

## Studio Project 13

### Niki Russell | Residency followed by an exhibition

Residency | 25 October - 20 November

Exhibition Preview | Friday 21 November 7-9pm

Exhibition Open | 22 November - 20 December

Gallery Open | Tuesday - Saturday 12-6 pm

*During the past five years, the Studio Project at market has been developed to support emerging artists and artists' collectives. This is a unique opportunity for artists to focus on the development of their practice, over an intensive period, followed by an exhibition. The experience is beneficial to all artists involved and acts as a springboard for their practice, securing further residencies and exhibitions.*

In *Residency followed by an exhibition*, Russell cleanses both terms of creativity. He sets out to erode the formal differences between them by exchanging them for 'modal differences'<sup>1</sup>. Akin to other works such as 'Redrawn, string' and 'Moving Boxes' in its reiteration of repetitive, pointless actions and sub sub actions, 'Residency...' continues Russell's valueless, 'un-creative practice'<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, it is possible to imagine Russell's 'Residency...' as an artwork that extends beyond the temporal and spatial frame of the gallery walls, into the reality show of Russell's evolving body of work, becoming a mass adhesion of intertwined processes and knotty proceduralism.

Russell's statement sets out the constraints under which work was conducted. This means that we understand before we encounter the work (if we ever encounter it) how the work came into being. Russell responds to the given structure of residency followed by exhibition by occupying the gallery space on a daily basis (specified days only) and constructing a wall dividing the space into two parts illustrating the bifurcation of terms, whilst simultaneously recording his own actions on a blog and on film. So while we apprehend the work, two narratives are likely to be present in our minds, the narrative of the work Russell is making and the narrative of Russell making the work. We can follow the procedural antics of the work and we can picture the drudgery of Russell's life world of adjusting ladders and planks, day after day, then diligently taping and transcribing a long string of actions.

If the work taken individually, bit by bit 'defamiliarises' certain mundane tasks, then taken as a whole it does the exact opposite, it familiarizes us with the constructed persona of Niki Russell and his artistic processes. Russell as author is out of control from the beginning, a depersonalized authorial function transcribing in clipped tones, actions and sub-actions, a monotone of dulled hyper attention. Russell's 'I cum it'<sup>3</sup> follows orders with a dull, termite-like persistence. The under-stated and the un-inflected attempt a neutrality that fails to hide a passive-aggressive determination to proceed at all costs. Small circumstantial defeats occur but are merely noted as obstacles before moving on. Like a militia on maneuvers, Russell's re-measuring and reconstructing of the gallery space has a controlling, disciplinary aspect to it, the endless circulation around the space, the re-active attentiveness, the ever more precise configuring, an ever more exacting tuning of mind and body. His technique entails a steady build up of move, counter-move, command, counter command, 'counter-conduct': an exacting approximation to an ideal, an ideal that doesn't exist.

And while the end is authoritatively pre-given, there are unlimited and unending sets of temporary contingent goals. Russell's operations are constantly subject to counter-factual immobilisation and delay:

'Having not yet acquired all the necessary fixings for the construction of the wall and having not yet decided on the first wall configuration...'

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The wood for the wall is delivered but the driver won't carry it in. The gallery plan gives the wrong proportions for the space. A central pillar makes moving the wood difficult. The wall fixings have not been bought. The movement of the timber lengths before MDF sheets is a mistake. A stepladder is removed. 'Conflicting priorities' emerge. A visitor distracts, illness follows, partial stoppages occur. In Russell's compliance with whatever occurs, indifference and insistence coexist, a Gnostic-like indifference to any personal inflection of style or taste but the rule of law.

The programme of actions has a rule-following uniformity and consistency but the rules keep changing through Russell's insistence on assimilating contingencies, which result in accidental variations. The piece demands uniformity to the constraints, to the rules of the work but what is simultaneously desired is variation to the rule, produced in the very act of rule following. What results is a branching of actions, a mobile behavioral model in which errors of concentration and random happenstance accrete one upon another as acts accumulate and the performer strays further and further from his original intentions in an 'unlimited schizoid line'<sup>4</sup>.

Ultimately, the author-function 'Niki Russell' can be viewed as adopting a 'radical passivity'<sup>5</sup>, a third position between active and passive, like Melville's Bartleby the Scrivener, another 'whatever being'<sup>6</sup> who writes from the 'the non-positive affirmative'<sup>7</sup>, 'Niki Russell' would 'prefer not' to copy the rule of law in his actions and inactions but to criss-cross 'impossible worlds'<sup>8</sup>.

@ Kathy Fawcett 2008

Works cited:

1 Deleuze, G. "Difference and Repetition" Continuum, 1994

2 <epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/uncreativity.html>

3 Vitanza, Victor J. "Abandoned to Writing: Notes Toward Several Provocations." Enculturation 5.1 (Fall 2003): [http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5\\_1/vitanza.html](http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5_1/vitanza.html)

4 Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. "Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature" University of Minnesota Press, 1986

5 Vitanza, Victor J. "Abandoned to Writing: Notes Toward Several Provocations." Enculturation 5.1 (Fall 2003): [http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5\\_1/vitanza.html](http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5_1/vitanza.html)

6 Vitanza, Victor J. "Abandoned to Writing: Notes Toward Several Provocations." Enculturation 5.1 (Fall 2003): [http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5\\_1/vitanza.html](http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5_1/vitanza.html)

7 Vitanza, Victor J. "Abandoned to Writing: Notes Toward Several Provocations." Enculturation 5.1 (Fall 2003): [http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5\\_1/vitanza.html](http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5_1/vitanza.html)

8 Vitanza, Victor J. "Abandoned to Writing: Notes Toward Several Provocations." Enculturation 5.1 (Fall 2003): [http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5\\_1/vitanza.html](http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5_1/vitanza.html)

*Niki Russell is an artist and producer based in the UK working individually and across a plethora of collaborations. He has been involved in numerous projects nationally and internationally, including: Tent, Kunsthallen Nikolaj – Copenhagen, Denmark (2007); Out of Place, Angel Row Gallery – Nottingham, UK (2007); Moving Boxes, ANTI Festival – Kuopio, Finland (2006) and Redrawn [MOOT], Moot Gallery – Nottingham, UK (2006). Alongside solo activity he has developed a collaborative practice with the group Reactor who have recently delivered Munkanon, Donau Festival – Austria (2008). He has been responsible for instigating numerous projects including: You Are Here Festival (2003-2004); the Sideshow Festival (2006) and the Nottingham Studios development for a new studio complex*

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