

SITUATION Exhibition Presentation

Remco Roes

Hasselt University

Remco Roes graduated as an architect in 2007 and, since then, has continually explored the edges of that discipline. He is currently working on a practice-based PhD in interior architecture at the University of Hasselt (Belgium). The main focus of his research is the exploration of the status-quo of a given site as the basis for the creation of 'sublime' space. This challenge is approached from two opposite sides. The first entails a philosophical and historical – and increasingly lateral and personal – reading of 'the sublime'. The other approach consists of the creation of spatial works within the context of an artistic practice.

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Alis Garlick

RMIT University

Alis Garlick is currently completing her thesis in Interior Design, which is focused toward an expanded notion of curation. Defining her role as an inter~ator (interior curator), Alis investigates how curation may be used as a design strategy for critical intervention within the 'space' or 'interior' of an exhibition. Exploring modular systems, aimed at being responsive to how objects ('art') can inhabit space, her research ultimately encourages a collaborative dialogue between interior designers, contemporary artists and curators.

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Exercises of the ~ man (v) : found dialogues whispered to drying paint

Nomen Nescio: To start off, could you briefly elaborate on the outlines of your own research, before zooming in on this particular project and your collaboration with Alis Garlick?

Remco Roes: My research takes the 'status quo' of a given (spatial) situation as the basis for the creation of artistic installations that illustrate inherent qualities or that break open the seemingly self-evident everyday (space). A crucial aspect of this method is my commitment to investing time within the 'collection' out of which the work is created (this can be the material context, physical/spatial conditions, people I encounter, etc). By being present in the 'status quo' the work comes into being. Whilst 'simply being present' I embrace every aspect and coincidence as opposed to imposing some grand scheme to fundamentally change (the nature of) the space or the objects it contains. This concentrated presence can vary in length (from a day to several months) and often results in a condensed representation (an installation that strives to realise some kind of 'secular sacred space': to 'charge' what was already present).

NN: Your work seems much more fragile and hesitant than this description which makes it sound like you're very certain of yourself and what you're doing.

RR: On the contrary, the series of *exercises* grew out of self-criticism and an attempt to incrementally improve (or deepen and refine) my practice. It has to do with being uncertain, with crossing the boundaries of my comfort zone. However, I do suppose my presence on site (in the broadest sense) and the surrender to the 'now' of the status quo are important anchors in my work.

NN: How does this 'being present on site' relate to the installation *found dialogues whispered to drying paint*? I understand you were not actually present at the site of the exhibition during any of its creation or the installation in the space?

RR: For a number of reasons it was not possible for me to be physically present in Melbourne in order to collect fragments and create the work. I thus chose to take my own physical absence as a point of departure for this exercise.

NN: How did the Situation arrangers respond to this somewhat inappropriate proposal for your absence during their event?

RR: In fact, the response was encouraging. In my proposal I outlined several structures within the *exercises* series that would allow for such an absence. Each completed exercise, for example, is transcribed in the form of a book that discloses the process to the visitor in images and text. Past books have, in a way, disclosed a lot of content that was absent from the final exhibit. My physical absence from the exhibition is simply (an uncomfortable) next step that the book accompanying this exhibition will have to disclose. Additionally, the *exercises* explore the question of character in a literal sense: they attempt to inscribe a human element into my previously predominantly object-based work. I thus suggested connecting to a physical 'other' in Melbourne in order to communicate about the site and to physically realise the exhibition.

NN: And this 'other' is Alis Garlick?

RR: Yes, she is an undergraduate student at RMIT. Alis was selected by the Situation organisers for her corresponding interests and affinities, her sensibility for space and composition. The aesthetics of our works certainly resonate. I was excited to also find a surprising openness, which surrender to the abyss of the 'status quo' requires, and am very pleased Alis agreed to enter into this dialogue with me.

NN: And this dialogue has its roots in the site, the Design Hub in Melbourne?

RR: That's how it started. But, it quickly became apparent that the true site was not the physical spatial condition of the Hub but our immaterial dialogue itself. Our status quo found itself in two different physical places (and bodies). The only common ground we shared was the virtual environment of the dialogue.

NN: In many of your other projects, (aesthetic) material clutter incidentally present on site offered you a (relatively easy) way out of truly facing the nothingness of the status quo. I imagine in this case, face to face with an *other*, without sharing a site, this abyss was infinitely greater. And inescapable.

RR: That sounds rather dramatic. The dialogue is also a way to explore values, methods and themes within my practice that have thus far remained unarticulated. Up to this project, my method has been entirely based on my own (very subjective, personal) 'being present' and working with a given space. I think it is an extremely interesting challenge to construct a work based on the complete opposite: being removed from the site and its objects, and being forced to continuously communicate about it and relate it to the more abstract (existential) domain that exists between two people. I think the easy way out that you refer to is never easy. It is simply not visible when it is left unarticulated, inside my head. In this collaboration every (existential) crisis, all the doubts, the impossibilities of language, the confronting questions, are shared and present themselves in the dialogue, as a shared space.

NN: How, then, is this project relevant for anyone else? Normally there is at least the site (the physical place) as something generically shared. The site forms the source material that is turned into an exhibit, which you have injected with meaning. The visitors to the exhibition feel this 'secular sacrality' that stems from the material itself. The site between you and Alis is completely immaterial and highly personal.

RR: I suppose we all share being human.

NN: ...

RR: Perhaps our project outlines a more abstract space – a plain, an ocean, a void – that exists between two individuals and attempts to construct ~something there. Something shared. Something to inhabit. Something that – however temporarily – offers shelter.

NN: ...

RR: And we do need objects to do this because they relate directly to our physical space of being. Through this project, it has become more apparent to ~us that these objects are mere shadows, traces, marks, anchors of meaning that are always fleeting. This ~meaning is always in-between.

NN: Perhaps the objects are like synchronisation points; to align, however temporary; to share, however briefly; to bridge...

RR: Perhaps. I only hope the visitors of the exhibition will feel free to inhabit the constellation as if it were built to align with their inner world. To use the physical interpunction wherever they might need it in their own interior landscape.

NN: ...



Images: Alis Garlick