



Notes from MACHINE: What's cooking? # 3 public program
Contemporary Art Tasmania | 5.30PM, 28 October 2021

What's cooking? #3 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**. Young and early-career artists participated in the program. From this process of enquiry CAT will develop the collective learning program, MACHINE.

PROGRAM: Welcome - Kylie Johnson; Presentation - Amyris Cauchi, Otis McDermott and Cameron Phillips; Presentation - Grace Gamage; Presentation - Billie Rankin with Daysi Patel and Pearl Smithies; Presentation - Caleb Nichols-Mansell, Open discussion.
Note taker: Nadia Refaei.

Amyris Cauchi, Otis McDermott and Cameron Phillips are Primal Regression Therapy. Walking the tightrope between art and music, they aim to induce catharsis through drone and dark ambient soundscapes. Primal Regression Therapy opened with a flute, guitar and percussion performance followed by a presentation by Cauchi.

What is needed

- Cauchi spoke about the parallels and differences between traditional forms of art and experimental music, suggesting that the art field is harder to break into than the music scene. Art spaces mostly require lengthy applications and justification for activity. In Cauchi's experience access to live performance venues and events is a much simpler process. She questioned if there could be other frameworks for sound artists to gain presentation opportunities in artspace?
- Audiences engage with sound work in galleries differently than in bars. Cauchi described how music is often a 'backdrop' to social activity in bars but in galleries live performance is considered in a more focussed way. More music in galleries - Cauchi suggested that sound artists and musicians should have more involvement with art organisations through development and presentation opportunities.

Grace Gamage introduced her art practice through the old Soviet boxing style she teaches and the organic market garden Broom and Brine that she runs with her partner. Through her practice she attempts to adapt to new conditions within capitalism through critique and praxis, and by collaborating with humans and non-humans.

What is needed

- Gamage described the development of Broom and Brine and the extensive research that they share with their clients, the organic market garden community and other interested

people, predominantly through their ever-expanding online database. She would like to build the farm by working with different organisations to facilitate the importation of seeds into Tasmania. Consideration was given to the barriers of working with organic material. Support with navigating biosecurity and institutional processes associated with this would be valuable for artists working in this area.

- In discussing future forms of practice, Gamage identified an interest in creating: a performance lecture focussing on the many varieties of spinach; a film on allium diversity directed to Lake Peipus, Europe's largest transboundary lake; and an app to assist small scale farmers in administration of flexible Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms. Gamage considered the difficult terrain of partnering with individuals and institutions to develop these involved works. Assistance with identifying and making connections with individuals and organisations beyond the arts would be of value.

Within their practice **Billie Rankin** explores affective geographies and place-specific relationships. Working extensively with young people, they employ collaboration and community to foster social practices of attentiveness and care. Billie was joined in is like conversation by school-aged people Daysi Patel and Pearl Smithies who spoke about what it for young people to work in the arts.

What is needed

- Rankin, Patel and Smithies recognised that institutional structures need further development around working with young people reflecting on: the hierarchy of authority and the adult and child power dynamic; needing to be challenged so that young people are afforded more power; bringing young people in as genuine collaborators with autonomy; the frameworks for working with children including the use of appropriate language and topics; and, ensuring that children feel safe in artspace.
- Art made with young people can be exploitative. It is important to think about the value that young people obtain from projects and develop strategies to mitigate this. Smithies suggested that while children should receive payment for their work, the experience of participation is the greatest benefit.
- Patel recognised the value of young people working with adults and the sense of freedom that can come from working together in the arts. This freedom is different between adults and young people, with adults being given more permission for expression and imagination, and young people given more societal or political freedom. She acknowledged that there is a need for more opportunities that are democratic for young participants.

Caleb Nichols-Mansell is a proud Tasmanian Aboriginal man with deep connections to country, family, community, culture, and spirit. Describing himself as a storyteller he spoke of his motivations in founding Blackspace Creative Arts and Cultural Hub in pataway / Burnie, his work as an artist and he touched on his cultural advisor role with DarkLab.

What is needed

- Nicols-Mansell acknowledged that there are not enough artspace dedicated to Tasmanian Aboriginal people. He described the Chosen exhibition, a large community event hosted in 2020 by Nayri Niara in Hobart. It was a week-long event coinciding with the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair. At the conclusion he contacted the artists involved and proposed the idea that became Blackspace Creative Arts. The collective currently represents a broad range of community artists, practices and family groups. Blackspace facilitates skill sharing and collaboration across generations of Aboriginal people. Nicols-Mansell also expressed interested in opportunities for collaboration between different communities, recognising that Aboriginal artists need to be considered as contemporary practitioners.
- In further considering the importance of dedicated Aboriginal artspace, Nicols-Mansell stated that "at the time of invasion, our people were stripped of their power, autonomy, and identity. For two hundred years, we have combatted racism, broken down misconceptions

and myths about our culture, country and community as well as fought for a place in this westernised world we find ourselves living in. This space has never existed in the format it currently does, in the past when these spaces have opened up for our mob it has been a back room off the side of a long, lonely corridor. We've not taken front and centre and Blackspace is changing this. We are putting our people, our art and our culture in the spotlight whilst also educating and engaging with the broader community."

- Noting that it currently feels like 'black is trendy', he spoke about forms of tokenistic engagement with Aboriginal art and proposed that institutions instead work towards building long-term relationships of value.

The Open discussion scheduled for this program did not occur. In 'reading the room' the event convenor considered that on this occasion informal conversation over light refreshments in the CAT courtyard was preferred.



Further information:

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