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Brian Fay interview for PEEL magazine

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[ARTISTS TALK \(/ARTISTS-TALK.HTML\)](#)
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ARTISTS TALK: MATERIALS

NAME: BRIAN FAY

OCCUPATION: ARTIST, LECTURER AND PHD CANDIDATE AT NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY

LOCATION: LECTURING IN THE DUBLIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, DUBLIN

MEDIA: MY PRACTICE IN RECENT TIMES HAS FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON DRAWING

1. WHEN INITIATING A PIECE OR BODY OF WORK HOW DO YOU DETERMINE THE MATERIALS YOU WILL USE?

Usually I would let the concept of the work drive the form, and from that decision the choice of materials follows. This has for some time led me to materials associated with drawing. Mindful of the range of choices this activity offers, I have almost exclusively employed pencil and paper as my main choice of media. This has not always been the case as I have worked with sound, digital animation and temporal drawing installations. For now it is the possibilities of a reduced range of materials that responds to pre-existing artworks that have been conserved seems to offer a rich range of avenues to pursue.

2. DO THE MATERIALS THAT YOU USE HAVE A VALUE IN THEMSELVES OR ARE THEY JUST A MEANS TO AN END?

I suppose the key word in the question is value, and problematically who might define what that value is. For me the materials I use, pencil on paper, carry many values and some contradictory. These can range from drawing seen as a vehicle for draughtsmanship, for the production of a finished drawing, as an immediate form for the expression of ideas, to the preliminary sketch towards another process. Part of my thinking in using drawing and drawing materials is to acknowledge and embrace these competing conditions.

Currently the aim of my drawing practice is to foreground the reading of the mark and trace as having particular temporal properties and readings outside of the drawing's production. When you use a reduced range of materials the action and conditions of their use become quite apparent. One reflexively employs these materials in the light of their attendant histories and consider how your work might contribute to emerging discourses in and with that media.

3. PLEASE COULD YOU DISCUSS ANY CORRELATION BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND MATERIALS IN YOUR PRACTICE

The drawings I have worked on as part my PhD work at Northumbria have responded to conservation and restoration treatments on the paintings of Vermeer. The context here is that through restoration the artwork is displaced from a chronological reading and functions within an anachronic paradigm where the painting is materially and conceptually between different temporal states. Within drawing there is a discourse around the temporal properties and characteristics of line (Butler, Lee, Bryson) and how it similarly functions within a liminal state and multiple temporalities. It is from this understanding that my drawings are informed and developed.

My use of drawing came from an interest in how a reduced form, such as line, could be a conduit for offering readings of time and temporality. Drawing has historical associations as being a form that is conditional, provisional and suggesting properties of becoming, provisional to and speculative for other outcomes. I wished to explore that terrain through both practice and research.



3 Stages Restoration Vermeer in non-chronological order Pencil on Paper

42 x 36 cm

2011

4. DO YOU CONSIDER WHAT YOUR MATERIALS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE, OR ARE YOU JUST THINKING ABOUT HOW THEY LOOK WHEN YOU USE THEM? FOR EXAMPLE, DO YOU CONSIDER WHETHER THE MATERIALS MIGHT CHANGE?

The source of my work is the capturing in some form the entropic changes that take place to the artworks and artefacts I am researching, be it paintings, as it is exclusively in my PhD research, or more generally nitrate film stock and archaeological structures. Driven by my study of the temporal implications for conservation and restoration it is an issue I am extremely aware of in my own practice.

In considering the properties of works on paper it can be viewed as a form that is both delicate and vulnerable. In fact Badiou attributes this condition of fragility as 'its essential feature'[1]. For me there is also an interesting tension between the time consuming production of a drawing being placed on an extremely vulnerable material.

[1] The full text of this discussion can be found online at <http://lacan.com/symptom12/?p=65> (<http://lacan.com/symptom12/?p=65>)

5. ARE YOUR MATERIALS SIGNIFICANT IN HOW YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS AN ARTIST?

I am not quite sure I understand the question. If it is a form of identification with other artists who use the same means, then knowledge and research of these practitioners is important. However, I would place a distinction on the form and materials of my work and the conceptual drivers that influence it. Many of the artists and artworks that inform my practice work with a variety of media and I would not feel bound to only have an affinity with artists who use the same range of materials that I employ. Not for that reason alone.

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