

A conversation between Laura Brown and Andrew Long on the occasion of their exhibitions - *Score for a Scene* and *Sway* at TCB Art Inc., April 2015.

Andrew: Hello! How are you?

Laura: Great! The weather in LA is miserable, it's amazing! It never rains. How is NY?

Andrew: It's good! Embracing the last bits of sunshine before freezing winter.

Laura: Any thought on what to centre a dialog on? I keep thinking 'the image' but that's the vaguest thing ever.

Andrew: Hmm... Not really to be honest - but I was wondering about how you are reflecting on your show now. Was there an outcome in terms of your curatorial practice? Has it led you to work on something else?

Laura: Hm... I'm not sure about 'outcomes'. For me it was a strange format, where I realised at the opening that people thought it was some sort of travelling show from LA? I guess from the wording on the press release...

Andrew: Right.

Laura: It wasn't about that at all. Anyhow... what's happened since... I spent a large part of the year after that show working to start a space here, but that totally collapsed. So it's been a strange time of a lot of movement and thinking but no 'outcome'.

Andrew: Sure. Did you get much of a response at the time? I know Melbourne can be hard, particularly if you're showing artists that aren't from Melbourne.

Laura: Strangely I had a few people tell me they thought it was really great to have those artists in Melbourne, I guess because half were from the US?

Andrew: That's great. Had you lived in Melbourne prior or was TCB simply a space you were interested in?

Laura: TCB was a space I was really interested in, I'd followed their programming for a while - then had this idea for the show and it clicked. With the show in my head everything looked red, and I recalled TCB's floor and it all made sense, that gross vinyl floor.

Andrew: I love that floor.

Laura: Yes!

Andrew: I remember thinking that the red globe was part of the nude drawing, but I don't think it was?

Laura: It wasn't, it was uncomfortably close but I didn't think Tyza would mind. Originally I wanted the whole room with red ceiling lights but it worked out nicely just turning most of the lights off and then your room still blazing bright past it. Did you have a visual of the show in your head like that before it happened?

Andrew: The way I installed my show responded to the space - but it could respond to any gallery space in a similar way. I was really happy for it to be at TCB though because I had become close to a few of the artists in and around the gallery and the studio upstairs, and similarly I had respected the program ever since I'd moved to Melbourne.

Laura: Yes! Have you had shows since?

Andrew: I actually had a show right before I came to New York - it was collaborative work with Lane Cormick - who has his studio upstairs from TCB. Our show was at Bus Projects in Collingwood.

Laura: Oh! When was that?

Andrew: September 2. It came about really quickly and literally opened the night that I left town.

Laura: Ah! Can you describe the work? (I'm also googling it)

Andrew: We made an edition of large photocopies that we coated with black enamel on the back and wood varnish on the front. We had been experimenting with having the enamel soak through to the front side of the paper and used the varnish to complete them as kind of heavier objects. They were blu-tacked to the wall in sets of 3 with an agave plant to accompany each set.

Laura: I love this -

"They return our looks. Our curiosity turns on itself, devours itself, becomes, for us, preposterous, futile, presumptuous, vulgar. Why on earth did we think we were interested? What did we expect to learn?"

Is the photocopy of anything? They're ghosts...

Andrew: That text was a collage, completely plagiarised. We tried so many different images, and working collaboratively was a challenge - to meditate about what the content of the copy was going to be in addition to every practical element of the work. In the end we used this image Lane took from youtube, which just happened to resonate visually with the processes we had developed. It's of Joe Cocker performing, but it's also of nothing. It is a ghost.

Laura: I like the title 'Lack'. The sound and shape of it and how it points to the lacquer on the copies and the lethargy of the plants too.

Andrew: Yes, totally. Originally the plant was going to be the image used, but then we decided to get actual plants.

Laura: Cool. Then the subject is right there.

Andrew: The image became the object.

Laura: Was each part a shared decision? I almost read it as the copies being yours, the plant being Lane's

Andrew: It was a really interesting process for both of us I think. There is a relation between the way the plant absorbs moisture / the paper absorbs the lacquer and enamel... but really each element of the work was agreed upon over about a year of working in the studio together on and off, handing copies back and forth, talking about work that we liked etc. Inevitably the subject turns to collaboration but the work maintains basic traits from both of our individual practices.

Laura: I remember installing at TCB waiting and wondering when you'd be back to add the last part of the work, and wondering what that would/could be. Which I guess in a sensation someone even visiting the show might have.

Andrew: It was the people! I did have ideas to add a little more, but it didn't feel right.

Laura: What would that be?

Andrew: I had experimented with taking the silicone blobs from the pine pieces onto the wall in different ways. I tried it, but it wasn't right. I mean, it was still a really minimal addition - but it was not working. I stuck to the original plan, which was to focus on the frame, frame the viewer with an image, and that's all.

Laura: Yeah.

Andrew: Basically that show is my point of departure here. I've been setting up my studio and trying to get back in the mindset that I was in around that time.

Laura: Great!

Andrew: I was happy with the show, but I want to build on it - do a more direct version.

Laura: How long / premeditated was the move? (Come do it in LA!)

Andrew: I'd been thinking about it for a while - I'd been here for a while back in 2011/2012 so had some contacts. Then I visited in June and it made sense so I went back to Melbourne and packed up.

Laura: Is 'the image' a question in your head, in making work? Whatever that might mean - to me that TCB work was totally surface... totally empty. But when you talk about it you talk about the structure...

Andrew: Yeah - I would say "image as architecture" is on my mind.

Laura: Image as architecture, surface as a structure.

Andrew: Exactly. Which was reflected in the image-content too - the structure of the newspaper, the structure of the phone directory. The structure of the print disrupted by the silicone. Very materialistic, but trying to create multiple different ways of looking at something seemingly arbitrary... the phone book and newspaper aren't

meaningless - they contain a lot of information within them and also the way they function.

Laura: But they are arbitrary too.

Andrew: They are ubiquitous, which is something I am interested in. Things that are pervasive, taken for granted - to look at them differently, materialistically, spatially, is interesting.

Laura: Yeah

Andrew: I like that technically you could call a number printed on one of the works.

Laura: Yeah! I recently received a yellow pages in the mail... it was a comedic moment to me.

Andrew: Yes! I actually had trouble finding the phone books when I needed them.

Laura: Why do they still exist?

Andrew: So redundant.

Laura: I didn't even unwrap it before trashing it. Streamlined. At least it wasn't as thick as they used to be.

Andrew: This was another parallel I was wanting to make - between the declining materiality of print-media (phone-book, newspaper) and the digitally printed timber which uses a newer technology – typically for public signage, advertising - commercial purposes.

Laura: People will call the gallery I work at and ask for directions, and I wonder how they even found the phone number if they can't handle the address.

Andrew: Hah – true.

Laura: Oh I assumed it was wheat-pasted on!

Andrew: Ah! No it is printed straight onto the timber, and over the silicone - which was hard for me to get done!

Laura: In LA a lot of the billboards are hand painted! There's a giant iPhone 6 ad in downtown right now, with 6 phones falling from the sky--the whole thing's hand painted.

Andrew: Oh wow! Are they doing it in a way, which sort of "commissions" the sign writer/painter/artist figure, or is it just simply a done thing in LA?

Laura: Nope! It's just a different means of producing a billboard. But I suppose more cost effective, to pay some days of labor vs that giant of a print.

Andrew: Right. Not for long....

Laura: You mean minimum wage? Or printing costs?

Andrew: Oh, I mean the machines that I have been using are designed to do one off large prints very cheaply, so I guess in the future when they are commonplace, faster... it will be easier and cheaper to print out a billboard, straight onto sheetrock or whatever.

Laura: A building-sized piece of sheetrock!