



Every Space as a Temporary Gallery

ALIRA CALLAGHAN

Gallery as Residency

9 - 23 February





Residency

While residency often refers to states of extended stays—being a resident, having residency, residing in—that denotes a certain fixed-ness, the artist residency is contradictorily an event that requires temporary permanence. Time pressures result in the need for a fast setup and the creation of an environment conducive to productivity, while also attempting to mark out the space as being one's own (or at least different from the previous inhabitants.) Often these things take more time than a residency can provide.

While this premise for working might seem counterintuitive and undesirable it provides the sort of unstable, variable and often unpredictable environment that has the potential to generate new ideas, outcomes and interactions in an intensive manner. While a more traditional and familiar studio can be a place where productivity flourishes, it is generally a removed and private space that completed work emigrates out of, sometimes returns to, but always remains somewhat disconnected from.

In contra-distinction to this then is the possibility of a residency as a thinking/making/showing space that exists between studio and gallery. A residency provides instability to challenge the habitual practices of studio production while interrogating the finality of a gallery, opening it up as a space for further creative potential.



Objects

Disco balls, sandpaper, rubber, seaweed, perspex, paper, alfoil and nails are all objects. Or are they things? Or maybe they can be considered materials? A disco ball attached to the ceiling, wobbly light dancing over the walls, is an object that captures one's attention. It's mesmerizing and alluring and instantly recognisable. And if it breaks or is taken down and left on the floor is it the same object? Or a broken thing? Is something's object-ness attached to its functionality? It seems a fickle club to be a part of, if to be in it, you need to have clearly defined parameters for usefulness. And if the mirror pieces fall off the disco ball and are collected as a potential material (or material with potential) to be used for another project are they not also things? Or small, shiny objects?

The ability of each term—object, thing, material—to move between definitions by not being contained within just one works towards questioning previous understandings based on classification. Their fluidity forces reconsideration of our relationships with them once those understandings are challenged.

If everything can sit somewhere or everywhere along the object/thing/material slide then maybe more important than classifying a disco ball is to consider what *we* are. And if we are objects like everything else what does it mean to study objects while being objects?



Collaboration

"[C]uriosity...seems to me the first requirement of collaborative survival in precarious times." (Tsing 2016, 2)

Collaboration, more than interaction, infers forward motion or an act of working towards something. It is an action that has the potential to extend past exploratory art practices. Within the space of the artist residency the opportunity to come into 'new' contact with familiar objects, things and materials encourages reimagining boundaries, definitions and relations. In order to collaborate, the new contact takes place through slow negotiations without presuppositions—a process of attempting to unlearn and then re-engage curiously. In this way, the focus of collaboration is not a uniting of labour between two artists but between a multitude of objects, things and materials that includes humans.

If the process of curiously collaborating takes place within an unstable environment like a residency then it's plausible that the types of visual questions that can be asked and played with could involve suspending a disco ball in a gelatinous cube or sanding an inflated balloon or fusing together sponges and silicon. This kind of object, thing and material mingling has the potential to generate hopeful collaborations that could help us to open our imaginations.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2016. *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

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Alira Callaghan is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice explores the way we shape and are shaped by our interactions with objects, things, and materials (o/t/m). Working across installation, sculpture, participatory events and performance, Callaghan's practice generates encounters that work towards problematising preconceived ideas of objects, things, and materials often employing concepts of play, humour and curiosity. Having graduated with a Bachelor of Art (Fine Art) (Hons) from Curtin University in 2013, she is now undertaking a practice-led PhD that uses creative practice to critique certain nonanthropocentric philosophical discourses surrounding our relationships with objects.

Paper Mountain is an artist-run
initiative co-directed by:

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