



Notes from MACHINE: What's cooking? # 2 public program
Contemporary Art Tasmania | 5.30PM, 7 October 2021

What's cooking? #2 was designed to provide a context for discussing topics important to artists now, foster connection and an occasion for artists to **speculate on what could be of value to progress their practice**. Four mid-career artists participated in the program with the conversation opened up through audience discussion. From this process of enquiry CAT will develop the collective learning program, MACHINE.

PROGRAM: Welcome - Kylie Johnson; Presentation - Pete Mattila; Presentation - Paul Eggins; Presentation - Lucienne Rickard; Presentation - Léuli Eshrāghi; Open discussion.
Note taker: Nadia Refaei.

Industrial blacksmith and artist **Pete Mattila**, provided examples of his work noting that he often collaborates with practitioners in other fields. Through his work he celebrates complex histories, in art, craft and design as well as in industrial expression.

What is needed

- Teaching and mentoring students and hosting internships at his workshop in nipaluna /Hobart is a significant part of Mattila's practice. In-kind support that offers practical assistance in areas such as accommodation for students or access to a network that can provide in-kind support was identified as areas of need.
- Assistance in developing strategies towards navigating collaborations and advice on the business side of practice would be useful including: administration assistance; web design; information on ticketing events; and, how to access relevant artist specific tax advice.
- The value of studio tours was considered as a potentially useful way of introducing the process of making to other artists and members of the community and to provide a space for collegial learning.

Paul Eggins is interested in how we perceive illegal drugs and their value. His practice spans drawing, painting, sculpture and street art. He also works as an art tradie providing installation assistance.

What is needed

- Eggins spoke about the difficulties in accessing expert perspectives on his work, from artists but also professionals in other fields. Organisations could assist by providing advice on how artists can make connections or provide introductions to art institutions, government organisations, counsellors and health professionals. Knowing what language to use and how to approach institutions and navigate their processes would be of value.
- Help in identifying opportunities to present large-scale work and assistance towards

'pitching' or articulating the value of the work would be of benefit. This includes knowing how to navigate the conservative and risk adverse nature of large institutions.

Lucienne Rickard has spent the last ten years working exclusively in drawing. She works at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) in public drawing. Her recent work, *Extinction Studies* was a 16-month durational performance drawing project.

What is needed

- Rickard spoke about the importance of artists talking with the public about their work. Working at the TMAG has provided opportunity for conversations with a variety of people. This has been a valuable experience, providing different perspective and prompting her to question how she can push her practice in new ways. Rickard wondered if opening artist studios to the public would provide the same benefits to other artists. Conversely, she reflected on the potential value of studio visits for artists. Organisations could facilitate opportunities for artists to visit other artists' studios as either a small informal groups or as one-on-one meetings.
- Rickard spoke about her experiences in working with institutions like Adrift Lab who have contacts and resources otherwise inaccessible to artists such as top tier scientists, and how this has been incredibly valuable in progressing her work. Help engaging with institutions like IMAS and setting up relationships with people doing research and PHDs in other fields would be important to many artists interested in interdisciplinary collaboration.

Léuli Eshraghi is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, curator and researcher living and working between Australia and Canada. They intervene in display territories to centre global Indigenous and Asian diasporic visuality, sensual and spoken languages, and ceremonial-political practices.

What is needed

- Eshraghi introduced recent projects speaking about ideas of rebirth, reconnecting with ancestors and trans nonbinary representations of sexuality that are not steeped in colonialism and shame. They described living between Mparntwe/Alice Springs and Tiohtià:ke/Montréal and now in nipaluna/Hobart. As someone who regularly travels Eshraghi suggested that it would be helpful for art organisations to assist artists navigate cultural protocols and build relationships with respect as they move around different communities.

FROM THE DISCUSSION:

The group (presenters and audience) started the conversation by considering the studio as a place of information exchange. Studios can operate as places of informal critique amongst peers and others. Shared studio environments are a good way for early career artists to learn from more established artists towards sustaining practice and forging relationships. These relationships can lead to new ways of working and create varied opportunities.

The group discussed how people from different areas of inquiry connect. What are the conditions that facilitate diverse connection and where are the spaces for this? CAT could support durational programs that involve curated travel to an event (carpooling), connect artists across generations and with people working in other fields, promote resources sharing, combine art talks with meals and hanging out. This could be as simple as inviting people to occupy the gallery for a day? Meals bring people together, discussing an issue over a meal, creates comfort and allows people to open up. (Salamanca Arts Centre used to put on free dinners and people found this valuable). Organisations could assist by fostering spaces that accommodate different ways of communicating – spaces that don't put people under the spotlight or make them feel pressured – giving more time and space to exchange

and conversation. Sometimes the best critique sessions are where people are equally vulnerable - everyone is bringing something to the conversation and are on the same level. This promoted discussion of material versus dematerialised practices and the different needs and frameworks that each require. There was an understanding that for the greatest chance of valuable exchange at group events numbers should be kept low.

The conversation moved to global networking with the group reasoning that in the current Covid, economic and climate crisis conditions this can be a fragile proposition. We need to invest and nurture close knit, local communities and take advantage of what is local instead of looking outwards. On the other hand, some (like Léuli Eshraghi) have vast communities across countries. There are no safety nets locally for some artists and they are forced to look outwards and seek opportunity elsewhere.



Further information:

Kylie Johnson

kylie@contemporaryart.org.au

www.contemporaryarttasmania.com