

# *Redrawn [MOOT]*

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Niki Russell

Redrawn [MOOT] is the latest incarnation of an ongoing project by Nottingham based artist Niki Russell. A project in which Russell enacts a series of predetermined actions in the gallery. Although not a performance that needs to be witnessed, the visitor may well encounter him working, if not his activity can be viewed on video alongside the traces of the activity left in the gallery.

My curiosity was initially aroused by the press release for this show, which refers to Russell developing his actions in 'what he considers to be his spare time'. Unequivocally the dictionary defines spare time as time that is 'available for leisure'. As a project Redrawn sets up an interesting dichotomy between work and leisure, like the project itself, both these activities are framed by the temporal. The gradual erosion of the boundary between work and leisure has, in recent years, been at the forefront of political, social, cultural commentary and is now entering an art discourse. In talking about the art of the 1960s Helen Molesworth states that:

*'much of the most important and challenging art of this period staged the problem of labour's transformation, its new divisions, and the increasingly blurred boundaries between work and leisure.'*<sup>1</sup>

She goes on to identify strategies adopted by artists at this time one of which was :

*'...The Artist as Manager and Worker: The artist Creates and Completes a Task. Here artists mime the traditional division of labour between mental and manual realms.'*<sup>2</sup>

In Redrawn Russell is in control of his time as both the manager and worker of his self imposed work regime. On the two occasions<sup>3</sup> I visited the gallery although he was not there working in the space, I realised it was me, not the artist, who was centre stage. I found myself with time to spare; it was like entering the gap between 'this and that' but not knowing what 'this and that' was. Gradually by interrogating and inspecting these three discrete spaces I was able to create a mental taxonomy of my surroundings in much the same way as the writer Georges Perac<sup>4</sup> looked at and examined the minutiae of his life and surroundings. On my first visit there was a yellow sign saying 'caution wet paint', a loud video playing of previous activity in the space, drawn parallel lines on the wall, floor and ceiling, were these lines drawn by the artist? sanded area on the wall, some of the gaps in the floor boards have been filled in with what looks like white silicone sealant. On my return a week later there was no yellow sign, two other visitors in the gallery, the video monitor (and camera) are in a different position, the video was not playing, yes the artist was obviously filling in the gaps in the floorboards with white sealant, also filling in the gaps between the t & g wood wall panelling in the space you first enter, footprints, there seemed to be more footprints here than on my first visit was this because of the wet and sticky nature of the sealant? footprints on the windowsill, the drawn line was still there, a pile of dust in the corner, a small cupboard door on the wall by the entrance was half ajar.

There is something interesting going on in 'Redrawn' that brings to mind 'Fluids' a piece of work made by Allan Kaprow in 1967. 'Fluids' involved the building, by volunteer participants, of walls with 50LB. blocks of ice. Building these walls by hand was very labour intensive and once built they were left to melt. Helen Molesworth says of Kaprow that:

*He provided no discreet or permanent object, no comfortable or passive spectatorship. Instead, Fluids, offers a highly staged version of 'useless' labour.*

*Fluids negated the logic of art as a commodity object by virtue of the artworks disappearance and it questioned the labour of the artist and the leisure of the spectator by virtue of its method of fabrication.*<sup>5</sup>

If the walls of 'Fluid' could be read as a metaphor for the gallery as institution the filling in the gaps at MOOT goes some way to becoming a metaphor for Sideshow, of which this exhibition is part.

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### Notes

1. Molesworth M. (2005) 'Work Ethic' Pennsylvania State University Press, USA p. 39
2. *Ibid* p. 19
3. The first was 12.15 pm on Saturday 29 April 12.15 pm and the second at 2.15 pm on Saturday 6 May.
4. Perac G. (1997) 'Species of Spaces and Other Pieces', Penguin, London
5. Molesworth M. (2005) 'Work Ethic' Pennsylvania State University Press, USA p.44

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Redrawn [MOOT] is at MOOT from 21 April to 4 June. Closing event 3 June 6 - 9pm  
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