

Wonderlust

Georgia Biggs

David Palliser

Julia Powles

Fairy Turner

Curated by

Jeremy Kibel & Peter Westwood

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Georgia Biggs and Julia Powles are represented by Blockprojects.

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Wonderlust' is a new term, a derivative of a derivative. Its antecedent, wanderlust, is an English word that was originally derived from the German word wandern, meaning to hike, and was associated with late 18th and early 19th Century Romanticism as an expression that embraced a powerful urge for self-development through experiences of the unknown. Appropriately, wonderlust describes the desire to be in a constant state of wonder, a threshold embodying a heightened, transitional sense of anticipation, motivated by the need to escape boredom. In any case, while wanderlust is an attested word within the English language, wonderlust is a term still coming in to being. Language modifies dynamically over time, and therefore, while colloquialisms can encapsulate something specific to an era, idioms of this type can either adhere to language over time, or simply fall away. Similarly, this is the way that ideas can form or dissolve.

This project began partly through associations around the meanings of these two words and their intermingling, where the passage between both terms could be considered to imply a shifting restlessness. The zone encompassed by both words also conjures certain associations and thoughts which can exist in the subconscious of artists: unease or disquiet; anxiety; the seeking of something strange and

unspecified; desire, accompanied by an intensified fascination; feeling; knowingness; belief or faith; and a prodigious degree of doubt. Our conscious mind is often not foremost in thought, forming only a small part of our awareness, as it is predominantly the subconscious that informs cognizance (Morsella, 2017). The subconscious initiates most things for us, and therefore, when artists work through materials, particularly those with a mutability and direct responsiveness, such as painting or drawing, the experience can invoke malleable and precognitive awareness, fashioned through phenomena, feelings and moments. Theorist and writer, Nikos Papastergiadis writes that the function of the imagination can be understood to be 'the sensorial and pre-purposeful mode by which the mind constitutes its world... as a reflector of emergent forms of ... change and as a generator of new modes of being and action in the world' (Papastergiadis, 2012, p 9 &10).

Thinking again about the space that might be implied between the two terms wanderlust and wonderlust, in this exhibition project we are not only considering a subconscious compulsive and intuitive obsession - the 'internal' thinking and impulses that happen within the creative process - we are also considering ideas surrounding art practices and their dynamics in terms of how ideas might be evolving in current times. The artists in this project employ gestures which are provisional, perhaps at times makeshift, and have each chosen to represent their practices and methodologies via some of the cyclical or conjugate thinking that informs and underpins their work.

The ideas for this exhibition began with the notion that these artists are, as is the case perhaps for many contemporary artists, enclosed within an anticipatory state of change. Whilst artists may be focused on their own personal fascinations and obsessions, there are also preoccupations shaped by our contemporaneity. Within the Modernist period, artists worked with a forward or 'onwards' momentum, often compelled by resolute and unwavering ideas focused in defining something ultimate. However, within our current period, while artists work with this same impetus, our

times are devoid of any sense of destination. In our present 'contemporary', we are in a period where change and variance forms as a hallmark, and where motivity has become a central condition. In terms of the conditions of art, cultural theorist Boris Groys considers creative practitioners to be in a 'discussion of art flowing', a constant re-forming of vantages pre-occupied with the present (Groys, 2016), formed through an ever-changing culture of what he refers to as 'repetitive immediacy' (Groys, 2006), with the sense that transition or perpetual change are at the centre of our times.

Nowadays, art develops in what could be described as a network, as a considerable amount of contemporary art generally analyses the networked intersections of technology, progress politics, culture and expression. Much contemporary art employs processes of reflexivity through the contexts of the specificity of cultural stratagems and histories, and intertextual interpretations of the past and present. And, markedly, the perpetual change that we experience in our societies, by which these artists are informed, is not neutral, but rather a political condition as part of a chaotic, transgressive and fluid time. This is the accumulative central characteristic of contemporaneity, the result of capital economies which require constant renewal through crisis and change (Laibman, 2010). These thoughts of 'change as a hallmark' are again expressed by Groys (2009), as he considers that we are more preoccupied with our ever-changing present and comprehending what this may be, than we have ever been at any time within history.

Correspondingly, many art practices currently form through a certain spirit of flux, either re-forming within or through a preoccupation with a principal medium central to the artist's practice, or working through methods that extend beyond the use of one material. In each instance, artists work through recurrent processes of challenging and renewing ideas to generate a dynamic loop in order to constantly reassess, probe and renew their practice. However this approach to practice may not simply be the desire to foster revitalization, but could equally be

about creating a practice with change and instability at its centre, in order to evade stasis and to address the question: how can the renewal of creative potential for the artist and viewer form within a practice informed by the experience of permanent change?

The only solution is constant flux, manifest in every gesture and formed by nothing other than the movement of intuition. This demands that one is reflective, placing oneself in the midst of things, with little conscious awareness of preconceived patterns or expectations. Over time, and with effort, one then discerns the natural relations between things, and the places amongst and in things, where differences most directly emerge. Through this forward momentum one comes to learn that everything encountered during the 'event' of creating and generating is effectively formed through moments or 'versions of differences', and that eventually these distinctions can be understood as an 'open-ended whole'. (Grosz citing Bergson, 2008).

Instead of surface states covering indivisibly some neutral stuff and maintaining with it a mysterious relationship of phenomena to substance, it will seize upon one identical change which keeps ever lengthening as in a melody where everything is becoming, being itself substantial, has no need of support. No more inner state, no more dead things; nothing but the mobility of which the stability of life is made. A vision of this kind, where reality appears as continuous and indivisible, is on the road which leads to philosophical intuition. (Bergson, 1946, p 150-151).

The artists in this exhibition are preoccupied with the idea of avoiding stasis through a dynamic practice, formed through a fluidity in thinking and feeling; they are absorbed in the uneasy tensions, conflicts and limitations of the confines within their work. In order to deepen awareness of the connections between medium, experiment and practice, some of the central contexts of an artist's approach may be uncertainty, improbability and ambiguity. They may search for what might be possible within changing perceptions of things, differences, incompletions, where things simply coalesce into a type of event. This apprehensive

restlessness may be about an acuity gained from the irritations, limitations and the constraints of known strategies, methods or mediums, the grappling with difficulties, or ways of failing, in order to uncover potential in opposition to complacency. The act of making art might be considered the creation of persistent and recurrent alternatives to insistent change within the world and the capital system. Considering this, while art might come about through re-formations of pre-existing mind-sets, idiomatically modulating, and perhaps at times forming through derivatives of derivatives, it is nevertheless in a state of unceasing becoming.

Peter Westwood

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