

***All The Things I Did: Richard Maloy* by Henry Davidson**

First published in print by Starkwhite Gallery, 2014

In Richard Maloy's installation *All the things I did*, the artist presents work from his time at art school as the content of the exhibition. He lays bare the fundamentals of artistic practice as informed and developed through western art school paradigms. Maloy actively refigures and reconceptualises his own practice within his present and also exposes the system of art learning he remains part of. Unfolding and revealing how an artist works is a key element of process art, in which the final outcome is not privileged over the construction process itself. This shift in focus towards the work's formation opens up the artwork to alternative forms of audience engagement. Here it also directs our attention to the meta-narratives that construct learning itself, exposing the mechanisms intended to help the young artist develop a 'practice'.

For this installation Maloy has constructed a group of partitions with six separate zones reminiscent of and alluding to the way in which studio space is often divided amongst fine art students in tertiary institutions. Each area hosts a selection of objects, images and ephemera that represents a different year of his art school education. Running clockwise and forming a loose circle, each grouping follows another chronologically, allowing each space to be entered into and experienced separately. This creates a sense of the positive enthusiasm for the unknown future, which we might imagine is the vibe of a university environment, a very real feeling during tertiary study. Similarly the physical structuring of each segment of this show constructs a notion of what an artistic practice might be like: both full of surprises but retaining a circularity, an infinite loop; a constant return to ideas, motifs and obsessions.

Maloy's art school restaging includes items re-made for the exhibition alongside archival material (works, parts of works or ephemera) selected from the artist's own personal collection. This archive is a powerful force structuring and feeding the exhibition – it is both where the show comes from and, in some ways, what it is. As well as where it will end up. At the same time, it is not an archive on display. With this depository silently fuelling the exhibition, the installation sets up a myriad of interlocking rings that chatter to and through each other; art objects, memories of works, imagined and latent work. It has been noted that Maloy's practice often utilises scraps of others' work; the discarded and the unwanted.[1] *All the things I did* makes it apparent that the artist's practice also sustains itself as well as sourcing content from elsewhere.

On entering the gallery, the first 'zone' the viewer is presented with is, of course, Maloy's first year of art school. A general sense of that first year is evoked, perhaps to the pleasure of many who might recognise their own beginnings. Like any diligent student, he tries different things. There is an unconsciously naïve exploration of familiar tropes: the body, sexuality, site-specificity. Through video and photographs of works, we see the artist trying out his ideas. Everyday rituals of the body; eating cleaning and perfunctory movement, are examined as actions of potential political meaning and worth. A sense of the excitement around this youthful experimentation is present in the selection; this excitement is both joyous and endearing. Maloy has noted in conversation that it precipitates his realisations that these works were not new, but in fact had been done many times before.[2]

The second compartment focuses on sculptural form and the transformation of discipline specificities: photography becomes painterly, painting becomes installation, sculpture becomes activity driven, the types of language you might apply to critiquing and discussing the works within the art school environment come to be tested. Pieces of painted timber lean against the partition;

becoming both sculpture and paintings fallen from the wall. In the third compartment there is a new focus and attention to form, carried out through repetition and exercises of performance, prefiguring Maloy's more recent bodies of work and conveying a sense of the development of his specific practice. Documentation of events, like recording his lunches through photographs and receipts, exemplify this shift from the prescriptive naivety of earlier years to art that is initiated by activities of the self more than the textbook. Blue plastic shopping bags emerge for the first time, a motif that reappears often in the future and signals an interest in certain types of everyday, makeshift materials that Maloy has become known for.

Fourth year saw more complex strands being developed; we see Maloy using the studio and art school as a site for making and content, along with his domestic home setting and the public street. Performance and repetition are brought together with an attention to form and a strong understanding of art historical predecessors who have worked in this field. This development is continued through two more zones that present his final years of study, within a Master's programme. Here we are presented with the trajectory from art school student to artist: installation images of exhibitions at artist-run galleries appear, as does his first dealer show, complete with newspaper clippings of reviews and other show ephemera. Now an established artist, Maloy understands the pressures on contemporary artists to produce 'projects', alongside developing a practice. This exhibition is part of a conversation around this subject, responding with a proposition that asks: what is in operation, what is at stake?

Ultimately, *All the things I did* asks questions about the institutions of art by presenting the detritus of 'an education' as art objects within a gallery context. Presenting such a tableau in the environment of a gallery also complicates traditional notions of value and worth. Maloy appears to celebrate and elevate the unseen and the un-presentable. What is made public is not the products of a completed art school exhibition, or even a taster of each year in development; it is a meta-narrative about the form and function of pedagogy itself. The situation is further layered with the knowledge that Maloy is also an educator and now has his own students. *All the things I did* becomes a platform for contemplating how an artist's role is formed, in the past, present or future.

[1] Martin Patrick, *Try and Try Again*, in *Broadsheet*, 2012.

[2] Richard Maloy in conversation with the author, November 2013.

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