Forgetting the Ordinary

14 February – 2 March 2012

Level 17 Artspace

<http://creativeindustries.vu.edu.au/level17-current-exhibition.html>

*Forgetting the Ordinary* matches three Melbourne artists, Andy Hutson, Michael Georgetti and

Paul Wotherspoon. A self-curated show at Level 17 Artspace, the exhibition will also be developed at two other sites, Sawtooth ARI in Tasmania, and Paradise Hills gallery in Richmond.

The first construction of the show, on the 17th floor at Victoria University in Melbourne’s CBD is a playful installation of all three artists work. The well lit gallery is an oddly configured space with a staircase in the middle, which provides a default “circuit” path around the space, but also breaks any clear line of sight one might have of the works from any one vantage point. For a contemporary art space, the architecture and fittings of the gallery are conspicuous to a fault, especially considering how relational contemporary art is to a site.
- Maybe something like ‘considering the significance of *site* in contemporary art’.

The first time I saw Michael Georgetti’s work *Fountain Painting* (2009, West Space), I was absolutely intrigued. It was, as the name suggests, a “fountain” in a plastic baby pool, with coloured liquid circulating from a bucket with a motor of some kind, up a hose, out the hose, and onto a canvas – “painting”. This simple assemblage immediately brought to mind Duchamp’s *Fountain*, not just because of the name, but in terms of an elegant gesture which communicated a complex idea in a single stroke.

*Fountain Painting* at once questions the artists ubiquitous mark, as the hose apparatus seems to remove the skill.

- ­more related to ‘authorship’ thank skill, perhaps?

In the same genus as Michael Stevenson’s *Fountain of Prosperity* (2007)*,* which at its core addresses the search or “quest” for a sacred (art) object, *Fountain Play* used ordinary objects to create something extra-ordinary. By removing the artist’s direct hand from the mark making, and instead highlighting the artists DIY skill apparent in the *process* of making, the frisson between concept and artistic skill is heightened. Georgetti’s piece at BUS Projects in that same year - *Common Play* - extended this idea, where a video of a motorised toy car loaded with a bucket of paint and paint brush cocked inexpertly, wobbled towards a canvas only to collide with the canvas, creating a visual encounter both humorous and enlightening. In the next room, a Pollock-esque canvas leans against the gallery wall. So *that’s* how it’s made. The absurd humour of this contraption and Georgetti’s well thought out action, had most people in the gallery titillated.

I had a similar experience walking through Andy Hutson’s work *Super Natural Sublime* (2009, West Space), which consisted of an elaborate, life-size yet ramshackle terrarium…filled with hand modelled plants. The fluorescent plants made from paper by Hutson were fed unnaturally by UV lights. These plants over time disintegrated from the water that sprayed in certain areas. The artist built a warm and complete ecology, and visitors were able to walk through the hothouse, only for it to be slowly destroyed by its own ecosystem.

It was also around this time Paul Wotherspoon exhibited *Reverse Monument* in his solo show at TCB. The violent yet contained cyclic fit of the shielded monument couldn’t hide its demoralised state, as the loud banging revealed the recognisable spin of a washing machine. The antithesis of a monument, the domestic mechanism hides behind a carnival-esque screen only to reveal its true nature as it spins and pulls the tape off the screen with each rotation. The work finishes its cycle by ultimately destroying itself, again reversing the idea of a monument, which is by necessity characterised by both longevity and stability.

*Art is a state of encounter*

-Nicolas Bourriaud

It is with these works and ideas in mind that I went to *Forgetting the Ordinary*. Over the years each of the artists has developed their work by successfully paralleling both a seriousness in enquiry (and perhaps deconstruction) of everyday materials; with an absurd reconfiguring (or reconstruction). *Forgetting the Ordinary* brings together many objects and assemblages by each artist in more complex and fluctuating relationships to each other - and the viewer - but still in the same humorous light.

As you walk into Level 17, the gallery opens up to the left with Georgetti’s figures standing around, for all the world looking like they are examining the kitsch flower painting placed on the wall. These expressive and curious figures look on with an uncanny gaze, the blocky description of “feet” and the weight which keeps them upright also lending much individual character. Similar to the figures Georgetti addressed in *The Personality of things* (2010), the layers of dripped on paint re-enacts the ‘unstable platform...the way people see and decipher’ images (Georgetti). The paint - layer upon layer, is like a constant re-drawing over and over, delineating one and defining another. It then becomes apparent these figures peering at this painting are reiterating Georgetti’s collaborative meaning-making with the audience. The viewer is at once like these figures with eyes flickering from the sculptural statues to the picture, and a part of the works rhetoric.

This sense of animated and sentient life breathed into the works is a thread picked up by Wotherspoons’ Yves Klein blue canvas which has been miked and is continuously filmed. There is an anchor of sorts which seems to be keeping the blue field in place. The blue appears to vibrate and hum, and alludes to Klein’s Void. I peered through the video camera display and wondered if something was going to come through, and wholly believed in Wotherspoon’s rematerialisation of Klein’s myths. The ‘radiance’ Klein thought of as so alive in his monochromes and its relation to space, was being captured by Wotherspoon’s homage.

Similarly Hutson’s *Word Press* is a kinetic piece
- unsure of the similarity here, do you mean similar to Klein/wotherspoon’s work being ‘alive’?
Maybe – Hutson’s kinetic sculpture, *Word Press*, is similarly animated. This work consists of rocks (made from paper-mâché) each with letters painted on them that endlessly spin, unable to generate complete words. The discordant sound of the rotations makes you smile when considering the apparatus’ inability to formulate words, which renders the press mute.

In some ways, by coming together each artist is expanding their practice by foregrounding Althusser’s idea of *the Encounter*. The ‘collective elaboration of meaning’ in the encounter raises the ordinary materials used into ‘forgetting’ their actuality and towards what Althusser refers to as ‘no eternity in the ‘laws’ of any world or any state’. The absurd *objets d’art* are not in themselves a static entity in so much as the experience a viewer has as *part* of the space and how the work is interpreted forms this change in states.

- what about: In this sense, the absurd objets d’art are no longer static entities, but together constitute *the experience* of a viewer as *part of* the space – and the ways in which the work is interpreted inform this change of states.

In forgetting, the viewer becomes part of the works agency.

The potential for things to become something else and the re-imagining of the ordinary object and the “signs” or meaning of things, is further extended by the show’s structure.

- Maybe: The potential for ordinary objects to be re-imagined, as well as the ambiguity of the *signs*, or meaning of things, are further extended by the show’s evolving structure.

Through new transformations and visual experimentation, Georgetti, Hutson and Wotherspoon will continue to investigate ‘the ordinary’ at the two following sites. This process itself is an additional elaboration of the changing state of the show and its production of meaning. It will be interesting to see how the show progresses and develops through these new encounters.

Hi Stevie!

I made a few small changes, which are in yellow, I’ve also highlighted unusual or problematic sentences in green – with some suggestions. Otherwise there are a few grammatical things which I’ve just edited without highlighting...

Thanks so much for writing it, it’s great!

Cheers,

Andy