

The Residency Programme

2010 Selected Artist – Amanda Couch

Statement

My practice straddles the domains of the object, process, and performance. Essentially I make images, which are both visceral and narrative; implicit in them is a dialogue about time and being... being made, making and becoming.

I have a particular fascination with sticky matter, materials, and substances, which comes from my grounding in sculpture. My time in the printmaking department at the Royal College of Art was spent chasing dreams of recording, reproduction, and repetition. There, for the first time in many years, I began using the human form, and specifically my own. In some way, this work was, and still is, about self-portraiture: a way of investigating identity and self.

Recently I have been exploring reflection from the perspective of time. With live and recorded performances I have been focusing on the physicality of the materials as well as the process of 'making' and allowing reflection, action, and re-action whilst enticing the viewer to choose the duration of their own observation and reflection.

Research Proposal

During the residency at Meltdowns I will develop Dust Passing - a piece that I have recently been focusing on. The work was originally inspired by Man Ray's Dust Breeding, a long exposure photograph of the settled dust on Duchamp's The Bride Stripped Bare By her Bachelor's, Even, and related texts. David Company wrote, "Dust is a trace, a trace of mortality. A photograph is a trace of what was there before the camera. So a photograph of dust is a trace of a trace."

In the studio and out in the local landscape, I will employ drawing and camera obscura pinhole photography. I am interested in the connection of the camera obscura with the science of observation itself, developed by European astronomers to observe the sun and planetary movements; more recently it has been used as 'a metaphor for the creative space, mental and physical', as Gen Doy proposes.

I will explore notions of duration and documentation through the transformation of particles - light, dust, and (photographic) grain - in an attempt to mark, merge, and perhaps suspend time. I will also look at the differences of 'being in' or 'a part of' a landscape/space, and what it is to be an observer.

Questions and Evaluation

During the month-long residency at Meltdowns I explored duration and documentation of time through the play of light, dust and the body, using photography (pinhole, medium format, video), installation, performance, writing and drawing. Much of my time was spent making large-scale, long exposure photographs in my purpose built, room-size pinhole camera. I tackled technical and logistic problems, creating systems with which to capture, and process large-scale prints. In this photography, I played with ideas of suspension (of time, dust, the body) and inversion (time, the body, the image (reversal, upside-down, positive/negative)). I

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also started to read and attempt to understand the notion of Hegel's "Inverted World".

The beginning of the residency coincided with my participation in the Live Art Development Agency's (LADA) DIY6: Practice-Based Research for Emerging Artists run by Helena Hunter. This project set up activities, workshops and exercises with which to reflect on past work, processes and interests, particularly, for me, the recent works *Dust Passing* and *Dust Falling*. I set-up a framework with which to explore, structure and evaluate my research and development activities, (theoretical and practical), which I used to support and activate my time in the studio. This included the creation of a set of research questions;

- How can I disrupt and re-consider time through the play of the three particles of light, dust, and photographic grain?
- Through image making, live and still, how can I manifest the notion of the impossible, of holding and suspending time?
- How do I prevent this downward journey and keep it up in the air?
- Through image making, live and still, how can I prevent the magical particles, dust grain, light – metaphors for time – from entering the past, a place from which they cannot return?
- How can I disrupt photography's predilection for speaking about the past?
- How can I create, suspend, hold time through drawing and photography?
- How can I create stillness in a durational activity?
- What is a document? Explore this in photography, drawing and action
- How can I suspend time when I am using gravity to form the work?
- How can I make the audience reconsider their experience of time and space?
- How can I offer the audience a sense of wonder?

Out of the studio activities, I began to develop and better articulate a project, "A Play with Three Magic Particles; Light, Dust, and Photographic Grain", creating the basis of a Statement of Intent. I also used web blogging as a way of articulating and structuring my research activities and thinking.

The experience of having a studio and time with which to explore, develop and research ideas and matter, without expectation, was invaluable to the development of my practice at the this stage. The combination of the residency alongside the LADA project, meant that I had a means of structuring and organising my time and research, learning and applying invaluable ways of developing my thinking and making processes in tandem. Above all, the residency has helped me to realise that I need regular access to studio space, in which to further this project and ambitions, and I am now slowly, but surely, working on ways to make this a possibility. I have recently applied for the National Media Museum's Photography Bursary, particularly, for funds to support the development of the large-scale pinhole photographic work. The experience at Meltdowns has been invaluable in creating a research statement, which I am continuing to develop. It has also given me the confidence to apply for the next round of research project opportunities at The Jan van Eyck Akademie in Belgium and/or similar opportunities for developing my work in such an environment.