a digital white cube with rooms. There is that technology out there, but I think that's not the most interesting answer. It's one way to tackle traditional art-making, like hung paintings - it's a space for these objects to exist in. There are reasons for this strategy, but it fits within the traditional art display. There are other ways to think about an online-hosted exhibition.

CC: Someone asked me how I would sell my online work, and I responded that I would turn it into a publication. But it wouldn't be quite right in a publication, because it was made with the subtleties of how we look online in mind. How do you think these subtleties affect the work of the artist who plans to put their work online?

MR: An example is video art, which is made to be seen on a screen or projected, not static in a book.

HE: There's video made with YouTube in mind (rather than film), and I think a lot of art now is made to be put online. When this is the case, being put in a physical space like a gallery can be a secondary step out of that online, remotely-accessible environment.

MR: But at the same time, online is not a medium in itself. Video can be on a screen, projected, or go online, and in this way, online is more like a support.

CC: Rather than acrylic on canvas, it's video on web. In many online platforms, there is often potential for a fluidity between creator and viewer. What are your opinions on these structures of the Internet, where users are able to take on the simultaneous roles of uploader and downloader?

HE: I think it's nice to think of online as a democratic space where anyone can do anything, but it's becoming less so. Our generation is seeing an increasingly capitalistic side instead. None of this stuff is new, but I think we're at another changing point, where marketing understands the web.

MR: The web's been tamed. Frequently, people miss the opportunities that Internet-based platforms provide and square them away as something secondary. It may have become that way because from the get-go it's been a secondary space, as we've been discussing, in art institutions, in academic institutions.

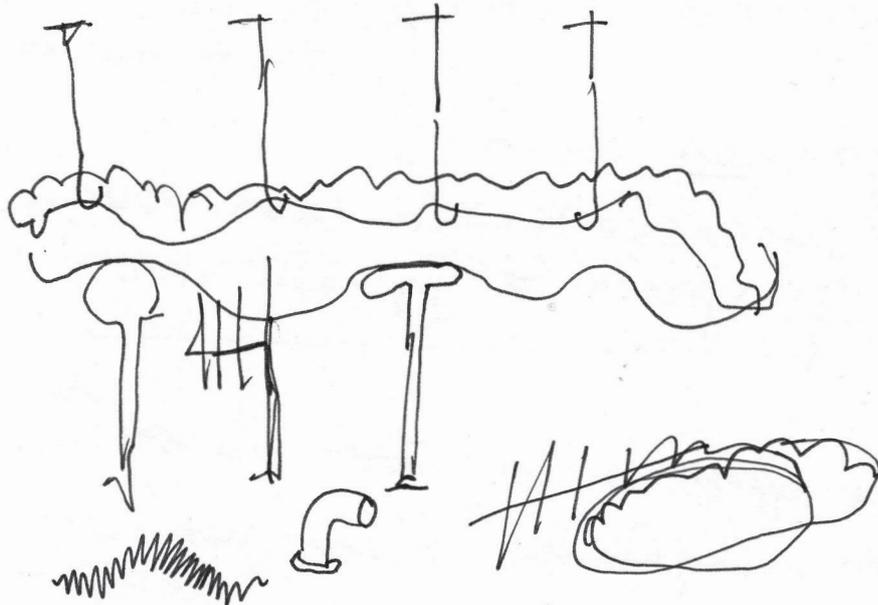
HE: But also, there's a trap in the digital-vs-physical debate, when really there should be a paradigm shift taking place. Online is so integrated now. It's not that black and white.

CC: But I feel that often the institutional integration of online is still mostly a lip service to social media, an awkward coexistence rather than an engagement with it.

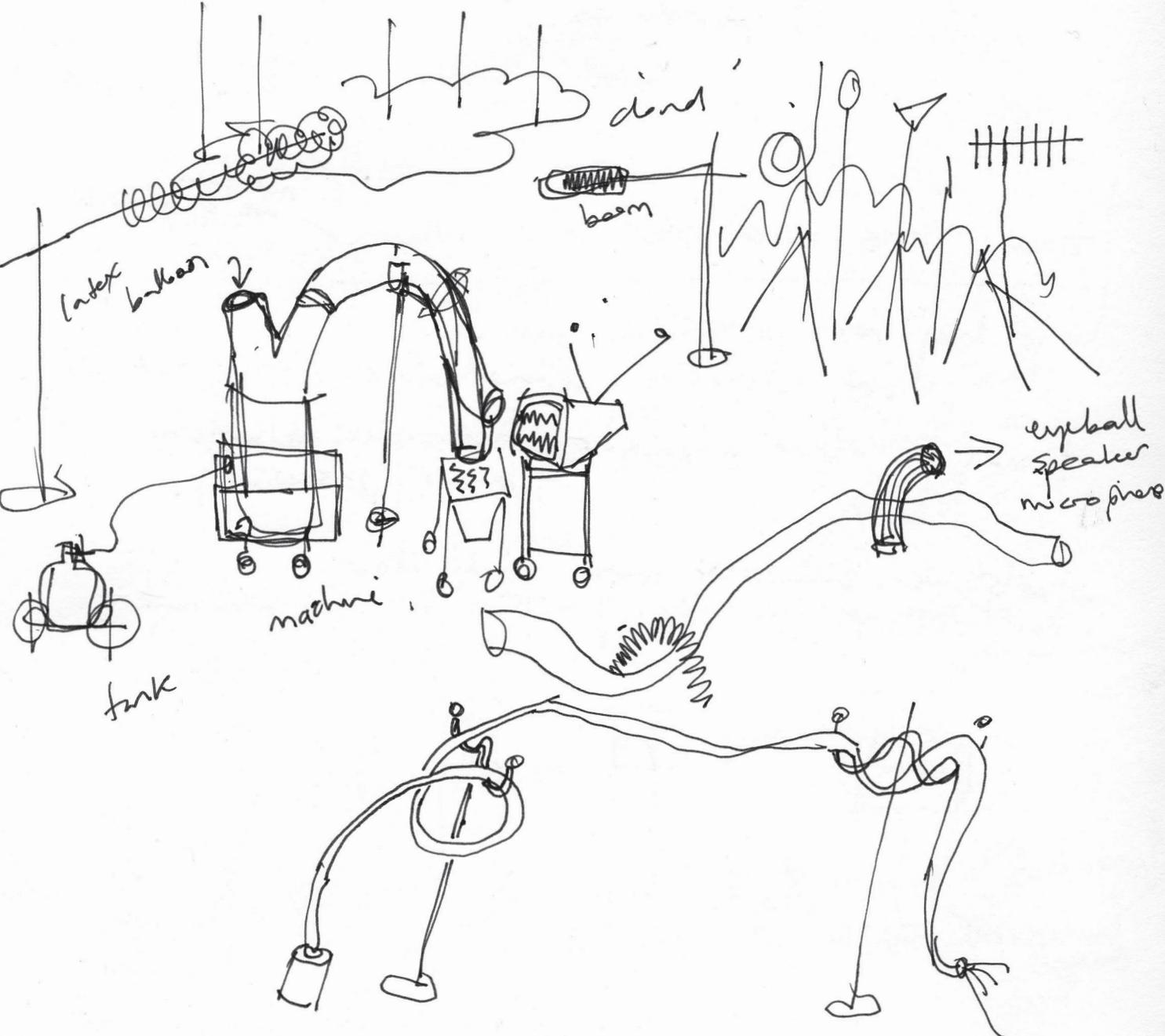
HE: It's quite forced when it's coming from them, but not when visitors are interacting with those social media platforms naturally.

CC: What are the ways offline and online could work together towards a brighter future?

MR: Turn up the brightness on your screen. Or make a Kickstarter campaign to make a new Internet, a brighter Internet.



- membrane
plates
- wires



making & making do

Robyn Walton

Within the cohort represented by *What Do I Want? Where Do I Stand?* there are two recurring threads that I would like to touch on in this essay. One is a reclaiming of the handmade, while the other involves “making do” with found objects and materials. My premise is that both of these threads involve cutting out the middleman, and together they can be seen as a response to the economic *Zeitgeist* - a neo-arte povera if you will. The ramifications of thirty years of widespread neo-liberalism, and the ensuing Global Financial Crisis, have created an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. This failure of society can no longer be ignored.

As part of *What Do I Want? Where Do I Stand?* one group of artists have collaborated for the work *On the moment of change, there is always a cup of tea* (2016). For this project Many Hands comprises Casey Carsel, Aya Yamashita, Jordan Davey-Emms, Lara Thomas, Caitlin Ramsay, Elisa Barczak, Emma Cheng, Mandy Chan, Felixe Laing and Liu Yuan. Their individual art practices are exemplified by direct action of the artist’s hand, which enables the nature of their chosen medium to be expressed, be it fibres, clay, papermaking or dough. Collectively, the group are able to pool their resources and mass-produce handcrafted ceramic cups.

This re-engagement with skill would initially appear to be at odds with a concept-driven art institution such as Elam. As Doryun Chong, 2016 judge of the Walters Prize, stated recently “contemporary art has moved away from that emphasis on technical mastery and virtuosity, more towards process and labour of the intellect” (Blundell 52). *On the moment of change, there is always a cup of tea* instead aims for both. As well as responding to the material, the group’s intent is to freely share the benefits of their skills, by serving drinks at public events associated with the exhibition. These social connections with the wider community are central to the work. I believe that the direct links between maker and user quietly assert a pre-capitalist form of production and exchange, in that the profit motive is denied: use-value is provided free of charge. Artist and writer Dave Beech has written that “the affirmation of skill in art is always a call to order. Contemporary artists deploy skill strategically because they cannot pretend that it is not ideological” (Beech 4).

As well as being part of Many hands, Elisa Barczak is also operating a trading table for *What Do I Want? Where Do I Stand?* Barczak is literally cutting out the middleman, by facilitating a fair exchange of value between worker and end user. No money will change hands, and there is no ticket clipping along the way for distribution and retail. This model has been perfected by New Zealand artist Eve Armstrong, with her work *Trading Table* (various sites since 2003). In 2007 Armstrong created an artist’s book, *How to Hold a Trading Table: A Manual for Beginners*. This open-source approach, with generous sharing of information, exemplifies the relational aspect of Armstrong’s *Trading Table* itself. Armstrong has said recently that “the trades became far less about the objects or materials and more about the conversation or moment

where these traders realised the ‘value’ of what they could offer” (Ocula Magazine). With a completely different approach, Patricia Ramos’s work in this exhibition, entitled *cost of living* (2016), also addresses concerns around value, labour economics, and the commodity. With huge quantities of hard manual labour and discarded cans, Ramos has literally created her own currency from rubbish. In my own work, *go money* (2016), solid bronze replicates cheap chocolate coins, which were themselves a deliberately oversized caricature of real money. Now the coins appear precious, but they are a copy of a copy: they are of no practical use, and are no longer even edible.

Dutch architect Bjarne Mastenbroek recently stated that working in today’s internalised retail precincts is analogous to going down historic coal mines. The workers are still denied a connection with daylight, only now they are digging up money (Mastenbroek). We work to consume, in order to sustain the illusion of everlasting economic growth required by the “masters of mankind.”¹ As Rem Koolhaas has written in his essay “Junkspace”, in these endless malls half of society madly shops, while the other half toils to support their consumption by maintaining the whole system (Koolhaas 179). In brief, Koolhaas’s Junkspace is the mediocre built residue that humankind leaves on the planet (which acts as a kind of corollary to the widely used term space-junk). Junkspace is analogous to junk food: rich and calorific, yet depleted of nutrients, designed expressly to tempt you to consume more and more.

Is it any surprise then that the current generation reacts to this over-consumption by refusing to engage? Maybe they don’t have the option. Saddled with student debt, exorbitant rents, and unlikely to ever possess property in Auckland without assistance, they have to choose between hope or denial. Retreat into frugal existence or party like its 1999. Luckily Junkspace is constantly subject to updates, rearrangement, refurbishment, the cult of the new. Its constant change and excessive production produces a surplus of potential material to feed an art practice – diverted en route to landfill.

The artist Thomas Hirschhorn has called the sensorium of Junkspace “the capitalist garbage bucket” while discussing his work (Hirschhorn quoted in Foster 11). With Hirschhorn, the precarious, the hybrid, and the expedient, become an “aesthetics of resistance”, a rallying cry to subvert capitalism (Foster 10). This approach is also expressed here in the work of Felix Pryor, Java Bentley, Kirsty McNeil, and Aya Yamashita, who all make use of whatever the capitalist garbage bucket throws their way. As with the arte povera movement in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s, these artists seek freedom from the free market by ascribing value to discarded and everyday poor materials.

Pryor tends to operate at the dumpster diving end of the spectrum. One recent work, *Fasces* (2016), comprises an aggressive assemblage of broken glass cast into a concrete base. Similar works have incorporated scrap metal and other debris. These hooligans are no longer happy playing second fiddle to some prissy art object: Pryor’s plinths have gone rogue. Along similar lines, Bentley acquires and reassembles demolition building materials and other cast-offs, however her new forms suggest vaguely dysfunctional domesticity: a table which resembles an outsize saw horse in *Quilt* (2016), and a grossly oversized vessel incapable of holding liquid for *Utilitarian Tiers* (2016).

Recycled cardboard boxes have featured heavily in McNeil’s recent practice, or rather featured lightly. Balanced precariously in tall towers, or forming a delicate architecture upon *pilotis* of domestic clothes racks in *Skewbald* (2016), the cardboard structure

¹ The 18th Century political economist Adam Smith coined the term ‘masters of mankind’ for those who abuse their position of power to increase their own profit at the expense of others. Their vile maxim of the masters was: “All for ourselves and nothing for other people.”

rises above its humble origins. Her work in this exhibition, *Your space or mine?* (2016), fashions cardboard into multiple miniature architectural spaces. By providing one each for her entire student cohort, McNeil references the ongoing Elam studio space restrictions and negotiations.

Yamashita has been constructing elaborate versions of functional items, with materials as diverse as bread and plastic bubble-wrap. Cheap is political, allowing for a democratic, accessible practice which engages with the everyday. With one recent work, *lint carpet* (2016), Yamashita neatly weaves together all of the loose threads in this essay – found, handmade, and useful – into a carpet painstakingly needle felted from drier lint. After collecting the lint from her apartment building’s clothes dryers over a period of time, Yamashita uses a handheld barbed needle to work the fibres into a tangled, dense, but fragile material.

Of course Foster’s subversive “aesthetics of resistance” is weirdly reliant upon the machinery of capitalism to supply the fuel for its fires. The two exist in a co-dependent relationship. Without the production of surplus-value, and the constant societal pressure to aspire through acquisition, there would be no waste, junk or by-product to be recycled or re-presented.

“Junk is not trash. We know what to do with trash. But Junk hangs around. It promises something fixed. It forces us to imagine another use, and drags us toward its future” (Mitch 3).

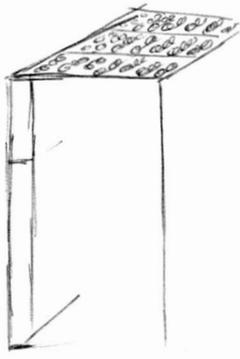
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2 sept 2014



Tiny Boxes.
placed all over the
corridor.



Flip open.



before the doors ways.

must make
them soon.
Is it too closely
associated?

9 - 10 sept.

temporality is
the real?

False Realisms p9141



cost of living?

Is this the impact of art?
to show the real knowing that
try as we do we will only
represent something.

Compliancy, consideration and the cusp

Avigail Allan

The idea for this exhibition was given to us by our supervisors during an early-morning group meeting. Michael Parekowhai and James Cousins sat in front of our year group and instructed us to “get off our arses,” like they had in their days at Elam School of Fine Arts. In their final year, they took over an old telecommunications building as a last big hurrah for their year group. From their experience they told us that this opportunity would not only offer the public a glimpse into our work as emerging artists, but would truly give us a show of our own, without the restrictions and scrutiny of the end of year graduate show. With the aim of accommodating up to the 95 students in our year, the huge range of practices were too diverse to connect with an overarching theme. Instead, the word of the day is context, context, context. The context of the cusp, the edge, the cliff-face of graduating, leaving one institution and learning to navigate others. The cusp is looming and it is significant.

Professional and creative practice is transforming in the face of drastic changes in our social and economic environment. Most of us are Generation Rent, the cost of living and property ownership rising exponentially since the 1980s without a corresponding increase in salaries (Howden-Chapman et al. 111). With the addition of our burgeoning student debt, it will be harder for our generation to fund our artistic practices, harder to afford artist run spaces and studios, harder to find new spaces to exhibit work. Our tutors first scoffed at the thought of turning to a public body like Auckland Council, urging us to wait until another student came forward with an uncle’s garage or warehouse. But with policies of deregulation and our government shedding almost all responsibility of new home lending, property ownership has become significantly delayed or unachievable for many on low and middle incomes, especially in larger cities like Auckland (112).

Auckland is changing. The demographic is shifting and spiking, new populations are moving in and our massive Los Angeles-like-sprawl has to somehow catch up. Two big plans are about to unfold, the Unitary Plan decides what can be built and where, with the aim of making Auckland a more compact and high-quality city, while the Long Term Plan upgrades our public transport system with the aim of connecting our most far-flung constituencies (Auckland Council 2012, 2013). It’s the biggest development to occur here in decades. Many spaces bought by Auckland Transport now lie empty, some for years, either waiting for demolition for the City Rail Link project or for a new leaseholder. This is the fate of Black Note Bar on 223 Symonds Street, offered to us by Auckland Transport. Previously a Māori music bar, it lies in an economically stagnant part of central Auckland. I remembered learning from a talk last year by local historian Edward Bennet, that unlike Karangahape Road, the area of upper Symonds Street never recovered from the construction of the motorway spaghetti junction behind it.¹ Businesses there often come and go. We jumped at the offering knowing that it was the perfect opportunity to learn the ropes of the changing conditions of creative practice. We can’t always rely on an established art gallery or conventional art space – more and more artists will be instead occupying bars for a couple of weeks a year.

¹ Edward Bennet is a Karangahape Road historian and somewhat of an Auckland icon. He takes guided tours through the area which I highly recommend. For more information, see <http://www.kroad.com/heritage/>.

We need to be more resilient and also more curious, both resisting the power structures that leave our generation in greater hardship than our parents, but also adapting and becoming more place-based and audience-focused.

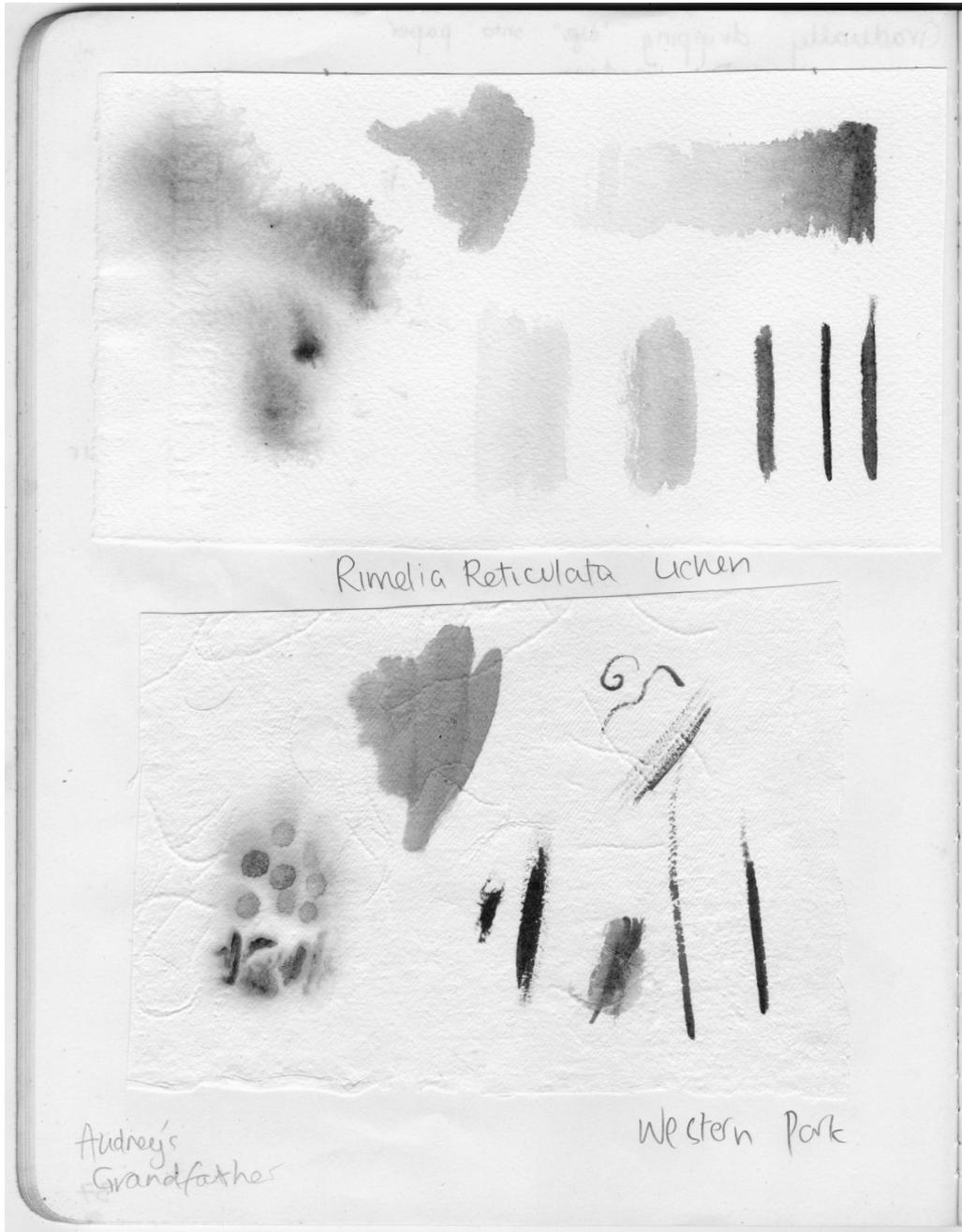
Many exciting things come from working with the Council. Working with a public body means working in the public's interest. The dream is for us as artists to break out of private practice and contribute to community building, working together with Council to make Auckland more vibrant and liveable. There are also some restrictions that come packaged in this partnership. Artists have far less control and agency over the space with the stringent regulations and red tape. Three weeks out from the show, a fire compliancy issue almost saw us losing the space entirely and moving to a shoddy office space and mechanics workshop down the street. Michael had also warned us early on about possible limitations that could arise and urged us to ask, "what are the antagonisms and conflicting agendas that come from working with a public body?" So far none have come to fruition but these are still important considerations. We're part of the democratic landscape now. The rate payer is serving us, but are we serving the ratepayer?

There are residents living above us, a barbershop next door is lending us their Wi-Fi, artists showing in the community garden are pulling out weeds during a local working bee. And even as we tried to pay respect to the area and its history there was heart-break and irony as the students from a white institution, The University of Auckland, took over the bar and had Council smear white paint over a beautiful mural of Māori creative practitioners and figures such as Ralph Hotere. Building on my previous point about the difficulties faced by the housing crisis, it's important to note that the hardest hit are Māori and Pasifika (especially as state housing schemes didn't apply to Māori for a good part of the 20th century) (Howden-Chapman et al 107). Thus, another important consideration of working with a public body is that by default the artist is connecting with the same state bodies responsible for catalysing the crisis. Is our work a nice little intervention into a largely unused part of town or are we merely an extension of a state arm that often quashes, squashes and oppresses?

This is the cusp, the new world we're thrown into of a new creative practice and a new Auckland. These issues have to be considered constantly and must be navigated accordingly. We're moving into a denser, more diverse and more connected city, we're rubbing shoulders with new bureaucratic circles, traffic engineers, fire chiefs, with lobbyists, politicians, local Iwi, and migrants. We have to act appropriately and with new sensitivity. Clashes, confusions and red tape shouldn't deter us. As Chantal Mouffe has proposed, in the public arena difficult relationships and "antagonistic" interactions are key to a healthy and vibrant democracy and in creating better political and social conditions for all (Mouffe). Artists, "get off your arses," fight, and be excited. Help rewrite the language we speak and the cultural fabric of Auckland city.

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Avigail Allan in conversation with Kaye Glamuzina and Tracey Williams

Kaye Glamuzina, Manager, Arts & Culture (Auckland Council)

Tracey Williams, Head of Creative Strategy, Arts & Culture (Auckland Council)

Avigail Allan: It was Michael [Parekowhai's] idea to have this exhibition and he said: "Someone's uncle will have a garage or a warehouse!" He was really not into the idea of using Auckland Council at first, "don't go to Council, one of you will have a big warehouse somewhere!" But the reality today is that property ownership is very rare. Today is very different from our supervisors' time. Many of today's emerging artists are Generation Rent, coming into their professional lives amidst economic crises and a huge decrease in property ownership. What does this mean for artists who need studios, artist run spaces and exhibition spaces?

Kaye Glamuzina: [The difference today] is not just about the economic crisis and property ownership but it's also about the massive rate of growth and the massive rate of demographic and cultural change. You know I went to Music School [at the University of Auckland], Tracey went to Elam [School of Fine Arts], and I was a generation ago but I'm not sure that it's that different. I'm from a migrant family; I'm the first person to go to university and actually in the '80s and the '90s it was quite rare to go to university from my high school in a small town.

Tracey Williams: Around the time Michael would have graduated I think there were around thirty to forty who would have graduated a year from Elam. Now you have one hundred graduating and that's just out of one art school – now there are many more art schools. And I'm feeling really anxious about the number of students that are being pumped out into the city.

KG: It's not being anxious about the number of students it's more being anxious about what's at the other end.

AA: Because we have this debt we have to repay and rents are going up, and as you said we have this huge demographic change of people going out into these professional fields but no space and lack of resourcing.

TW: That speaks to our point of asking: "what's on the other side?" There's this demand or this need with the number of people going out (in to the world from art school), but it's like the bits don't connect.

KG: But because there is so much change now in Auckland, there are lots of spaces changing now also. There are lots of empty spaces. So I do think that provides additional opportunities. With something like Symonds Street you go, "that's in everyone's interest!" And yes, we've had to work through some issues around it, but actually there are lots of empty spaces.

TW: We are at a time where these opportunities are available and people are picking up on them. And, related to what Kaye was saying as well, I think creative practice

is changing too. Some of the people we're working with, like Pop with Alt Group,¹ and the artists we've collaborated with through that work – it's really shifting the understanding of what creative practice is, and I think that's a shift that needs to happen as well. I still come across students that have been educated in the same way since [the 1970s]. But creative practice has changed! To work like this [with Council and with the public] and to work with a real audience-focus and to work in a city that is so diverse where there are these opportunities is incredible.

KG: Kind of circling back to your question, yes, there are particular challenges concerning property ownership and I think economically it's always been hard for artists. But, I do think if you look at the social and economic and cultural environment together it's kind of an exciting time.

TW: And in an art practice people can really step up to that. "How can I be part of this?" There are all sorts of opportunities to work not just across creative disciplines – some of the work we're involved with is with traffic engineers and businesses. I just had a meeting this morning with a man from the Takapuna Business Association. And he would say that about himself, "I don't know anything about creativity or the arts." But he did know Pop, and he did know that it made a difference [in activating the space]. Even in terms of what he's charged to do, he knew it was that one thing that transformed that space.

KG: We've been talking a lot about how you get people engaged with public art, because a lot of people don't engage, but if you ask people, "what did you do when you went to Paris?" Or, "what did you do when you went to New York or London?" People always understand the cultural fabric of a city. We're asking, how do we translate that and get people to understand that here [in our city]? We have some really good examples where it doesn't feel like Auckland is always ready for that conversation. And that's very much in the research we've just done. I was at a [meeting] with a whole lot of CEs last week and I was talking about the CRL [City Rail Link], it's an amazing opportunity to build an image of a city and to show creative practice. It's less than once in a lifetime. It's probably [going to be] the biggest transformation of this area we've seen in our lifetime. And someone asked [in relation to public art], "what's at stake?" and I said, "the human experience and the image of Auckland is at stake!" Because you could just have tunnels with trains and it could all be beige, but if we're going to be a world class city, you could change everyone who travels through the CRL, you could change their day, everyday. And we did some [rough] stats: 600,000 people visit the [Auckland] Art Gallery every year and something like 60 million will go on the CRL a year. And if we can do a really great job of showcasing and integrating creative practice in that system, how awesome would that be?

AA: So that's one way maybe that Council is shifting its roles and responsibilities by saying "we need to work on Auckland as an *image*." But is Council recognising the economic and social issues of having no private space to show? Is Council seeing a need to fill the gap in some areas, now that there's all these resources we have to provide all of a sudden?

KG: Like any organisation there's never *more resources*. I think it's made us think really carefully about where we put the resources we do have. I think the *image of a city* [in the sense of people building a cognitive map of where they are by what they see, feel, hear], particularly with public art, is that it's utterly democratic, everyone sees public art so I think that has a particular role to play in terms of the cultural fabric

¹ The Pop platform was created by Auckland-based multidisciplinary design studio, Alt Group. The following information was taken from the homepage for Pop: "Alt Group was commissioned by the Waitemata Local Board to create Pop as part of an artists' collective to generate creativity, fun, connections and experiences for Aucklanders." Many artists create and produce Pop projects. Go to <http://www.pop.org.nz/> for more.

of the city. We have a whole spectrum of programmes, for example, some focus on a small, specific area and a small, specific community. Certainly with social and economic issues it's made us think about where we put the resources that we've got. And it's made us analyse, what are other people [in Auckland] doing? Where are the gaps? I do think the changing demographic is a real challenge for us both in big and small ways. One of the things I think about a lot is that there are a lot of arts facilities, we fund some of them ourselves. But Auckland is going to potentially have a 25 per cent Asian population by 2030. We're building theatres and art galleries but is that [fit for] the creative practice that we need to show or not? I don't think we're highly engaged enough in that.

TW: Also if you take that audience focus that Kaye referred to before, and thinking about what we know from our own research about the theatres and galleries, is that [the theatres and galleries are] for a very narrow band of the city's demographic, which are predominately over 50-year-old white females. We need to think about what's being provided for youth, Māori, Pacific, Asian, migrants. We're just a small piece of the overall arts landscape and we're very much about city infrastructure and people and place, so we've taken an intervention logic in asking, "where are those gaps"? Hence things like Pop – very place-based, highly visible, public. Because those audiences [over 50-year-old white females] already have quite a lot of provision and they're often highly mobile and will travel.

AA: Yeah I guess in terms of the logic I'm kind of seeing. I mean the logic of Elam at the moment, if we're thinking of the *idea* of Elam, it's still driving that old idea of what a creative practice is and who the audience is.

TW: Things that go on walls, making things and then making people come see those things. Rather than the other way round.

AA: Yes, and maybe the shift in Council's logic is that it doesn't have any more resources as you say but all of a sudden the City Rail Link is happening and then there's space all of a sudden, or there's a huge demographic shift, or spike in one area and you go to that. It's about going out there and producing a language that's appropriate for those communities.

KG: We're not saying everything has to be this or everything has to be that and that's why you see such a breadth of work. I love the fact that we can commission Michael [Parekowhai] to do this work on Queens Wharf. Because by international standards we do not have a substantial public art collection in Auckland. And by international standards that's also not a big commission. It's not. One of the discussions I keep having with people is that they talk [badly] about Auckland as a city and when they use examples of public art they'll use [Antony] Gormley or Anish Kapoor or works that cost 25 million dollars. And this one is one and a half. So what I'm really hoping is that starts something! Auckland's mature; Auckland's maturing; we can deal with this. We can be proud of it as a destination work. So I would hope that this work is the start of us commissioning really substantial works for the city. Great cities have great art, and we should be able to do that. I do hope that over the next 10 years we can shift to having a city with a collection of public art that people love and when they leave, they'll miss the work. What do you miss about Auckland when you're not here? I want people to go, "I miss the Parekowhai." That would be awesome.

AA: But then I guess there's another tension around whether the art we're making for situations like that is appropriate? There's a lot of writing about how public art is often not so democratic because they [the artists, the commissioner] will dump stuff they *think* the public will like.

TW: That has happened, but I think that equally happens not just in public art but in building facilities and what you put in facilities. That exactly goes to what you were saying earlier about the focus being the place and the people, [when] you're working backwards to look for the content. I think there are plenty of examples where that's done really well. Creative practice is a spectrum. Because, actually, it [Pop] doesn't take away from that very high end practice that sits on the white walls of a gallery. Equally [with creative practice], it's around asking who your audience is. Edith Amatuanai is amazing at that. Edith has her high-end practice, she's totally clear about that, then she works in Ranui with youth and those things sit easily side by side as part of her practice. She's like, "that's right for that context, that's right for this one. I might do my work over here with these kids and it might pop up over here." It's about being able to understand that sort of complexity for what's right in what context and who your audience is, and where you are and how it relates.

AA: Especially in a situation like Auckland, everything is so Auckland-central-focused. When you think about the art scene especially. But Auckland is such a huge, diverse body. It's something you have to really be aware of.

KG: I guess circling back to your question - that is where Council asks, how do we serve the city? We are public servants for the city and how do we use all of these tools? And all this creative practice? And that's why people and place is so critical in trying to prioritise our resources.

TW: And while respecting all kind of practice. You can have Michael's lighthouse on a wharf and you can have paste-ups in Papakura in the shops. Phantom Billstickers have a poetry thing, [Phantom Billstickers National Poetry Day], that I saw as I was walking up Bond Street and it's just some billboards with poetry on them and I was just like, "that's cool."²

AA: It's so funny because often people from Elam will pull up their noses at Phantom posters but I think that's what Elam is missing out on... It's so accessible to the public. Elam students often laugh at Pop, "Oh, it's so ugly!" Maybe that is where artists need to fill the gap.

KG: I just think that you can have both.

TW: You can have both!

KG: Pop was ahead of its time. And I don't know if you've seen the Pop Marble Run, but it's a beautiful object.³ And if it was showing in the middle of Te Uru [Waitakere Contemporary Gallery] everyone would be going, "that's amazing." It's a beautiful object, it's sound activated, SJD did the sound for it. It talks to New Zealand visual language in terms it references the whole history of New Zealand art.

TW: And not to mention it references Fluxus and the Situationists.

KG: It's got all of that in this one object. And I go, how can you hate that? But it's about context. It's funny, I trained in classical piano and I cried for weeks when Prince died. Why can't I have both of those things? Why can't I love Stockhausen and John Cage and Prince and Beyoncé?

² On the 31st of March 2016, Phantom Billstickers announced their Poetry Posters project, "Phantom Billstickers has announced a partnership with the NZ Book Awards Trust to promote National Poetry Day – the biggest nationwide poetry event of the year." This event was launched on Friday the 26th of August. Go to <http://0800phantom.co.nz/category/poetry-posters/phantom-poetry-posters/> for more.

³ Pop Marbles by Alt Group was the 27th Pop project, installed in Karanga Plaza, 137 Halsey Street, CBD, Auckland from the 12th – 17th July 2016. Go to <http://www.pop.org.nz/projects/pop-marbles/> for more.

TW: I can listen to listen to Justin Bieber and Mozart!

AA: Yeah I love that UbuWeb shit but I can only listen to Mai FM in my car.

KG: That's exactly right. And all the thinking is the same. I don't have much time for the people saying we can only have "this" and "this" is the only thing of "value." I just think it's bullshit.

AA: We're talking about the disconnection between the public and, maybe, the Elam hive mind I guess? Are there common conflicts of interest between the Council working with the public and even an artist working with the public? And maybe not necessarily coming back to Michael's work on Queens Wharf, but maybe there's that conflict of interest with what the public wants and what Council want, even if it is a beautiful work. Is there a problem of putting it there anyway?

KG: I think there's a complexity about it! You see trends as well. There are pendulums that always swing so sometimes it's, "facilities are great!", and then it will be, "no everything has to be decentralised and democratised and out in the city," and then it's, "facilities are great!" The real challenge for us is how, in a rapidly changing economic, social and cultural environment, do we hold all of that and do the best we can for artists and for Auckland? That's really hard. The only other thing you might want to talk about Tracey, with the question around red tape, is the "broker model" that we've done.

TW: That's an awesome point. Do you know about the arts broker in the Whau?

AA: Actually, no!

TW: So there's an arts broker in the Whau Local Board area. There's an arts broker in Franklin, Māngere-Ōtāhuhu and Albert-Eden, but the pilot started in the Whau. The thinking behind it very much relates to this conversation completely. There was a group of people in the local community that were lobbying to have the local board give a space to a local group to make into another arts facility. It was in New Lynn. It was about to happen and there was a moment where we got to sort of pause and say, "Hey no, let's just have a look at this. What is the need? What's the driver?" In the end a good stocktake revealed there's actually a whole bunch of [creative activity] already happening in that area. There's also Te Uru two kilometres up the road, which Council has spent a lot of money on, and that audience is very well-served by that facility. The question was asked: what about all the other people [working or living in the area] and what's the range of creative practice? The stocktake showed there are musicians here, there are actors there, etc. A lot of those people that used to live in Grey Lynn and Ponsonby and are now living in Avondale and New Lynn. The recommendation was that the need was not a building, because we know from our own research that often putting something [for the public] in a building limits that offering geographically. There's a huge amount of resource that goes into keeping that building maintained and paying the staff. The need was actually more of a broker type model – there's a lot of existing infrastructure, there are halls, there are theatres, there are libraries. I went to a lot of those stakeholder meetings where we asked what they needed. People talked about the space that they needed and they would describe what would be happening there and the experience they would have there. One night I had this revelation – "Oh, it's a library! Or a marae!" The research done in looking at the need for that area at that time is that you almost needed a conduit – how do you map that stuff across? How do you make it visible? There are community choirs practicing in a lounge. But they could practice in the town square if you got them a permit every lunchtime and then people could enjoy it and people could get to practice and wouldn't need their

own special space. At the end of that piece of work, which was a whole lot of people in Council all sort of putting their heads together, [we decided that] you just need a person!

KG: And not a Council person.

TW: Not a Council person. A person embedded in that community. Council would pay for it. Because the money was there.

AA: A person instead of a space!

TW: Exactly, the Whau Community Arts Broker [Melissa Laing]⁴ works all across that area, across all arts organisations, all individuals. She connects into places like Te Uru and works with Unitec [Institute of Technology]. She maps stuff across and she activates empty spaces and shops, and utilises existing infrastructure. Did you see that video she took of the kids performing in the car parks? This group of local youth, [Creative Souls], did a series of amazing dance performances – in one they took over an empty indoor car park in the night. And she [the broker] is at arm's length where it's totally enabling.

KG: And you asked about red tape? Imagine what would happen if we had to produce that, if our staff had to produce that.

KG: Well we'd probably get 20 per cent of what she can get done. We work with her and if that programme looks awesome, [she gets to] go and do it. It's a service contract and that's fine. It's just our job to get this kind of stuff out of the way so people can do really amazing work.

AA: That's really interesting to know that there are places where Council makes these decisions that this is not an appropriate place for Council to be. Let's get someone in between.

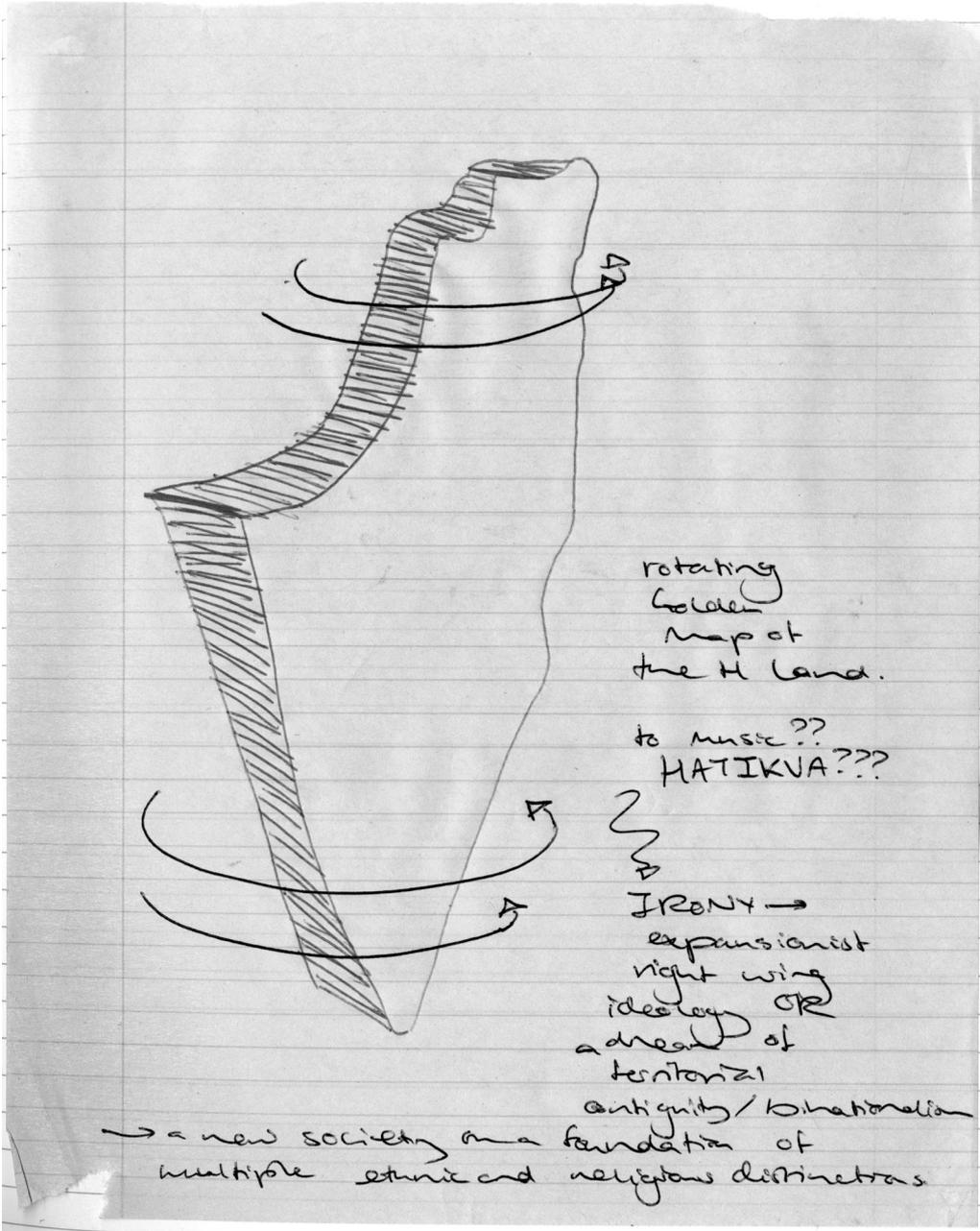
TW: And we've realised that with Pop. We're quite happy for it to be artist-led so it doesn't look like Council. We don't want to turn up, "Look! Here's Council doing some arts in Papatoetoe."

AA: "Ooh look at us we're cool and fresh and hip!"

TW: The last thing we want to do is have it look like Council!

KG: But at the same time you do want people to think, "Isn't it great that ratepayers support this work?" So we do need people to champion it.

⁴ The Whau Community Arts Broker is a service funded by the Whau Local Board. Go to <http://www.artsw Hau.org.nz/> for more.



rotating
Golden
Map of
the H Land.

to music??
HATIKVA???



IRONY ->
expansionist
right wing
ideology OR
a dream of
territorial
antiquity/biblicalism

-> a new society on a foundation of
multiple ethnic and religious distinctness

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Patricia Ramos
Many Hands
Elisa Barczak
Tommo Jiang
Holly Gillard
Hazel Ellis
Brigitte Chan
Aya Yamashita
Ash Fanauga Tofa
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