

Looking back

Excerpt from a blog conversation between artists Mandy Lee Jandrell and Melanie Stidolph (<https://connectseverything.tumblr.com/>)

Mandy Jandrell

I think for me one of the surprises about the installation was the dialogue between 2 of the newest pieces made in the show. Both finalised in the hours prior to opening. This was my sculptural work '1975- Vibration' and Melanie, your film 'She is already here'.

In both we're quite playful about the mechanics of making images. In your film, your subject, Nadege, is endlessly rearranging studio ephemera (poly boards, studio lights, plinths) with what appears to be some earnest determination, echoing the deadpan humour of early silent films. It's as if she has a grand plan, she looks like she knows what she's doing, like she's 'an expert', and yet she's not actually doing anything productive. I like that, not only because it undercuts the (often quite macho) performativity of commercial photographic studio practice but because points to the 'dig a hole and fill it back up again' philosophy of much late capitalist labour practice. A redundant productivity. A dog chasing its tail. And its funny, really funny.

<http://melaniestidolph.com/work> (Link to Vimeo-?)

Oddly (eventually everything connects!) a little of this was echoed in the production of my piece '1975 Vibration'. The piece consisted of an 'old school' 35mm slide projector on a sequenced timer, with 80 slides. The slides were made by laboriously (with an assistant it took many days and hours) constructing collages from lighting gels, intricate compositions layering colours in formalist constructions. In fact this work was intended to be purely a projection of these collages, however, chance happenings in the studio and decisions made in the final hours meant that this laborious detail never get seen by the viewer, as I removed the lens from the projector and instead

mounted circular mirrors using clamps onto studio lighting stands to reflect the changes of light as the projector showed one range of colour then the next. Coloured light then got reflected in circles across the space. Like a deconstructed disco ball.

It's been a very long time since I made sculptural works/installations and it was with some excitement that this piece came together in the way it did. Like 'She is already here' it has the look of 'serious photography', the light stands, the projector, the refraction of light, the 'science experiment' but really it isn't.

Watching viewers interact with '1975 Vibration' I became aware how their response would go from 'must figure out what this all means' to 'oh this is fun'. Particularly as viewers began to interact with it. It became a playful game for viewers, adults revisiting a child like joy in the simplicity of colour, light and reflection. A little 'Science Museum' ish too. Which is something I liked about it, that it looked like it was supposed to mean something, like it was supposed to enlighten you about the nature of light or particles or something like that but actually it didn't really. Kind of like a respite from the endless pursuit or consumption of knowledge production.

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