

REPURPOSE

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TO: How do objects or found material influence your approach to making art?

TR: It depends on the role these materials play in the artwork. But generally I do like having something 'external' to my narrative (i.e. the thing in the world that has its own history and associative power) as setting some kind of rules for how I proceed with the artwork – like a seed or lattice might determine the growth of a crystal structure. Sometimes the act of finding and the possibility of accumulation is the most interesting thing, which becomes transformative for the objects themselves. Sometimes that process is unconscious, complimentary to a daily rhythm (like walking, repeatedly engaging with any space or activity, etc). I also find it interesting and enjoyable to incorporate found material, clearly with previous lives and contexts, into works that don't primarily have them as the focus. I guess in small ways they are points of connection to 'life', to memories of touch and purpose, to what already exists and is bound up in relationships of usage (or severed and discarded). I guess it gives the world of 'life-objects' more salience.

When you make a work, what are the qualities you would like it to evidence?

This doesn't happen every time I make a work (in fact, perhaps only rarely), but it's something I aspire to. I like being blindsided by simplicity. I love the smallness of things, the ordinariness of things, and the latent poetry or grace or tenderness in the things we touch and the spaces we inhabit that can become clear in certain situations/presentations, no matter how fragile or temporary. When something is so close to the everyday, I feel it as a more profound revelation. A lot of what I think about and travel towards/around through making work, is about drawing something from (perceived) nothing, holding it briefly and releasing it back to 'nothing' – back into the world of things or weather or other kinds of indifference. In ideal, rare moments, it is not about creating or destroying, but about shifting positions. I am still figuring out how to do this and I may never get it. For me the interest lies in what is given value, what is acknowledged to exist, in what situation. My work takes various forms so I know this is not always obvious. And sometimes I have to make very contrived structures to make these situations, which are fleeting at best, possible.

Which Australian artists do you admire and respect the most?

Deb Jones, Neil Roberts, Charlie Sofo, Fiona Hall, David Sequeira, Garry Trinh, Rebecca Baumann, Gabrielle de Vietri, Jonathon Jones

Which artists have influenced you longest and deepest?

Neil Roberts, Tom Friedman, Roni Horn, Mona Hatoum, James Turrell. Happy to expand on this if needed!

Was there a specific artwork, piece of writing or music, which revealed to you the power that art can have?

It is hard to single out just one artwork. I think one of the earlier notable memories I have was as a teenager seeing William Kentridge's animated short film 'Ubu Tells the Truth'. I don't think I had been so viscerally affected by an artwork before, though I hadn't seen very much at that stage. Many of his other works have a strong emotional effect on me. Maybe also the Patti Smith song 'Land', which I first heard at a similar time of life. Those things probably say more about the age I was and exposure to creative expression I had at the time? They were revelatory.

Are there aphorisms, are there words of advice you were given which you sometimes bear in mind when you are making a work?

I certainly don't succeed in this all the time but something that is persistent in my mind is this from a friend and fellow artist: the risks get bigger, the better you get at taking them. I think it was in the context of a conversation about how when making an artwork, there should be this sense of risking absolutely everything. I will honestly say that I don't apply that to the full in

every situation yet though I admire people who do. But I keep it in mind particularly when there's any chance of vulnerability and exposure – it's always an opportunity to explore something unknown, to learn something new, to fail absolutely – or it's a squandered moment for growth. Potential failure is a lot more compelling than certain success. I think.

What are the qualities you prize in your chosen medium/media?

My primary medium for much of my time practising has been glass and sculptural assemblages. What I value about glass is – broadly – the ways in which it affects how we look at things: for example as a reflector, distorter, a definer of a space. There's many different ways to use glass and my use of it is quite narrow, but I use it in a way that allows me to see other things (objects/matter, light, space) differently. I like to work in sculpture because I can relate to it in a tactile way and I like materiality and limits.

Where do you find the objects that inform your artwork? Do you collect other objects that sit outside of your art practice?

A lot of objects are found incidentally in the course of daily life, and take a long time to accumulate without necessarily having significant meaning until later down the track – when the conditions for seeing exist. I discarded most of my long-held collections of detritus when I moved to a different city, and haven't quite shaken the feeling that I need to let go of objects. I think I'm collecting 'visual' situations more than objects these days, like light reflections, and other temporal or physically unmovable things.

How do objects facilitate the visual language within your work? How do found objects coalesce within a composition/arrangement or direct its form and structure?

Every work is different. Sometimes the object is central, and guides any formal and conceptual decisions. It's a feeling of wanting to keep the integrity (including limitations) of that thing. However, sometimes this process can happen in reverse, in which case the object becomes a bit symbolic but its function in the world or the process of encountering it is important. Sometimes the emphasis is on rhythm (in groupings of things) and association.

Who are/were the writers who have been most important to you during your lifetime?

I'm self-conscious about answering this question because I don't get round to reading a lot, but I have been greatly influenced and enriched by the writings of Rebecca Solnit, Jeanette Winterson, Anne Michaels, the artist writings of Neil Roberts and Stephen Procter have also had a great impact.



Iris, 2016, video still.