

Prolegomenon

Stella Corkery “No Direction Home” and Kara Baldwin “Fishes of Australia” 09/08/2017 – 26/08/2017

<Stella Corkery to Kara Baldwin> Sunday 17/09/2017

Hi Kara !

I've been thinking a lot about my show at tcb and how much I enjoyed the experience. What gave you the idea to use this space ?

<Kara Baldwin to Stella Corkery> Sunday 17/09/2017

That's a hard question to answer! In honesty, a friend of mine is on the board and they needed an artist to show in three weeks. She knew I had quite a lot of work backed up and asked if I'd be interested in showing. I've been working on iteration one of fishes of Australia for a while now and thought it would be a good chance to get feedback and see the piece hung (as I work on it in segments and hadn't seen the entire image unrolled before this).

What about you? What made you choose to show at tcb and was the work significant to the space? As you aren't based in Melbourne, I was wondering about the context of the work 'no direction home' and whether being shown in different locations had an effect on the show itself?

<Stella Corkery to Kara Baldwin> Monday 18/09/2017

:ah ok :)

I have been aware of tcb and admired the program for several years. Friends I have in Australia have shown there, the projects have always been interesting and specific to the space. And it was a way to reach out to those people too. I have representation in Auckland so the opportunity to show in a non-commercial gallery opens up a space in your practice that may not be fulfilled within the context of a commercial gallery.

I put in a proposal application when there was the callout in 2016. I'd been waiting to see it come up. My initial application was very different to what I ended up showing ha ha. I fell into the material and formal aspects of work for *No Direction Home* almost by accident. Although the ideas had been churning around for a while.

Some of the ideas that surround the work are movement, migration and survival. For that reason it certainly felt like the right context to show the paintings away from the location of their making. It was their job to go somewhere else and represent those ideas.

And as an aside I was thinking about the tcb floor and how I could have a conversation with the colours and shapes of the linoleum. Looking at an install photograph of the entire show, the shapes and colours on the wall and the floor seem kind of sing-songy.

Did you get feedback for your drawing ? Did you find it critical ? How did visitors respond to the plastic doorway piece ?

<Kara Baldwin to Stella Corkery> Monday 18/09/2017

You wrote about the work having a conversation with the patterns, colours and shapes within the space. Decisions on how to install often intrigue me as they affect how the work is received/ interacted with. I noticed within your installation, all but one of the paintings were portrait, with an exception of one landscape painting on the left hand side. Was this an intentional act?

On a side note, whilst I was sitting the gallery I had some people come through and discuss your work. One immediately started noting all the immediate subject matter, "a bindle" "a campfire" "a traffic cone", another was really intrigued about the scraping of paint and the material choice, stretched velvet. This isn't a critical observation, but I did find it interesting how different people pick up and identify with different aspects of the work. I noticed two paintings in the show shared a similar subject with different colour palettes; what is the significance of colour choice in these paintings? I really enjoy the atmospheric quality, the work is reminiscent and soft whilst seeming to portray elements of waywardness (apologies if I'm off the mark, to me it seems to resinate lazy campfire and summer days where time plays no designation.) I was curious as to how colour functions to you, the importance and choice and interaction between individual paintings.

As with my work, I got some feedback but not too much critical. I did however get a lot out of the conversations I had with people about how to further develop both this work and my practice. This was the first installation I have had where I have focused on drawing, as I have tended to show mostly video and sculptural works in the past. This was a change, doing something quite minimal and restrained in contrast to other shows I've had. I think the piece was not effective in its current iteration; it's a question I often encounter when focusing on humour and nostalgia in response. The question of how to relate an image that is reliant on shared cultural background significance (such as a physical homage to posters within fish and chip shops) and the leap between understanding the capitalist marketing of species that exist outside land boundaries is lost in this show. Without my summary, the image would not have any obvious ties to either context and falls short in this respect. By trying to make a work that is not 'over spectacular', I think I may have gone too much in the other direction and alienated ideas within the work, creating a flattened image with very little reactionary content beyond an initial view of 'huh, fish'. The clear curtain was brought in as an iconic object; the opening of a fish and chip shop or milk bar, but once again it seemed to be lost in the space. One friend at the opening even remarked that they thought it was part of TCB and didn't associate it with the show. This comment really stuck with me, as did little comments about the fish themselves, the roll of paper and the use of the space. It was a positive experience and has given me plenty to consider, which is great.

<Stella Corkery to Kara Baldwin> Tuesday 19/09/2017

The hang was carefully thought through and took a way longer than I thought it would. We decided on 12 paintings and we brought with us 24. Not really knowing what was going to hold up away from the studio and what would work well in the space and the group. On the second day we did a major edit, that was great. Fresh eyes the morning after you think you've finished an install is essential and potentially devastating ! There was a lot of trying things out, a lot of choosing about what to put where, paintings going up and down, we gave ourselves brain fry. So many decisions go into the formal and conceptual choices. The landscape Knapsack worked well as a kacky and great colour in that position and I always remember this really great tip I read from R.H.Quaytman, some of her works are merely arrows that point to the next work. So the knapsack, I think, added a punctuation or rhythm to the viewing experience.

Oh I am envious, the day I sat in the gallery the visitors were all so quiet ! You are talking about *Goldtops (blue)* and *Goldtops*, right ? Eeerrmm that decision came about in the studio and in part unplanned. I was really chuffed with how the white paint on blue velvet version turned out and thought it would be fun to reverse the colour-way plus I had the right shade of paint on hand. However surprisingly it ended up more as a monochrome. The blue pigment was so strong it stained the white beneath. I was left with only the dug-out line as the drawing and not with the added colour of the velvet ground. Positioned next to each other I thought they were vibrating.

The work had a reading quite different from my initial intentions, which I have to appreciate and stand by. I was hoping to make something political without being overt, I'm still not sure if that worked. I think maybe the romance of the velvet dispelled any attempt to politicize. That said I really enjoyed working with the velvet ground and as a social and art historical conversation I think it still has legs.

Taking colour more seriously in my practise has been a recent thing. I had been gifted a lot of paint over the last few years and actually I have really been working with what I had at hand, the subject would dictate the colour but often my thoughts about it have been pretty hasty. This is actually a pretty huge conversation ! In relation to the tcb paintings the velvet ground and the paint on top were planned reasonably carefully. Considering any install no matter the idea of the painting I find the vibration of colour between paintings has to be taken into account.

It seems you have had some valid thoughts about the result of your install and how the pieces relate to your practice as a whole. From what you have been saying I think the clear curtain was an important (like Quaytman would say) arrow for the install. Because it was such an iconic signifier I wonder how it would have helped the overall effect if it had been hung in its own space within your room. More closely connected with the drawing so the ideas within the two pieces could have bounced off each other more. When you were standing in the front room it became part of the painting show too. Which I think may have helped dilute its presence.

<Kara Baldwin to Stella Corkery> Tuesday 19/09/2017

"Fresh eyes the morning after you think you've finished an install is essential and potentially devastating" - this statement is the best thing I've read about art practice in a long time. And very true.

Arrows that point to the next work- a great sentiment directing rhythm and audience. I like the idea of being directed around a room visually subconsciously, much the same way one listens and moves to sound. It would be interesting to see what pictures also didn't make the final edit, as it really did come across as a complete piece/ series- I can't believe this was only half of the choice! Sometimes I think the hardest part of a show or body of writing is the culling and resolution stage, being precise without over doing it or in the case of writing, using only precise language without superfluous statements. Paintings as punctuation, and rhythm based on object to object interaction even without an active gaze.

I was talking about Goldtops (blue) and Goldtops. They were vibrating next to each other and stuck with me after the show.

Writing back in conversation is more difficult than I planned; I keep referring back to the email as there is so much interesting information that I don't want to miss! Apologies if this comes across as staggered, I'm not used to this format. I agree that velvet is a huge topic, its history as nobility, and price due to the complex process of weaving. But yes, in modern times it does often get loaded with connotations of burlesque and romance. I guess it probably has something to do with donning women in velvet to show worth and rank. However, I am no expert in materials and am only aware of the complexities involved in weaving it before modern machines made it simpler and thus more readily available.

The clear curtain with my show was important but I agree, it faded into the background and was not clear cut. It is definitely something I'll work with in the future- different colours, different hangs, audio etc. Originally I was planning on also including a video work which I removed as I was worried about having too many messages within the space. I think it was the correct decision to leave the video out, but I do think that there needs to be more signifiers within the work to provide insight. I've already started working on a next iteration which will hopefully come to fruition. I am happy with how the show was received and the look of the image, but I'd be lying if I said it was fully resolved. However, it's a strong standing point to go on from, the icon, the symbol, the homage, the image, the space. Also the history of representation and breaching the topic of silly, as something serious. I've been thinking a lot about how to use "silly" in a way that is still considered and not discarded by the mind upon initial reaction.

<Stella Corkery to Kara Baldwin> Thursday 21/09/2017

...It's taken me a little while to get with the real value of a sometimes severe edit of a show. That it's not just some add on at the end to get done as quickly as possible (although it may be that often there's not much time for it...). Recognizing it's a part of making the work. I spend a lot of time in studio arranging, rearranging.

An old friend of mine made a show for Ivan Anthony a few years back, the gallery is a group of interconnecting small rooms he showed plastic curtains in all adjoining doorways, that was the only thing in the show, it was cool. However he is very into the conceptual artists like Donald Judd quite different to your purposes :)

'Silly' is pretty fun and I reckon go for it if you have the inclination, I think we have got to follow these (could be intuitive) leads (something will be pointing you that way for good reason). Have you read Tim Gentles article Cartooning the Body ? I have friends in NY who sort of use that way of working on their painting, like Rafael Delacruz, it's sort of going back

to a postmodern approach like some of Kippenburger's work. I'm thinking drawing knapsacks and road cones are a bit silly too haha.

<Kara Baldwin to Stella Corkery> Thursday 21/09/2017

The work with the plastic curtains sounds really cool! I love spatiality in installation; showing the viewer that it is not only the object/ works integrity but the entire space in which we show which affects the viewer. I've always found art spaces really fascinating as these bare rooms which have the ability to highlight and explore so many themes. Same as pop up shows, outdoor installations etc. Did you notice the back room in TCB is slightly askew? Whilst I was playing in the back room during install I happened on how the tiling was slightly off to the wall and looked up the floor plan. It has been inset at a slight angle, so whilst it's still a rectangle, it's an interesting fit in the space.

I haven't read the article by Tim Gentles, but I will definitely check it out! recently I've been reading a lot on the power and politics of play and humour. How we disregard humour and play as insignificant (in comparison to serious discourse), yet they are inherent in all cultural societies. Play as a child is used to teach and conform to a societal role, whilst the play of an adult can be seen as a rebellion of the societal role through disruption. - at least, that's the theory. Same can be said about the transgression in humour and in all aspects of 'being silly'. It's transference of power from one thing back to the self. I guess in a sense, I see humour and play as political and extremely important in understanding propaganda and interaction.

I did enjoy your road cones! I felt they also kind of looked like clown hats, with the sun doubling as pom poms. But I have silliness on the brain!

Life would be a little too serious without the whimsical. I think adding whimsical to a sterile white room environment of a classic gallery is probably my attempt at integrating self and the negativity of stoic environments. Or I just like playing.

I really enjoyed your work in the front room. A few people mentioned to me that the two shows worked well together, whilst tcb shows two separate rooms for shows, I reckon work is always read differently depending on what is going on around it. Solo shows and group shows definitely have very different responses in my opinion. I don't know where I'm going with this, I've enjoyed your feedback as well. It's really cool to hear and listen to how another artist works, as it's such a varied platform- in studio, ideas, installation and everything really!

<Stella Corkery to Kara Baldwin> Tuesday 26/09/2017

Actually I did not notice the askew-ness, although I did very much like that space, only the thickness of a wall away but seemed completely of its own, autonomous, where a whole other set of rules applied. It was cozy but still remained a focused space. I wondered how I would have organized my install if I had been in that room, that's not to say I wasn't happy in the front because I was very happy to be there and I think we nailed the installation but it was a thought, especially when another option or a possible route that could have been is right in front of you. What I was especially curious about was the next space along that super narrow (is it storage ?) space, the skinny, dusty hallway.

Play is super important in my practice. I haven't pledged myself to just one kind of painting so often some studio days I will act out, maybe seriously (painting paradoxes) a kind of nonchalance with materials to reach for the unexpected. If I'm on the ball I can work this quite effectively and find a place in the work where I think I have the upper hand (lol) and call it done !

<Kara Baldwin to Stella Corkery> Wednesday 27/09/2017

I agree, it really does feel like a separate space within a larger divide. The hallway space has always intrigued me, especially because it seems so foreign in design to cast away windows. A dusty wedge space with electrical cords and a view straight onto Russell street, opposite the heritage listed carpark- it becomes a surreal offcut; rejected for its natural light, noise and temperamental conditions.

By having the upper hand it sounds like you're battling/ dancing/ playing with the work! Intriguing; I wonder if every artist has a distinct relationship with what is created by gesture and material; articulated into being. It's a nice thought, that we not only create but redefine ourselves as well. Ah! I always seem to fall away into tangents, as is the way of the world.

<Stella Corkery to Kara Baldwin> Wednesday 27/09/2017

ha ! you are an excellent and articulate writer Kara, I'm envious of your skill !

It's been fantastic to have these conversations

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<Kara Baldwin to Stella Corkery> Wednesday 27/09/2017

Thank you and back atcha! I absolutely love having conversations about other peoples' practices as it opens my mind up to different ways of thinking and exploring ideas and possibilities. So thank you :)