

Interview for the exhibition ‘Silent as Glue’

Oakville Galleries, Ontario 2010

Questions

Micah Lexier

1. I took the title of the show from the Bill Callahan song “Night.” Is there a piece of music, writing, dance or a philosophy that has influenced you?
2. What kind of notetaking do you do, if any? Do you write things down, make sketches or take photos of things that influence you?
3. Using one work in the show as an example, how do you typically start working? Is your process guided by intuition, set parameters, a particular context or some combination of these things?
4. Can you talk about your relationship to the materials you use?
5. How or when do you use colour in your work?
6. How do you decide what size a particular work needs to be? Is there a work in the exhibition that started its life at a different scale?
7. What is your studio like and how do you think it affects your work? Does its physical dimensions or the neighborhood that it is located in play any role in the work? Do you share your studio with anyone and, if so, has that person had any effect on your work?
8. Can you share an image of your studio taken today? If you don’t mind, don’t clean it up in any way—let us see what it looks like right now.
9. Has anyone had a response to your work that affected how you saw or thought about what you made?
10. Is there a particular work or an artist whose body of work is one you wished you made yourself?

Answers

Lynda Gammon

1. I have been thinking lately that the strongest influence on my art practice was experiences of a time and place: Vancouver in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s at Simon Fraser University, attending courses in the English and Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology departments; a Fine Arts course with Iain Baxter (now known as Iain Baxter&); concurrent courses at the University of British Columbia (UBC) with Michael de Courcy and David Rimmer; learning photography and spending lots of time in the darkrooms at UBC; Roy Kiyooka in the Huts; a lecture in the Buchanan building—Tom

Burrows talking about a recent trip to the Netherlands where he was looking at squatters' residencies; performance works by Evelyn Roth, Al Neil; looking at the work of Carol Itter, Gathie Falk and Glenn Lewis. I remember being exposed to ideas of architecture, space, shelter, inhabitation worked through disciplines of photography, performance and collage.

2. I take notes, handwritten. I'm influenced by things I'm reading: recently *Earth Moves: The Furnishing of Territories* by Bernard Cache, *The Rings of Saturn* by W.G. Sebald, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* by Eduardo Cadava, and Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau: The Cathedral of Erotic Misery* by Elizabeth Burns Gamard.

3. My work always begins with the act of photography. I proceed through a particular space using a loose and somewhat vacant documentation process. The spaces share similar qualities: warehouse and industrial spaces, now abandoned; obsolete spaces that no longer serve their original function, but have taken on a new life and new function often as a studio and/or domestic space. In the darkroom, negatives are projected on to pieces of glossy fibre paper and move on to be developed, stopped, fixed, and washed. Wet paper is hung to dry. The paper curls. All photographs—dark, light, blurry, etc.—are of interest to me. The photographs may then be cut, re-photographed, enlarged, darkened, re-made. Severed from the time and place in which they were taken, they are stored in boxes. The boxes accumulate. Photographs join other photographs taken at other times and in different locations. I go into the archive and begin a selection process.

4. Remaining sensitive to both the indexical quality of the photograph and the physical quality of this piece of fibre photo paper, I use the photograph as both structural material and visual image. I tape photographs together and cut and fold them; I attach them to bits and pieces of foam core, cardboard and paper. Taken apart and re-built, edited and re-edited, spaces begin to construct themselves—doors open from one room to another, stairs, hallways, dark rooms behind other rooms, walls in front of windows, walls against walls—abstract forms reveal themselves. Photographs now attach themselves to other photographs and slowly, with many back-and-forth steps involving gluing, removing, re-gluing, throwing out, there begins to be a sense of coherence. The piece always seems on the verge of failure and collapse: failure in terms of the internal logic and necessary visual and subjective coherence, collapse in the very real physical sense of falling apart. The project proceeds, the piece takes shape and the work becomes a document of the attempts and failures to create this momentary coherence.

5. I use the colour of birch plywood, black-and-white Polaroid photographs, foam core, parchment paper, fibreglass insulation, rag paper, cardboard, rigid insulation, fir, balsa wood, fibre-based photos, ink jet photographs, glassine, mahogany plywood, black Sintra PVC board, tracing paper, and matte board.

6. I am interested in the way scale works differently in sculpture than in photography. For example, when you see a four-inch photograph of a chair, you generally assume it is a photograph of a full-scale chair. However, when you see a sculptural chair that is only four inches tall you say, "Oh, that is a tiny chair, a doll's chair, or a toy chair."

7. At present my studio is a building behind my house. The space I work in always has an effect on my work. During the 1990s, I worked in a studio in Rotterdam called The Kunst & Complex. The studio was situated on a pier near the Maas River, one of the largest ports in the world. This somewhat dilapidated building had, at one time, been a box factory and was now inhabited by artists who had renovated the dark, damp and cavernous spaces into living rooms (with views over the canal), kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, and so forth. The renovations were ingenious, and in several of the spaces small trailers sat inside the larger room providing living space. I came to know Riemke de Jong, an artist with whom I collaborated on several occasions, and Joep von Lieshout with whom I exhibited at the Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam. Many of the artists were of interest to me, as their work emerged directly out of their experiences renovating particular living/working spaces in this warehouse.

8.



9. Yes, lots. For instance, in 2007 Katy McCormick wrote an essay titled *Rearrangements: Sculpture/Performance/Photography* for my exhibition with Adam Dade and Sonya Hanney at Gallery 44 in Toronto. She wrote about the performative aspect of my work. Although private, she still saw it as a performance, which involved an interaction with the materials, the space and the resultant photograph. I rehearse the work in the studio, dismantle it and later re-build the final piece in the gallery for its one-time showing, after which the piece no longer exists. Although it didn't change the way I worked, just thinking of the work as performance caused me to look at it through a slightly different lens.

10. Kurt Schwitters's *Hannover Merzbau* (1923). Part of my attraction to the work is that

it could not survive, and now only exists in relatively few murky black-and-white photographs that I peer into, in an attempt to re-construct it in my mind.