

Fen - Glut
Ben Burgis et Ksenia Pedan

Forde How do you start each work and how does it evolve during the process?

Ben Burgis & Ksenia Pedan It varies around circumstance, sometimes we work with other artists and the show includes performance and music, those tend to have more of a narrative, or characters built within the installation. This show is vaguely focused around a reflection of a specific place we've been hanging out and ruminated about its atmosphere.

Forde Can you tell me about this place that inspired you or do you prefer to keep the back stories secret?

Ben Burgis & Ksenia Pedan It's a stretch along the Thames that's mainly been a site for industry and waste disposal, and more recently housing developments, some built with parking on the ground floor acting as stilts for the impending flooding. The huge waste disposal centre has a potent odour and to mask it there are tubes coming out the ground spritzing the air with perfume. Around it there is a nature reserve that acts as a type of barrier between the smell and the public. We used to go there and draw and the mood for the show kind of came from that but not based on the place itself, more an abstraction of its elements.

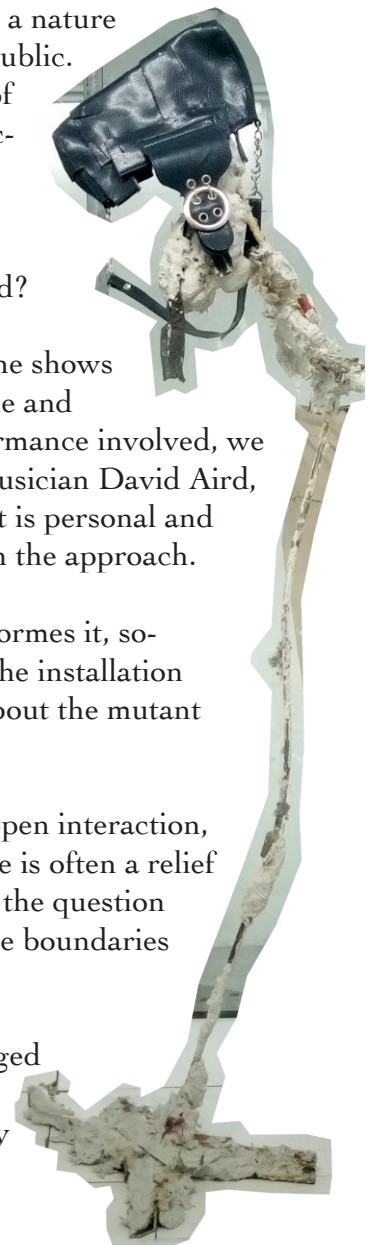
Forde Is there a continuity from one show to the next, from one work or install to the other or is your practice more project based?

Ben Burgis & Ksenia Pedan There usually is different theme or structure to the shows but then the approach to materials and their value and status as objects is a large part of the work. When there is performance involved, we have worked a lot with Keira Fox and Adam Christensen and musician David Aird, it's project based, but everyone has their own thing going on that is personal and continuous. So its projects, but with a continuous content through the approach.

Forde The performance taking place in your installations transforms it, sometimes even irrevocably. In London a real party took place in the installation and left all the traces we can imagine on it (*Oikos*, 2015). What about the mutant nature of your objects?

Ben Burgis & Ksenia Pedan We've created spaces trying to facilitate a more open interaction, allowing the audience some extra room to explore is often a relief from the pressures of a prescribed art experience. Spaces where the question - is it a stage prop, a sculpture or something I can use? - blurs the boundaries and changes the nature of the object.

Forde Your installations make the spectator feel a bit like immersed on a theater or movie set. The elements - even non human - appear like characters, is there always a constructed fictional story behind your shows?



Ben Burgis & Ksenia Pedan It's perhaps more about generic human behaviour than specific characters. The objects get a character in the sense that they are self reflective, they re-frame themselves, the artwork questions the aspiration of the object that it mimics.

Forde There is something very sensitive in your work, something linked to emotions and skin (and shit and puke and orgasm) as if you wanted to pass by the spectator's body/sensations to reach his/her brain and heart.

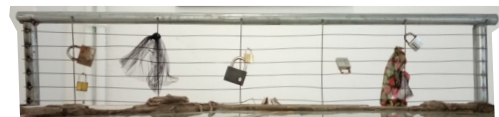
Ben Burgis & Ksenia Pedan That's nice that you see that in the work, we both have an interest in some balance where the objects evoke empathy even though they might not be directly appealing. We often say it's not about making things we necessarily like. You can combine several parts of disgusting that makes something cognitively quite sweet.

Forde If you «speak» with the form, how do you deal with the explanation of it?

Ben Burgis & Ksenia Pedan Can be a tricky one, you want to give people a way in but sometimes when you start to explain things, or give it a specific narrative it can feel restraining to the making process, you start trying to make "sense" of it. We try to focus more on how the objects read in relation to each other, and the context in which they are shown. So maybe not so keen on explanatory texts that is used as a blueprint for conversation about the work. But people handle text in different ways so depends on who's writing.

Forde Do you have any favorite science fiction author, movie or book?

Ben Burgis & Ksenia Pedan Ursula le Guin, Philip K Dick amongst others. Also Andrzej Zulawski and Fassbinders films has inspired some of the shows, and a lot of psychological thrillers and horror from Adam Christensens collection.



This interview has been conducted by Roxane Bovet and Yoan Mudry at the occasion of the exhibition *Fen-Glut* by Ben Burgis & Ksenia Pedan taking place at Forde (Geneva) from May 16 to June 23, 2019.

