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# **Any order is appropriate; it's all in equal measure**

An exegesis presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

At Massey University, Wellington New Zealand.

Deanna Dowling

2014

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Any order is appropriate; it's all in equal measure. Multiple entry points, separating out the parts. Even by listing them I feel uncomfortable.

This research enquiry takes the form of a number of different investigations over a period of two years, and within the scaffolding project there are a number of simultaneous explorations that have happened at once. It is for this reason that I have offered a document that aims to oppose a chronological order. This structure reflects how I consider each component in a project that contains objects, sites, place, people, and institutions. What has become apparent to me in this process is that the relationship between all these factors is more complex than I thought and warrants avoiding, or producing, a hierarchy.

The task of translating a collection of art works from their separate periods of production has encouraged new outcomes in my own research and concerns that form around a system of interrelationships – raising questions such as what it means to be under construction or deconstruction, to be something in translation, in progress, in development? These thoughts have evolved from terms used to discuss thematic concerns in a number of my works and shift at times to a more abstract use of the words, notes and lists. I have made objects about construction in a city currently undergoing heavy urban modification.

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**Film Still, bay 133, 2014.**

**Visit <https://vimeo.com/109358277> to see more  
video documentation**

STDS  
 4x6-5  
 4x4  
 4x1

LOGS  
 22x2.4  
 8x4-5

Post  
 22x1.2  
 8x2-1

DIAP  
 6x3-2  
 4x6-5  
 6x2-3  
 4x4-5

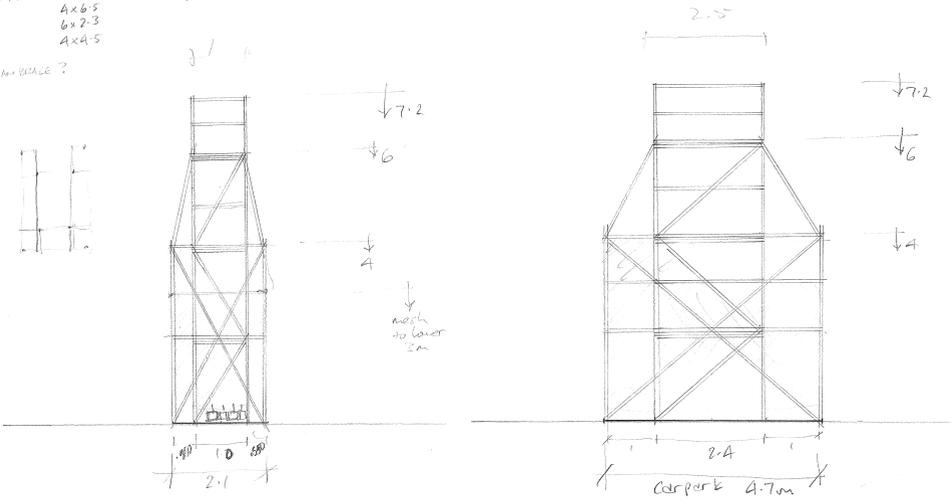
REAR BRACE ?

8 x soleboard  
 8 x base plate

Rails 4x2.5  
 4x2-1

FITTINGS  
 GUNTERMEIKER x 16 - 10/10/10

Tube + clip  
 free-standing  
 NO  
 PLANKS.



**Bay 133 plans provided by Acrow/Pyradeck.**



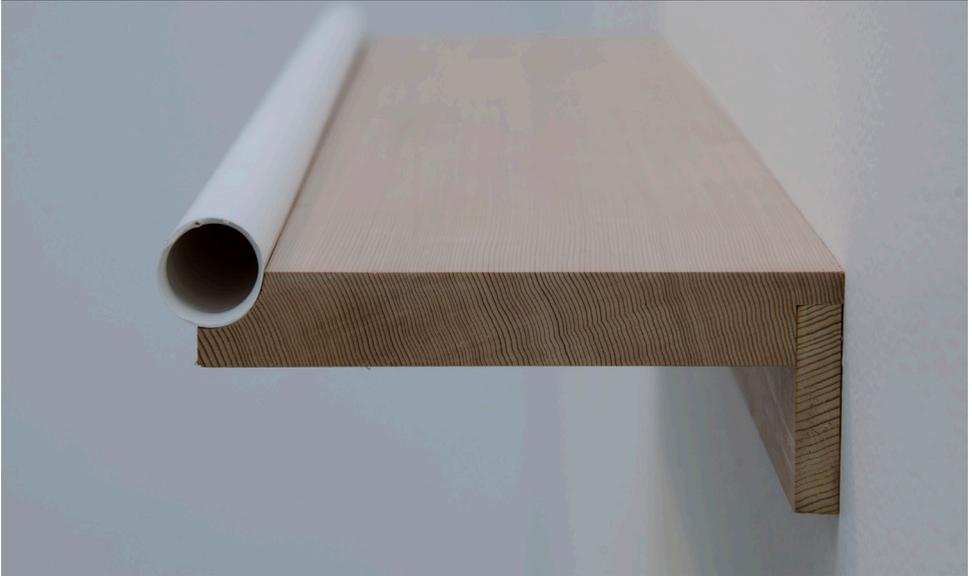
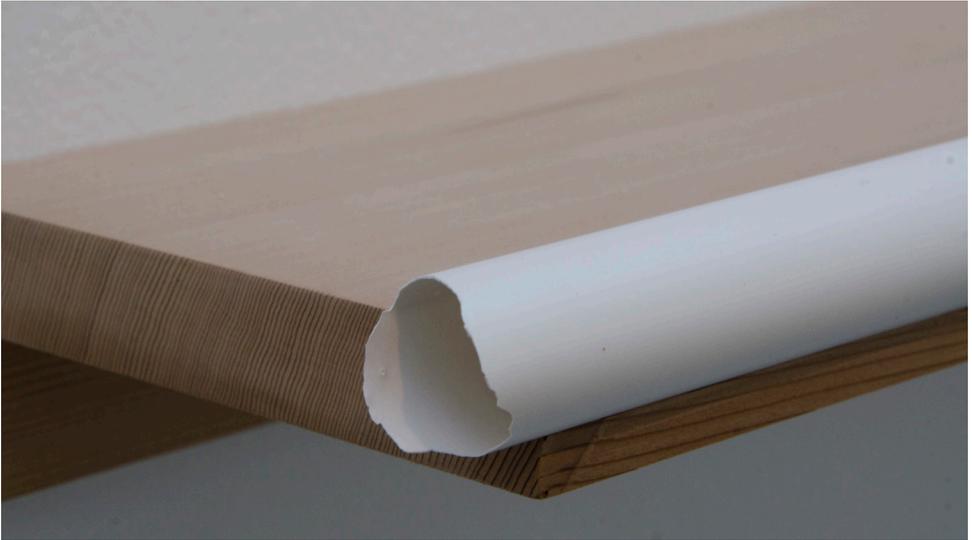
**Bay 133**

**July 21 - July 25, 2014**

**Wilson Car Park, Cuba Street**



**Wilson car park, Ghuznee street.**



**Tell someone if something happens. 2014.**

**Hollow plaster tube, wall thickness 0.25mm-0.75mm - diameter  
25mm,  
Cedar shelf.**

A tube of plaster. Part of a fluorescent bulb.

I have dropped one and god, the sound is so satisfying.

Supported ever so gently; the slightest touch or bump of the wall could send it over the Edge.

I'm sure it would be ok if it fell. The responsible thing would be to tell someone. It's just like changing a light bulb. How thin can plaster get?

How close to the edge can it sit? Tell someone if something happens conjures a sense of tension and unease; your proximity is unnerving.

The tube is only as sure as its wall, its shelf, the slight turn up from its cove.

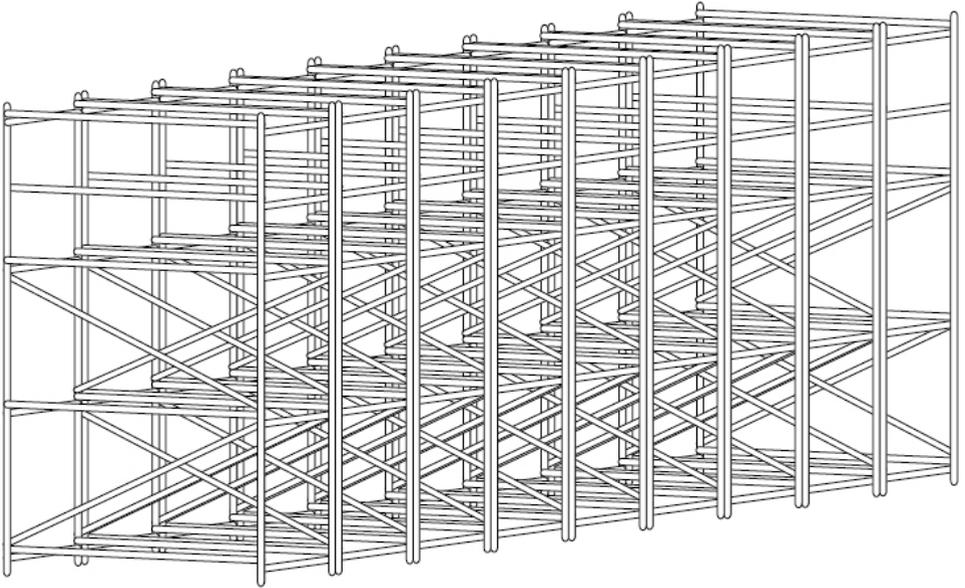
Both object and support have surfaces that are so soft, so inviting.

Go on. I dare you. The sound is better than glass.

**Tell someone if something happens. Supporting text. 2014**



**Instructions test work, 2013, sculptural installation**

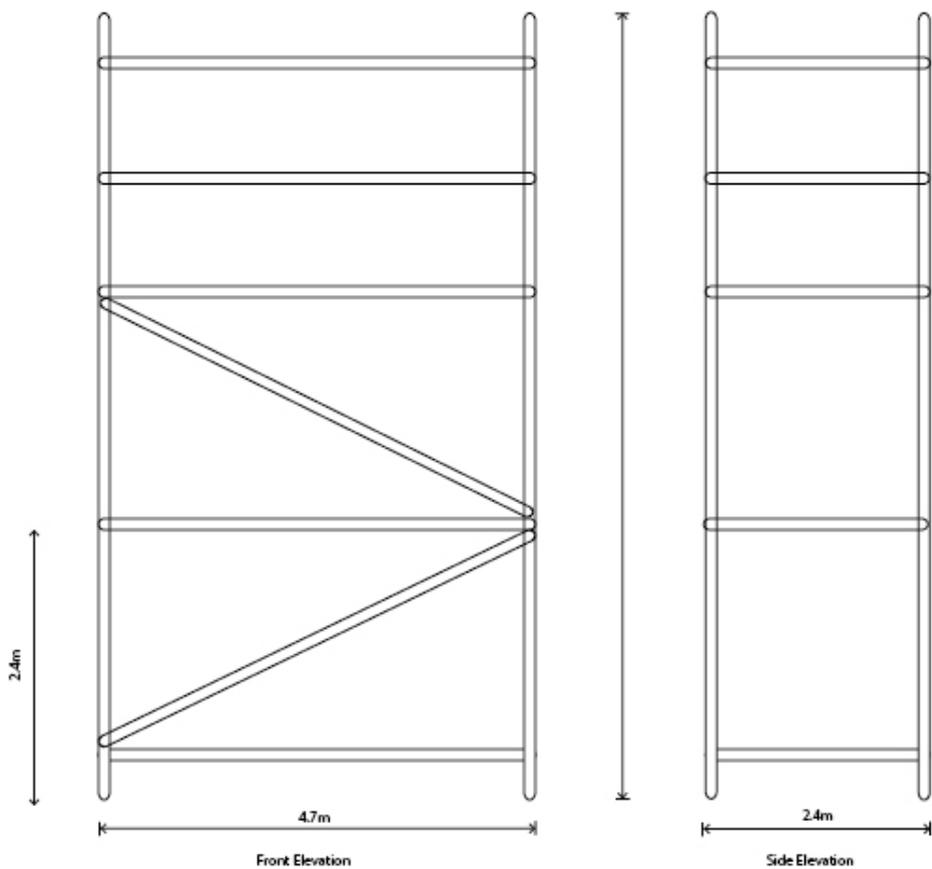


**Original Plan drawing for bay 133**



**Help me find a wrecking ball, 2013.**

**Image of wrecking found in the serach to find a wrecking ball.  
Wrecking ball owned by Smith Crane and Construction,  
Christchurch.**



**Elevation drawing for Bay133**



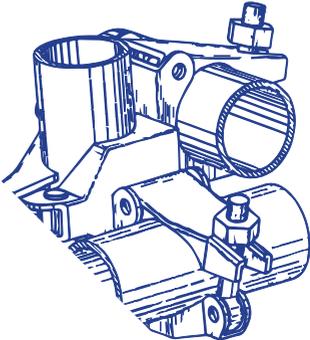
**Wilson Car Park,  
Cuba Street**



**Wilson Car Park, corner of Dixon and Victoria Street**

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# Construction





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# Construction

Constructing

Narrative

Objects

Site

Exhibition

Exegesis

and deconstructing it.

Parts converge for a moment and  
then disperse.

Any order is appropriate; it's all in equal measure. Multiple entry points, separating out the parts. Even by listing them I feel uncomfortable. I did not set out to do this, to have each chapter contained within its own blue cover. It was only once I began to consider an order that I questioned what comes first? Which chapter sets the scene? Where did it begin? This research enquiry takes the form of a number of different investigations over a period of two years, and within the scaffolding project there are a number of simultaneous explorations that have happened at once. It is for this reason that I have offered a document that aims to oppose a chronological order. This structure reflects how I consider each component in a project that contains objects, sites, place, people, and institutions. What has become apparent to me is the relationship between all these factors is more complex than I thought and warrants avoiding, or producing, a hierarchy.

The separation is not clear-cut. There are relationships between each book that approach site, and the project, as a type of ecological structure, a community of parts working together to form the overarching project that is Any order is appropriate; it's all in equal measure. In the study of ecology there is consideration of the interactions between organisms and their environment, including interactions with one another and an ecosystem is not only considered in a biological

sense. Urban ecology is the study of living things in an environment, their relationship to one another and to their physical surroundings.<sup>1</sup> I have adopted this mode of thinking in my practice. For me, approaching research that draws from site-based practice and sculptural practice with an ecological framework in mind provides an understanding that both site and object are equally important.

Extending this further, within site-based thinking there can be a sense of situating people, places, object and governing bodies in an interrelated system. As my project developed it shifted and moved between close studies of the site itself, its history, current state and possible manifestation for something in the future. What is most revealing in this process is not necessarily specifics of site but the actions on the perimeter, of what is circulating around the site and the relationships between each element.

The task of translating a collection of art works from their separate periods of production has encouraged new outcomes in my own research and concerns that form around a system of interrelationships – raising questions such as what it means to be under construction or deconstruction, to be something in translation, in progress, in development? These thoughts have evolved from terms used to discuss thematic concerns in a number of my works and shift at times

to a more abstract use of the words, notes and lists. I have made objects about construction in a city currently undergoing heavy urban modification. They are not isolated to the streets though and these ideas can also translate this to the gallery, a space that can be considered constantly under construction and certainly concerned with ideas of translation.

I have approached the exhibition at Enjoy gallery from the position of reflecting on the research explored over the past two years. I have drawn a set of works together for this moment. The components within the exhibition do not sit alone as singular artworks: this is an extension of my approach to the site investigation leading to this point. I have engaged with a combination of information gathering and narrative construction about a specific location and researched issues that deal with broader geographical location of Wellington. I explored how objects can act as a tool and perhaps help to knit together and extend the narrative instead of existing as a product of, or in response to site.

The thematic concerns of this research are focused on a conversation around the relationship between sites of investigation, within issues situated in construction (lack of) and urban development currently in Wellington. This includes addressing and commenting on what I have observed as being a spike in construction, demolition and repair, but it also

extends further to include speculation for future urban development plans for this city. The gallery as a site or a context could be seen as being removed from the hustle and bustle of the streets below. It could be taken as a minimal approach to the presence of physical objects in the space, calmness in the space and a respite where a visitor has just been. However this respite is a façade. The work within the show aims to build a conversation between open urban spaces and the space that is the 'white cube'. I suggest that the gallery as an institution, and the exhibitions associated with them, can be used as tools to direct people towards questions, debates and issues that circulate outside of its four walls. After all just like an open-air car park, Enjoy, as a gallery is a site that functions within Wellington. It is part of the broader discussion, as the building that it is contained in is not exempt from urban development.

I use a process of constructing conceptual parameters to work within and constructing propositions that don't always work out. As an artist I aim to construct experiences that ask the audience to piece together the information presented to them. The work is not bound by the physical limits of the gallery; instead, it attempts to test the boundaries between a collection of locations and moments in time. There has to be a careful consideration of how I construct the experience in order to produce an affective experience. This is done through the information

that I provide to visitors and includes video, sound, print media and sculptural components. All of these devices are used to provisionally situate the elements together within an exhibition moment.

I would consider my approach to the exegesis to be an extension of the research process I have developed - as constructing an experience for the reader that is focused on the idea of interchangeability, producing an object in its own right. These pages contain a mixture of observations as a result of a process of information gathering, as well as parts of a narrative that was formed from observation. It includes discussions about urban development particularly relating to Wellington alongside critical discussions that assist me to situate myself within creative arts research. My practice draws on a sculptural discourse that is not bound solely to the construction of objects, however, I do that as well. I am interested in using functional objects or what Gean Moreno and Ernesto Oroza would term 'generic objects'.<sup>2</sup> I aim to highlight an object's embedded cultural association, allowing for the audience to locate their subjective relationships with these objects in the production of meaning.

Site is the other primary concern covered in this exegesis. While I'm interested in discussions of site-specificity, I find the term 'specificity' to be problematic. This is because I feel that the dispersed nature of

deliberately diffused locations and their relationships to (and between) one another encompasses the broader condition of geographical location, and of place, that I am investigating.

Objects are also used in my site investigations and I have come to realise that in my practice objects are not produced in direct response to site, rather they can be used as tools to draw out information and learn more about the sites of investigation. As a visitor to the work it is my aim to provoke thought and conversation about sites such as the car park at 151 -157 Cuba Street.

Mr Utting does have a plan for his plot; he revealed it me to as we stood at the perimeter of the car park. I didn't want to come across as though I was interviewing him but as we spoke about the scaffolding structure we were looking at beyond into the window of enjoy gallery I really just wanted to come out and ask him. We spoke about scaffolding and its functional use in the process of construction. Trying to be as subtle as possible in diverting the conversation I ask what was here before it was a car park, which lead to a question about the future. He didn't want to give too much away as he is still in the process of drawing up the plans, he didn't want to tell what it was going to be in case it didn't end up happening. I told him how this scaffolding structure was only a ninth of the size I had wanted it to be. I explained to him how that planned failed because it cost too much money and he told me he is trying to save money and hopes he can start building in 2016.

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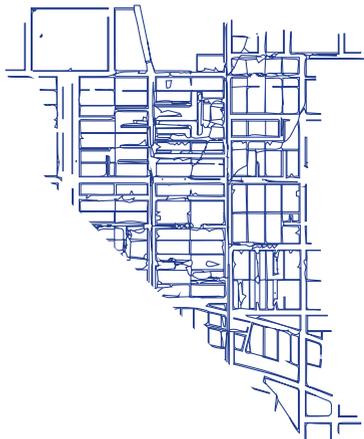
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# Wellington City Council limits





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# Wellington City Council limits

I have lived in Wellington for six years now, but it's only in recent years that I feel more connected to this place than I do to the place I grew up in. I visit Cuba Street and the surrounding area on a regular basis. Very seldom do I venture much further. These streets are part of my routine thoroughfare: walking from my home in Newtown to the night market on Left Bank; meeting people for a meal or going to an opening. Cuba Street is a street with more buildings under historic protection than any other street in the city. Cuba Street and its surrounding area are not the most manicured part of town – graffiti and old unkempt buildings are prevalent. Mr Ian Utting, the owner of the car park, inhabits the building next door. Next to this is a building known as Berry & Co., which was originally home to a photographic studio. William Berry was best known

for his portraits of soldiers and their families, taken before heading off to war. Continuing the artistic tradition of this building, 147 Cuba Street is now home to three notable Wellington commercial galleries.

Within contemporary art discourse the terms 'site' and 'place' are often conflated. In locating site and place in my practice I often find it difficult to use these terms separately due to the interrelated nature of them. Place: its proliferation in general day-to-day conversation makes it important to articulate exactly what I mean when I talk about place within this project. Place, like site, can be defined in terms of geographical location. Perhaps where the difference might lie is the sense of ownership connected with place. To have a sense of place is to have claimed some aspect of ownership. Places have traces of former inhabitants, previous 'owners' and a personal significance to someone, but they also function within a larger socio-geographical system.<sup>1</sup>

Lara Almarcegui's practice often deals with place and site. Her projects cover a broad spectrum of approaches, from place and site related art to a more phenomenological, body-space-object sited experience. In works such as her 2013 Venice Biennale project *Construction Materials of the Spanish Pavilion*,<sup>2</sup> situated inside the Spanish Pavilion, large mounds of construction material were related to the construction of the building it was housed in. Offsetting this installation was the inclusion of a related project with similar thematic concerns of construction urban development. This parallel project *A Guide to Sacca San Mattia, The Abandoned Island of*

Murano<sup>3</sup> was developed around the abandoned artificial Murano Island of Sacca San Mattia. Almarcegui alights on Murano's famous glass making industry as a general concern but also focuses more specifically on Sacca San Mattia's relationship to this place through geographical and environmental themes, addressing why proposed developments for this site have not come to fruition. In this instance, the site is both considered as the Island of Sacca San Mattia but also the place that is Murano and the greater islands that form that area.

In my own research there is an oscillating process of focusing in on the very specific, then out to a more general discussion, then honing in on one particular pinpointed location, the car park that is 151-157 Cuba Street, then out more general concerns relating to a larger geographical location. I am interested in the relationship between these locations and others facing the same type of stasis, that are undeveloped and under utilised. Operating beyond this is the relationship and position that they have within the broader geographical location that is Wellington. I hold the position that in concentrating a focused investigation on one particular location, 151-157 Cuba Street, the result can position this site as a type of catalyst emblematic of a constellation of sites with similar positions. The research undertaken for *Any order is appropriate; it's all in equal measure*, the construction of site, draws from a number of different understandings of the term site in contemporary art discourse. In the pages that follow this concept is unpacked in terms of geographical location. In other sections I address ownership, Mr Utting and the day-to-day use of the location and its function in Wellington as a city. My understanding of site is not confined to its physical boundaries, however I understand this as one

aspect of site included in its relationship to the term place.

Over the next 30 years, Wellington City Council estimate Wellington's population will increase by 55,000 people.<sup>4</sup> Although these figures relate to the amount of growth in urban and suburban spaces, the city centre is designed to serve people from both areas. My research is located in examining open urban spaces that can be freely accessed but are not necessarily public or civic spaces. Wellington City Council, influential in defining our sense of geographical location, provides guidelines that property owners must work within. As a governing figure their influence on the future of Wellington's urban environment is pivotal. At a macro level, their impact on the scaffolding project was also significant as it was rejected for funding from the Council's Public Art Fund:

#### Email response to funding application.<sup>5</sup>

The Panel found the concept of creating a work from Enjoy outwards into the kind of liminal space that exists over the car park to be an appealing one, and exploring the sculptural possibilities of scaffolding to be interesting. However, there were a number of overriding concerns that discouraged the panel from selecting your proposal. The key one of these was the fact that the Wilson Car Park is privately owned, and not Council owned. The Public Art Fund does not generally fund projects that do not utilise Council land, sites or buildings. This concern became central with discussion of the possibility that public pressure would be put on Wilson Car Park during your project, given its use of premium car parks in a congested part of the city, and the fact that Council would not be able to act if a business decided to fold on a project. Although

the Wilson car park staff had been engaged by you, the surety of their involvement, particularly if under pressure, was seen as open to question.

Although the outcome was not what I would have hoped for, the response was useful in the original consideration of this project as public art. As Claire Doherty states, shifts in the understanding of site in artistic practice can be expressed through the way in which art is experienced.<sup>6</sup> I have explored this in a number of modes through various approaches to dissemination of information and consideration of the way in which an audience member might encounter different works. In [Tell someone if something happens](#) the wall text was specifically considered less as an explanation or source of background information and more as an extension of the work itself. In [Bay 133](#) a corresponding line drawing was emailed to the galleries mailing list, while tweets and Facebook images from the gallery directed possible audience members to the location of the scaffolding form during it's time in the car park. In [Time to save a little more](#) the title and accompany text is used as a device to draw the site narrative into the exhibition.

It can be hard to find a sense of wonder in the familiar, to fuel curiosity about the environment of the everyday. Caught in a routine, there may be little time in today's world to stop and consider one's daily, mundane actions - like where to park the car or glancing every morning at the same sign promising a new supermarket for your convenience. Art has the ability to conjure a different sense of looking at the world, offering alternative points of view. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests, art can allow people to "rediscover the world in which we live, yet which we are always prone to forget."<sup>7</sup> Taking a cue from Merleau-Ponty, it is my aim to focus this kind of small, insignificant moment, to hint at a slower, more observant pattern of movement through the city and to produce a sense of renewed experience with a place one knows too well.

These familiar environments and materials are the departure for this investigation and subsequent work produced. It's a process of familiarising myself with the movements of people through the city. A process of unearthing, of allowing the resurfacing of issues and debates already in operation that have faded as time passes.

As cities grow focus is directed to enhancing the flow and circulation of people and goods around urban areas. Issues surrounding transport and roading are prevalent in civic debates and the city's urban development policy states an intention of making Wellington a more sustainable, less polluted and less congested city.<sup>8</sup> As more and more buildings are demolished due to their earthquake risk a popular and supposedly 'temporary' solution is to lease the cleared site out to Wilson Parking. This situation is not isolated to Wellington. Particularly important this discussion is the situation in Christchurch. Having visited post-quake Christchurch, the number of sites being used

as temporary car parks – waiting for development – far out ways the demand. The situation in Wellington is different, as the task of strengthening or demolishing earthquake-prone buildings is a slower process.

As a person with a sense of place in Wellington, I often find the current situation a frustrating reality. It could be seen that the private, commercial interests of Wilson Parking, with easily accessible parking which encourages more motor traffic, goes against the Council's urban development plan and undermines their sustainable values.

There was a project that came before the scaffolding project, and although it was my intention to see both projects to completion, this one has a pace of its own. It's still there, simmering away and it pops up every now and then.

It is a project with similar thematic concerns, formal enquires and logistical conundrums. The broader ideas explored in [Help me find a wrecking ball](#) contextualise my current project and locate it within a social discourse about current transformations and modification of urban spaces in Wellington.

My interest in these issues were first sparked as a result of the Government's announcement to extend the requirement from 15 to 20 years before property owners must strengthen or demolish any commercial building that is found to meet less than 33% of the current building code.<sup>9</sup>

Wellington has always been known as 'the shaky city' and there has always been speculation about the arrival of the [Big One](#), an earthquake that could destroy the city, a city built on reclaimed land. I find myself in a city that is now racing against the clock, preparing for an earthquake that may not happen, surrounded by vacant buildings too dangerous to inhabit and buildings being brought down in greater than usual numbers. The sobering number of buildings that appear on Wellington City Council's [Earthquake Prone Building List](#) suggests that a possible 530 buildings will no longer be standing in 20 years' time.<sup>10</sup>

This is not the first time Wellington has found itself in the midst of possible 'catastrophe'. [Hometown Boomtown](#), a 1983 documentary, examines the mindset on urban development during the Seventies and Eighties. The

film focuses on 200 buildings that were demolished as a result of similar seismic testing conducted in the late 1970s, illustrating clearly that, at the point this film was made, attitudes towards ideas about progress and development revolved around [out with the old, in with the new](#).<sup>11</sup>

[Help me find a wrecking ball](#) became the search for an archaic object - the wrecking ball, a popular method of demolition in the eighties. The object took on catalytic properties and became a vehicle to discuss current issues surrounding urban modification and the demolish-or-strengthen debate.

Catastrophe is what we are trying to prevent but the proposition itself is potentially catastrophic. In the next 20 years Wellington faces a spike in demolition: over 400 buildings will be either strengthened or demolished. Catastrophe seems hard to avoid in this situation. Are we [damned if we do, damned if we don't](#)?

Will Wellington's built environment undergo radical change over the next two decades? It seems absurd to think that all this effort is being put into preparing for something that might never happen. It would be irresponsible to do nothing but it seems extreme to knock down so many buildings. [Help me find a wrecking ball](#), does not focus on buildings with important historic, social and cultural value in Wellington, as the debate around this category of building (those protected under heritage listing status) are discussed in more in-depth in public forums. Rather, this project pays attention to those less publicly 'significant' buildings – the buildings most likely to be demolished will most likely be buildings you pass every day. You won't notice them until they are gone. I don't think the mundane should be forgotten and these buildings are no less important.

They foster and contain smaller, personal memories to those who have inhabited them throughout their history.

Existing as a proposition not yet fulfilled, I have located a wrecking ball and begun planning its journey to Wellington. I have a drawing of a structure to distribute the load. Wrecking balls are not as common as you might think and they are an outdated and now somewhat obsolete piece of demolition equipment used on special occasions, ironically for buildings where modern demolition methods are unsafe and for charity events.<sup>12</sup> As wrecking balls tend to produce more uncontrollable debris, and using them slows the process, they are not common practice in high-density urban demolition projects.

My idea is to bring the wrecking ball I have located to Wellington. I don't think the challenge will be getting it to this place from its home in Christchurch. The challenge will be maneuvering the hefty steel object into position. I had a space in mind in my studio. This space was marked by a one meter by one meter square outlined using caution tape. The tape was meticulously laid and the demarcation of the space on the floor became placeholder for an object that has not yet arrived. The tape square has been brought back into conversation through its inclusion in [Time to save a little more](#). Here a one metre by one metre piece of the gallery floor is demarcated, evoking a sense of material presence in the precisely laid anti-slip tape. Existing in multiple locations at once, this same demarcated space also appears for the duration of the exhibition in various locations around the Te Aro area. Directed to Enjoy as a first point of call, a small text work [Location Location Location](#) directs visitors back outside to the 'originary' place the exhibition addresses – the car park. Like the material gestures of artists Roman

Ondak or Jiri Kovanda this work not only operates as a set of works for an audience visiting Enjoy first, but also work as individual interventions, acting a momentary disruptions.

The aims of [Help me find a wrecking ball](#) are aligned to the aims of both [Bay 133](#) and [Time to save a little more](#). I do not expect these works to enforce or encourage change about the issues they address. I hold the position of highlighting and reintroducing awareness of place, building knowledge of sites where people have stopped focusing their attention. These sites, and the production of art within or about them, are intended to act as catalysts to lead the viewer away from the immediacy of a single location and to provoke thought and discussion about a city's current, and future, state of urban modification.

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# References

- <sup>1</sup> Tim Cresswell, [Place, a short introduction](#), (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 1-14.
  
- <sup>2</sup> Lara Almarcegui, [Construction Materials of the Spanish Pavilion](#), 2013, Sculptural installation.
  
- <sup>3</sup> Lara Almarcegui, [A Guide to Sacca San Mattia, The Abandoned Island of Murano](#), 2013, slide installation on video, 13:36 min.

- <sup>4</sup> 'Wellington City Council Urban Planning' Wellington City Council, accessed September 28, 2014, <http://wellington.govt.nz/services/environment-and-waste/urban-development>.
- <sup>5</sup> Jodie Dalglish, email message to author, May 28, 2014.
- <sup>6</sup> Claire Doherty. 'Claire Doherty: From Site to Situation- Art in the Space of Public Time 2,' IHME Contemporary Art Festival 2011, YouTube video, 20.42, April 8, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRCJLCZLMys&list=UUz-JTdo2TfFnAkkriFnZ6pQ>.
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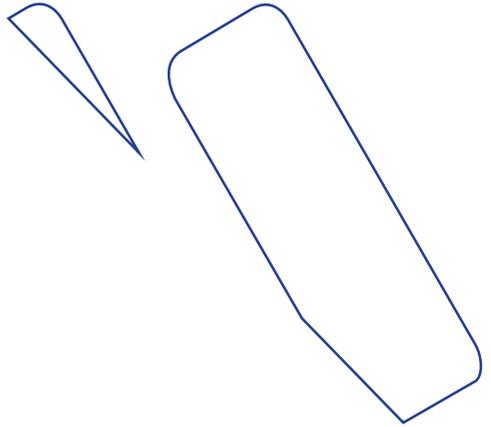






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# Wilson Parking





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# Wilson Parking

For six days (it was supposed to be five) I occupied bay 133 at Wilson Parking's open-air parking lot on Cuba Street. A seven-meter high scaffolding structure, that occupied the space within the boundaries of what I paid for, was something that went against the usual use of the space.

A second occupation will occur simultaneously during an exhibition at Enjoy Public Art Gallery.

The emails, the cold calls, the dead-ends and, every now and again, the people who get on board. Persisting when people don't reply to your emails or phone messages – I know a bit about that.

Organising and coordinating, making sure each company, each person and each contributing party is in the right place at the right time. In order for the plan to be carried out the cooperation of others is imperative.

With the aim of forming a better understanding of my practice and research I went through a process of examining areas I did not have a clear understanding of. I identified my reliance on the involvement of people other than myself and started to focus on exploring 'social' aspects of my practice. I found myself being led towards the field of research termed participatory or socially engaged art practice but this alignment didn't feel quite right. This field of study has not been an ongoing central concern for this research, however due to the examination socially engaged practice in the early stages of this my project, it is useful to reflect on and consider its influence on later works such as [Bay 133](#).

I considered Claire Bishop's [Artificial Hells](#), which is heavily weighted with discussion around participatory art. I was particularly interested in her concept of 'delegated performance'. The idea refers to the "the act of hiring non-professionals or specialists in other fields to undertake the job of being present and performing at a particular time and particular place on behalf of the artist, and following his/her instructions."<sup>1</sup> Bishop's concept of delegated performance informed a number of instructional-based performative works I produced in the early stages of this research in which I explored the use of instructional language in order to

get other people to produce sculptural installations in a controlled studio environment.

This line of inquiry could be seen to have re-emerged in the process of constructing the scaffolding work that was [Bay 133](#). It was important that professional scaffolders constructed the scaffolding, partly due to safety concerns but also the ‘realness’ I required of the object to heighten a sense of speculation about what this object was trying to evoke. There was a process of translation and relaying of instructions to people who have a greater understanding of scaffolding in a material sense than I do. The use of a small set of books produced in the planning phase of this work was instrumental in conveying a set of instructions to the scaffolders who constructed the work.

Along with Bishop, Nato Thompson<sup>2</sup> is also concerned with participatory, socially engaged modes of art practice. Their discussions on socially engaged practice have been considered influential because they introduce a set of ideas that counter embedded associations with social and political concerns within participatory practice and encourage a type of practice that inherently deals with the relevance of art in contemporary societies.

Thompson defines socially engaged art as a type of practice that engages people in order to confront specific issues and enact change about the issues dealt within the work it addresses. Thompson outlines the need to be situated in the “real” world and out of gallery or museum contexts, to produce participation involving physical engagement with the work and the desire for work to operate in the political sphere. For many artists there is “continued interest in impact and often the realm of the political symbolises these ambitions.”<sup>3</sup> I would not position myself within a politically driven and

socially directed practice, however I see the commentary within my work as offering a platform for discussion, if not an intention to enact change.

As an artist it is my intention to question and respond to current social issues and I believe it is important to offer alternative ways of considering our environment. It is this that motivates my current interest in our built environment and issues concerning urban space. Through the production of objects and investigations of particular sites it is my aim to assert and highlight what it means to be an active and vigilant individual in the world, a person who questions and contributes to the direction of the place she locates herself. It is about questioning and rethinking the familiar, destabilising routine and allowing buried histories to resurface.

Wilson Parking holds the current lease for the land at 151-157 Cuba Street and a number of other similar sites. Wilson Parking is a Singapore-based company and hold the majority of New Zealand commercial parking spaces: they manage over 300 parking lots, both covered and open-air.<sup>4</sup> Wilson Group is a multinational company operating across Australasia with sectors in security, healthcare and storage. Wilson have had their fair share of controversy in recent years: Director Raymond Kwok was arrested in 2012 for corruption<sup>5</sup> and Wilson are the current contractors for security in Australian refugee and detention centres, with reports of guards mistreating inmates placing the company into the media spot light.<sup>6</sup> Wilson Parking, and its attendant politics, is not the focus of my project but the company does play a clear role in defining the purpose of the land I have chosen to host my project.

It was not the car park on Cuba Street below Enjoy that first triggered this project. It was a result of a number of observations spanning a number of years – one being the demolition of a building right across the road from where I get my coffee. From what I can remember the demolished building housed a second-hand furniture shop and a small number of apartments and was briefly home to Kim Paton's Letting Space project [Free Store](#).<sup>7</sup> After demolition the front section of the site was immediately transformed into a parking lot. The small structure at the rear housed an artist studio and project space for a short while. Eventually this was gone too and replaced by a billboard with artist impressions for the intended development.

Three large signs meet at the outermost corner. One advertises ASPEC Construction and another displays a

set of artist impression drawings for planned building and real estate advertising, instructing prospective buyers to [Enquire Now!](#) Hovering over these is a large red and white Wilson Parking billboard. This was in 2012. Following the demolition of the building a number of media reports and online forums discussed the tension surrounding the future plans for the site – many in opposition to the proposed New World supermarket and construction of more apartments. Fast forward to late 2014 and the site has no signs of development, the completion date has passed. As it turns out Foodstuffs pulled out, so it's back to the drawing board.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, at 73 Rugby Street, there has been an extended hush about its fate. 73 Rugby Street was also going to be a supermarket but the site is clearly in a state of suspension, becoming a site that might interest Lara Almarcegui, a fenced-off wasteland. In contrast, sites like 38-40 Ghuznee St, 151-157 Cuba St and the plot between Victoria and Upper Willis Streets remain in states of limbo but, due to their supposedly temporary repurposing by Wilson, the contention around these sites tends to dissipate as time passes.

[In a conversation with Ian I realised that he sincerely believes the current use of his land, as a parking lot, is a contribution to the community that benefits the local businesses. In some ways I agree. By providing more parking it will draw more people to the vicinity, people who will spend more money and support the economic growth of the community. However, in a city as geographically small as Wellington, where land is precious, is this the most efficient use of this land? For me it is also raises a question of complacency. Throughout my research I have come across a number of debates around the use](#)

of inner-city land, particularly the car parks on Cuba Street (151-157) and Ghuznee Street (38-40) and more recently the corner of Dixon and Victoria Streets. It would seem that over time these debates fall off the collective radar, people stop looking and the use of the site becomes more familiar. People get used to what is there.

The process of creating the scaffolding work [Bay 133](#) at the Wilson car park, on Cuba Street was activated when deciding to occupy a piece of land that was already in use. Occupying a piece of land currently in use by Wilson Parking was an important self-imposed parameter. This was deliberate in order to have the most impact, to intervene and to stand out, instead of what may have been a cheaper exercise of using the 'spare' land around the perimeter. The task of obtaining the small plot of land brought up a number of concerns. Essentially, when paying for a car park, the payee holds a temporary lease for that small plot of land. Although it is a car park, there are no restrictions placed on what can be 'parked' in the 4.7m by 2.5m section of land. [It's not a loud protest: the occupation of this small plot of land is not an OCCUPATION in an activist sense.](#) It's more of a gesture, a comment rather than a protest. However, in a sense, this is also a somewhat antagonistic act of co-opting parking spaces with an object that speaks to future speculation of the site and acts as a type of monument to the owner. The structure, monolithic in form, suggests an alternative use of the land. [Like Ian, I too find myself in a position of resistance:](#) going against the grain, quietly occupying the land within the boundaries I have paid for in order to provoke thought and to contribute dialogue to a field of research that encourages people to question their surroundings. It has raised questions around what is appropriate use of land and provoking thought about the future development of these sites.

I'd suggest that there is a slapstick element to the work, sitting somewhere between the physical comedy of Charlie Chaplin and the pathos of Bas Jan Ader's, actions that surpass the rational; works such as Ader's

All My Clothes<sup>9</sup> and Fall series.<sup>10</sup> I am interested in how echoes of black humour or deadpan comedic delivery work as an articulation without an obvious change in emotion. Artist Roman Ondak also pairs the use of comedy with politically and socially implied messages.

Within my practice there often is an understated comic element to circulating in the works produced. This is used to offset the sometimes hard-edged, austere nature of the thematic concerns around construction and deconstruction. In earlier test works a number of participations performed a set of tasks provided to them on a television monitor. Exploring the limits of Instructional language was a central concern of this work and, through the act of providing ambiguous instructions a set of randomly chosen materials, the participant carried out what I called a material investigation. These took cues from Richard Serra's Verb list,<sup>11</sup> applying an action to a material to form a sculptural assemblage. What was 'presented' was the set of instructions, a tape square on the floor – acting as a type of stage – the materials themselves and a test response from the participants about their experience. As instructions these were purposefully frustrating and made little sense. When paired with responses from participants, it spoke to a comical experience that the participants had previously engaged with. The static objects and the taped 'stage' helped to construct a space for imagination of action even though it was physically present.

In Bay 133 the gesture of placing the scaffolding in its location was not immediately or overtly supposed to be humorous. However there are intentionally comic elements in the purposelessness of the scaffolding structure and, in Time to save a little more, the reservation

of three car parks in the Te Aro area with nothing placed in them – only the demarcation of the space through a reserved sign painted in the centre of the space and tape laid around the perimeter.

A large ‘useless’ scaffolding structure, on view for 6 days, wrapped in bright blue mesh... isn't that a funny sight?

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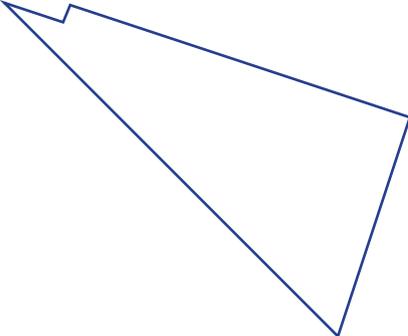
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**Mr Utting**





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# Mr Utting

A car park for as long as I have known.

I have only been here for six years but know from others that it has been the way it is for as long as they can remember.

A car park with a sense of permanence, stubborn in a way.

A car park located in a historically significant and lively area, sandwiched by historically protected buildings.  
A car park, servicing an area rich in entertainment, art and culture.

A car park covered in asphalt, not gravel like the others.

No advertising for shiny new buildings.

On the surface, no plans for the future.

A car park owned by a Mr Utting.

56 parking spaces. Slightly smaller than the standard size.

9 permanent occupants.

One van selling chai.

On weekdays people skirt the perimeter.

Countless cars drive down Swan Lane, hopeful, but have to turn around.

The rows between the car parks are narrow so watching cars try and get out is slightly amusing.

Mr Utting parks here every morning, his favourite is right by his gate. Bay 133, 132 or 131 usually.

Weekdays this space is filled to the brim, you have got to be in quick.

By 8.30 you will be out of luck, they all choose the early bird option; they will be there until 7pm.

On Saturday the space is far quieter, with only a handful of cars at 9am.

On these days people use the space as a thoroughfare.

By midday the park is full, but more action as cars flow in and out more often.

A curious story was told to me: an account of a meeting, a negotiation to purchase some of the land. The story of a restaurateur trying to purchase a piece of the car park because its afternoon sun meant another draw card for customers. Ian was stubbornly unwilling to sell or lease any part of the land. From this story Mr Utting grew in my mind as an idea. It's the use of hearsay and conversational stories that have been important in constructing the narrative formed around this site.

Mr Utting: an indistinct figure, a character in my mind. I had never met him or spoken to him personally and the information gathered up until this point came from second-hand stories, books, archives and personal observations. A narrative evolving, a narrative informing the formal and material investigation of the scaffolding, the two feeding each other.

As the chattel of a property owner, who owns and directs a property business, it is strange that this site has been left undeveloped for such a lengthy period. The position of resistance held by Mr Utting – resisting development in such a high-density location – is an unexpected position for a developer to hold.

In 1980 the artist Ann Messner took part in an influential exhibition titled *The Real Estate Show*.<sup>1</sup> This show took the form of a type of occupation. Messner, along with

Joseph Beuys and artists from the New York-based artist collective Colab, engaged in a physical occupation and mounting of an exhibition - [The Real Estate Show](#) - in a neglected building earmarked for demolition and redevelopment. Messner describes [The Real-Estate Show](#) as “a provocative stance deployed to expose the city’s nefarious relationship not only to the urgent concerns of an impoverished community but also to the creative desires of a vibrant counterculture movement.”<sup>2</sup> The act of occupying can be seen in itself as a form of resisting, opposing the planned development in the Lower East Side during that time. After the two-week exhibition/occupation, the building in question was eventually torn down, and for the last three decades has remained an under-used parking lot. This event is not isolated to the original moment in 1980. The actions of those involved in [The Real Estate Show](#) provides an historic grounding for artists dealing with issues of urban development. The Social Centre and project Space ABC on Rio emerged as a result. In a recent account of her involvement in the 1980 event, Messner suggests the action of physically occupying a space provides an interesting historic model for social practices such as the Occupy Movement.<sup>3</sup>

Three decades later, the role of the artist in contributing to the discourse around the development of cities and the urban environment is still relevant and vital. The central focus of the 2013 Creative Times summit

Art, Place and Dislocation in the 21st Century explores topics such as *Resistors*, a discussion around strategies for resisting urban development and the transformation of high-density urban area. Continuing the discussion around the relevance of such issues in contemporary art practice.<sup>4</sup>

Swan Lane itself has been around for a long time. The site of the present car park used to house the White Swan Hotel “affectionately and incomprehensibly called The Dirty Duck.”<sup>5</sup> More recently, the land was the site of the Wakefield Hotel, with references to its past now visible two doors down, next to Ian’s family-run jewellery store. Wakefield Hotel has become a men’s shoe shop of the same name.

Building a car park was supposedly a temporary solution, but slowly became less and less temporary. Along with the restaurateur, Wellington City Council also approached Mr Utting to swap his plot for a comparable plot on Garrett Street (now Glover Park). Clearly they too were unsuccessful in this bid. It is not only the council who are of the opinion that this site would be better utilised as a civic space: one speculative idea is of this site being transformed into ‘Utting Park.’ Maybe the suggestion might persuade Mr Utting?<sup>6</sup> Perhaps Mr Utting is too attached to the lucrative, low maintenance parking lot. Or he is still not ready to give up his

aspirations and is carefully considering the right use for the space. To him the parking lot remains very much a temporary solution. It is a case of aspiration versus concrete reality.

A key figure in the discourse around the site specificity is Miwon Kwon. In her 2002 text *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*,<sup>7</sup> Kwon tracks the concept of site specificity as emerging from the phenomenological understanding explored by Minimalist artists in the 1960s and 70s where site was defined by physical attributes of size, scale, texture, climate, lighting and topographical features and often the architecture of the site served as a foil for the artwork.

These concepts evolved through those artists engaging with institutional critique – where site specificity was reconfigured as a network of spaces such as the studio, gallery and museum as contexts for art to sit within. Kwon puts forward the argument that there has been a shift away from the understanding of site specificity towards approaches that challenge “the hermeticism of this system, complicating the site of art as not only a physical arena but one constituted through social, economic and political processes.”<sup>8</sup>

Throughout *Any order is appropriate; it's all in equal measure* a number of investigations have

been developed and run parallel to one another. The first is a formal and material focus around scaffolding as a sculptural object, and the other an ongoing investigation into an observed spike in urban modification in Wellington – specifically in relation to earthquake strengthening. Alongside these fields of enquiry I also embarked on an investigation that began in a straightforward manner – collecting bits of information, historical notes, site observations, past and present debates surrounding the site and its current usage as an inner-city car park in order to help form a narrative about this Mr Utting and his plot land.

Mr Utting, a figure of resistance: resisting another low cost high-density apartment building, resisting the temptation of building for the sake of building, resisting selling or swapping. Mr Utting, a figure of resistance: resisting the offer for his land to be converted into a civic space – do we even need another park? Mr Utting is an example of someone who has a modest amount control and influence, a man frustrated by the restrictions placed on him as an historic building owner: having to keep the wall backing onto the car park free of posters and graffiti and the Council’s insistence that he must paint it black.

151- 157 Cuba Street is a site in stasis, inactive, with an owner resisting everything. A site as a

result of idleness: people have stopped looking, stopped questioning and speculating. My project is influenced by the site's current state of suspension in time, by the resistance to urban modification of a city I live in. It is my intention to produce speculation and stage my own resistance.

The use of site, the engagement with particular spaces within a place, has held my attention for a number of years. Although this project circulates within the realm of site-responsive art practice, this investigation does not place emphasis on exploring physical qualities of the car park, aside from the car parks themselves. Within the parameters of this project themes of construction are visible in my choice of a site emptied of architectural features, a ghost of its former presence and edged with speculation for future plans. The site is constructed through facts, archives and narratives that exist around it. This is a process where I have attempted to uncover past and present debates about the site, taking a cue from its relationship to similar locations within a broader geographical location of Wellington City.

Alongside the narrative formed around this site is a process of information gathering in relation to the creation of a sculptural object. For me this is a process of interrelations and unlike a linear mode of site-

responsive art where an object (artwork) is created directly in response to physical and formal site conditions. The site does inform the objects I have produced, but these act as tools to draw information out of people, allowing me to form a less hierarchical relationship between site and object and their positions within the urban landscape.

I met Mr Ian Utting while pacing out car park dimensions. At first, the conversation wasn't significant then, a moment of realisation, when I learned who I was talking to a tactical shift from idle banter to more constructed, self-aware conversation took place. This pivotal point, this chance encounter, complicated my position and my initial assumptions about Ian and his position in the project. The figure of Ian shifted for me, away from a person whose actions and decisions portray him as a reactionary towards an understanding of his sense of care, a person strangely attached to the provisional nature of this site.

Writer and curator Claire Doherty considers contemporary notions of site. Like Kwon, Doherty argues that there has been a shift from the minimalist understanding of site-specificity, such as Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*,<sup>9</sup> that aimed for an integral relationship between the object and its physical location, demanding the physical presence of the

viewer for an authentic experience. Doherty states that the shift in understanding of site is not a linear evolution over time. She acknowledges the differing approaches to site during particular time periods while recognising that the shift in understanding is most noticeable in the way projects are “produced, disseminated, circulated and consumed”.<sup>10</sup>

Doherty reflects on the practice of artist Lara Almarcegui, an artist I have frequently returned to, whose is known for her investigations into wasteland and abandoned sites. Like Ann Messner, Almarcegui was included in the Creative Times Summit. Her practice has clear themes of construction and often uses materials associated with industry processes.

Almarcegui explains her aversion to the saturation of construction, architecture and urban development and a lack of control as a result of a concentration of power in those who plan and design cities. For her the result is claustrophobia, a sense of being surrounded by too much design. Her approach is to seek out spaces that go against the grain, spaces waiting for development, where anything could happen but it hasn't happened yet.<sup>11</sup> What sets Almarcegui's practice apart from my research interests is her approach to the types of spaces that are engaged with. Almarcegui usually locates her investigation within liminal sites that are sitting outside of the economic flow of the city. My

interest is in spaces that have that appearance but tread a line between function and idleness – they not clearly abandoned sites but sites whose function within the ecology of the city is questionable.

I propose that the work created within [Any order is an appropriate; it's all in equal measure](#) does not singularly reflect the nature of the term site-specificity or the emphasis on the social in Doherty's notion of situation-specific. I have found useful the methodology employed by practitioners such as Maddie Leach where gathered discussions and narratives around specific locations assist in forming conceptual parameters and building of logic within an investigation. My practice places site and object into a more level and holistic relationship where there is nothing produced as a result of a site investigation but, rather, site and object inform one another in a more complex weave. There are traces of site-specificity and responsiveness in the process of information gathering and building a narrative around a location but the intentions for the project go beyond the immediate location to draw out discussion and provoke thought, located more in the perimeter and the space between the chosen sites.

For [Bay 133](#) Ian has been one of the key sources of information throughout my return visits and planning for the scaffolding structure and his presence in the site a constant.

In the day the scaffolding was supposed to come down, I spent a considerable amount of time on the outskirts of the car park. Johanna was filming while trying to keep quiet for the sake of the sound recording. I stood a fair distance away, struggling to get a clear answer as to why Wilson Parking had failed to reserve the six parks around the structure so the scaffolders could safely dismantle it and take it away. Ian arrived. There was no space for his car. Parking right on the edge, he hovered, observing the scaffolding, occupying the space as he often did. When Ian spotted the filming he came over for a chat. He was joined by a man who was working on the paving that lined the perimeter of the parking lot. Like the conversations and encounters before, our interaction was based around the scaffolding structure, a tool for conversation and a way to draw out details that might come in handy later. Ian's position is perplexing and this last conversation was no different. One minute he asked me to explain 'why', curious, engaged and in support of the use of his land for 'art'. Then he was quick to voice his concerns. I sensed some anxiety. He would be happy when it was gone so he didn't have to worry about 'silly buggers' trying to climb up it.

153-157 Cuba Street, Te Aro:

An asphalt parking lot. 55 parking spaces.

\$4 per hour, 24 hours, 7 days a week

Operated by Wilson Parking.

Owned by Pavilion Properties Ltd. 9 Box Hill, Khandallah,  
Wellington 6004.

Pavilion Properties is owned and directed by Ian W Utting  
of Te Aro.

The site was purchased by Pavilion Properties Ltd in May  
1995.

Site Area: 1.008 sqm.<sup>12</sup>

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**Time to  
Save a  
Little More**

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# Time to Save a Little More

A moment in itself.

Pause. A moment to reflect, to consider, to question.

A quiet tension. The objects are neither here nor there.

Everything is balanced, suspended, and provisional.

A fleeting moment.

Look to the past and to the future.

Things that have happened, and things that could happen.

Circulating the perimeter. The space between one thing and another. Look into the gallery from below, and out the car park from where you stand.

In here and out there. The circulation emanates outwards.

A pause, a sense of calm, a moment to notice. Pay attention to the things you usually don't notice.

Borders and boundaries, circulating the perimeter.

The accumulation of things, converging for a moment, but then back out again.

[Time to save a little more](#) is a line of text sourced from a billboard advertising a planned property development. The space is now a parking lot. With the completion date been and gone, the artist's impression still remains: the promise of a new development, an inner city supermarket with a set of apartments above. Or so the sign would suggest.

[Time to save a little more](#) resonates from my very last conversation with Ian, the owner of 151-157 Cuba Street and the revealing of his true intentions for the site: it's a secret, but he is saving for now and hopes to begin work in 2016.

The language of this advertisement is full of the promise and persuasion of something not present. No sign of action and a completion date that has passed. The extension of the site of engagement has come full circle. Initially my thesis project proposed an engagement with a number of sites designated as car parks where buildings were recently torn down, but it has slowly consolidated into a narrative built around one particular car park. [Time to save a little more](#) is borrowed text from

a particular real estate sign, drawing on a specific vocabulary associated with the real estate industry. It is not only drawn into the space of the exhibition through the title but also in the inclusion of a postcard type document. In its first iteration [Bay 133](#) had a supplement document within the gallery. This document, also a postcard, had a small line drawing pertaining to the planning of the object and on the back it indicated a specific location and a set of dates. The postcards have never left the space. For this occasion the same type of document has been included.

[Location Location Location](#) is a phrase easily associated with the real estate industry, a language set up to entice potential buyers of property. By drawing the language of the particular sign on Ghuznee Street through the inclusion of a second postcard type document. There is a cycle of the past moment (that happened in the car park in July), the exhibition moment, a present viewing and then a sense of future thinking and of the sites in question. As a document [Location Location Location](#) acts as a type of map, giving details to the four locations of car parks I have reserved for the duration of the exhibition.

I was originally drawn to the idea of building a dialogue between the interior institutional space of the gallery and the open, more public space of the car park below. This proposition intrigued me, as I am interested in working outside of the gallery context, in what Nato Thompson calls the 'real' world. However, my practice is not a rejection of these types of spaces, unlike the socially engaged practices outlined by Thompson's text [Living as form](#).<sup>1</sup> For me the white cube space, the space of the gallery, in itself provides a set of parameters that can be challenged, rather than rejected.

My decision to shift the construction of the scaffolding structure, to a date three months earlier than initially thought, was pivotal in my approach to exhibition. This resulted in a shift in considering the relationship between the scaffolding outside in the car park and the subsequent exhibition. The effect of this shift has been most noticeable in the focus of the presentation in the gallery and its position in relation to the scaffolding project. It has allowed me draw from and include work explored over the last 24 months, to focus on thematic concerns and core interests. With this there is a cracking and a loosening of the parameters tied to the investigation of site directly below the gallery. The thematic concerns of the show have shifted away from the scaffolding to a discussion that considers the relationships between components, using the [Bay 133](#)

as link between other works.

The gallery, the white cube: a specific context, an empty shell full of historic baggage. The gallery is a space of faux neutrality traditionally contained within its white walls often limiting the conversation to the audience's immediate surroundings in a specific moment.<sup>2</sup> Its contents are automatically elevated to the status of art.

In exploring the separation of art that exists outside the walls of a gallery space and that which is located outdoors, I am interested in how the gallery exhibition I have constructed might challenge and complicate, without rejecting, the understanding of the gallery space.

A driving force for the research conducted within this thesis project has been a personal dissatisfaction with the way sculpture is experienced in a gallery context or as public sculpture. There have, however, been specific moments when a more conventional object-body-space relationship has been constructed, specifically in [Bay 133](#), and where speculation around the object was produced due to the encounter with the physical object in the space. This viewing experience could be considered to fall into the territory of an earlier mode of site specificity, which demanded the viewer to be present in the site of display in order to complete the artwork.

I would consider my work to be situated with a sculptural practice. In 2011 I spent 14 hours hitting together a small stack of Greywacke rocks together. The result: a vertically challenged pile of dust on the floor of the Engine Room gallery at Massey University. With an emphasis on a material exploration, influenced by Richard Serra's [Verb List](#),<sup>3</sup> for me it was about applying an action to a material to alter the understanding of the material itself. For me this work marks a point in time where I became more aware of a type of sculptural work that was, in my mind, an autonomous object and subsequently influenced my approach to making sculptural works.

Contained within the body of work produced for my thesis project are a number of early explorations that examine alternative methods of producing sculptural installations. These were enquiries less focused on context, site and place and more interested in exploring performativity within the production of sculptural objects and material installations. The work became about a process of setting up situations and providing a set of obscure instructions whereby others were instructed to carry out a task. I then presented the remnants as an installation.

A small but significant work that sits outside of my central research, and its focus on site and place, is [Tell someone if something happens](#). It is important because it draws on core concerns of my practice around craft and material exploration but also illustrates the construction of a situation using objects and performative actions.

This work was created as an entry for the National Contemporary Art Award at the Waikato Museum. The work was generated by two threads of inquiry: the first an experiment focusing on the material qualities and formal possibilities of Victor Superfine Casting Plaster; the second a section of scaffolding displayed horizontally, nestled in a shallow groove, perfectly flush with the ends of the shelf it sits on.

### [Tell someone if something happens](#)

A set of hollow plaster tubes, placed one at a time on a cedar shelf; a clearly hollowed out groove on the very edge; all that holds it in place is the slight upturn of this recess. Nine slip-cast objects, each resembling a broken fluorescent light bulb, or a rolled-up paper, each placed in a meticulously crafted case, the packaging not unlike a light bulb's.

The rough finish on the interior hollow of the case grips and holds the smooth, almost reflective surface of the plaster. A sheet of thin grid paper protects the broken edge. It is all packaged snugly into a long rectangular cedar box; safe enough to withstand a turbulent flight and a bumpy car ride.

A lengthy set of instructions accompanied this work, building a sense of tension and alerting museum staff to the extreme care needed when handling. As its author I understand the properties of the material, its limits and characteristics, however imparting this information to someone else set the parameters for the storage methods incorporated in the work itself.

This was an object with fragility and tension and risk. A work where the visual experience of the tube on the shelf and the experience of holding this form both have a sense of anxiety. There is satisfaction in the sound it makes when the object breaks. This is due to its almost porcelain quality, the thinness of the walls accompanied by the form and the open ends amplifies the sound, adding to the unique resonance produced.

The accompanying wall text encouraged a tactile experience and set the scene for the viewer to experience the work as an object on a shelf with the potentiality of falling and as an object, broken and failed

on the floor in small fine shards. Nine audience members experienced the satisfying and haptic moment of hold and breaking the object. All are equally valid.

This work drew on the context it was placed in and the institutional rules of experiencing art object in a museum, the [look, but don't touch](#) behaviour that audiences absorb and perform. I acknowledge that these conventions are referenced in this work but, for me, this is not the sole focus of the work and exists as an underlying concern that created another level of tension.

In [Tell someone if something happens](#), the work relied on a bodily relationship between object, body and physical space of viewing to produce an affective experience. However, larger projects such as [Bay 133](#) and [Time to save a little more](#) employ an imaginative space.

Experiencing these works is more complicated. In [Bay 133](#), unlike temporary public sculptures where the physical interaction with the object could be described as the 'authentic experience' as discussed by Claire Doherty, the evolution did not follow a trajectory of the object having its moment of glory for five days in the car park. The planning and the imaginative processes leading up to the actualisation of the object and then the reimagining, the ghosting of the object in [Time to save a little more](#) are considered equally important and experienced differently by different people. I would argue that it doesn't matter whether an audience

member experiences only the object in the car park or the work in the gallery – these individual experiences are as authentic as experiencing both moments. As a result, there is an attempt to refuse the primacy of one experience over another.

[The physical manifestation of the scaffolding has passed.](#)

The set of scaffolding is, by now, long gone: reinstated into circulation and relegated back to functional componentry, circulating throughout the city. What remains is a collection of items, notes on the planning phase and documents of the scaffolding's short life as a sculptural form. It is the productive reimagining of this object, in the absence of the physical, that visitors now contend with.

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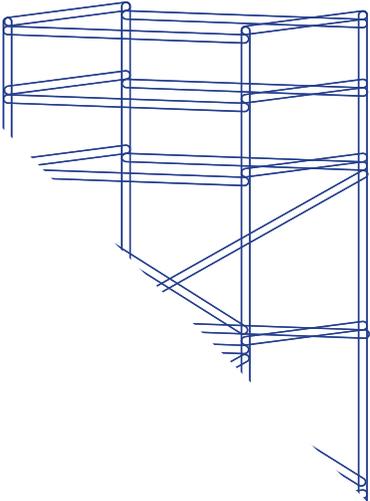






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# Bay 133





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# Bay 133

These pages track a project of aspiration, optimism and Utopian ideals. Perhaps this is naive; I am artist, not a scaffolder. But where is the fun if there is no challenge?

[Bay 133](#) is a project that has been directed by particular circumstance: a moment to reassess intentions due to the reality of the price of a grand structure, causing many revisions, transformations and further transformations. This has conspired to form the path of an object much smaller in scale but just as full of possibility and speculation.

August 2013<sup>1</sup>

The focal point of the work is the relationship between the inside of the gallery space and the car park directly outside, using the existing windows as a viewfinder that frames and directs the eye to the space directly outside the gallery. Inside, I will erect a set of seats facing the window. The structure will resemble a small set of terraced seating or bleachers out of scaffolding and shrink-wrap (as used in construction). The shrink-wrap is applied to the outer surface of the structure, creating a shell and mostly concealing the interior form of the scaffolding. It is the material's transformative potential that I am interested in; how the concealing of the structure enables the 'objectness' of this form to be revealed. I want to use the seat as a space for contemplation of the car park below, as a potential intervention intended to activate reflection and focus the discussion.

April 2014<sup>2</sup>

Occupying 9 parking spaces directly outside the window of Enjoy. This first configuration will exist in this form for 5-7 days. On the seventh day the form will be dismantled and moved to the gallery for one day before being reconfigured in a different set of 9 parking spaces in 151-157 Cuba Street. One more reconfiguration will take place before the end of the exhibition at Enjoy gallery. These forms will be visually functional at a glance but will have anomalies that would render them useless in an industrial or utility context.

The process of constructing and reconfiguring these forms will be carried out using clip and tube scaffolding with wooden planks. It will require at least two 'scaffies' to construct these forms using a conventional scaffolding process of assembling and dismantling. The forms are constructed from the ground up with a platform every 2.4m. The first bay from the ground to 2.4m will be constructed so that it cannot be climbed. It is important to ensure that the public cannot gain access to this structure.

One option is to cover the second bay from 2.4m-4.8m in scaffolding mesh. This will enclose the structure from the outside. The bottom tubes can be covered in a soft foam and mesh to discourage people from trying to scale up these tubes.

## Capital Scaffolding.

I met Shaun in the carpark. It was cold, dark and wet. I had brought the drawings with me: miniature representations of a much larger structure, ready to be transformed from the imagined form in my head into reality.

This was not to be. One of my configurations alone exceeded the entire budget and the intention was to have three. Not every idea becomes a reality.

There is Vladimir Tatlin's tower: [Monument to the Third International](#),<sup>3</sup> iconic for its utopian intent, an aspirational plan for a 400-metre-high tower. Larger than any other symbol of modernity, this towering structure was only ever realised on paper and as a scale model. Even the original plan only existed for a short period of time. Similarly, fellow constructivist Naum Gabo's small models for larger constructions were never fully resolved to their intended scale.

Not every project is brought into a physical reality or to an intended scale. Often it only ever exists as a proposition; an imagined experience. External factors can be the most challenging, derailing best-laid plans and no matter how much force one applies sometimes it just doesn't work. Budget, time, engineering possibilities and bureaucratic hurdles can all contribute the potential failure of art works.

[Bay 133](#), in its original form, is destined to exist only on paper, and what the moment with Shaun highlighted was, perhaps, just how far it had strayed off-course. Learning the true cost of scaffolding required a re-evaluation of the essence of the work, the bones and the

true intentions of the project, directing a shift in form. The constraints of what was realistically possible were initially derailing – destabilising a closed proposition and a direct conversation between two sets of scaffolding.

Scale it back. Reminder: it isn't supposed to be a massive statement. Quiet, thoughtful but still powerful.

One form, one working week, one day to construct, one day to dismantle.

If the form of the structure is a repetition of the singular modular, the single form is stronger.

The one with the possibility of more.

Material and formal references to sculptural works of artists working within a minimalist context, the use of industrial material, reductive form and modular systems form the historic and current context for my research. Where minimalist sculptors aimed to explore the self-reflexivity of art itself, an internal system, it is my aim to employ industrial materials for their position and use value in an industrial system and its processes of circulation.

This attention to connotative materials is not always as clear-cut as in [Bay 133](#) which uses industrial and unadorned materials and their existing modular system. Unlike the minimalist avoidance of subject matter, pictorial representation and reliance on a physical encounter with the work, I have explored a number of ways to experience and encounter material forms.

In the past I have engaged with a purely material based exploration of the qualities of a singular material such as utility plaster, testing its limits and intentionally subverting its embedded material characteristics. Within my thesis research I return to embedded meanings to evoke affective experiences, this time exploring the subjective relationships that individuals have with materials, alongside the intrinsic cultural and social understandings of its functional form.

My approach to materiality is perhaps more in line with artists who employ objects as tools to provoke and extend thought or discussion. In the late seventies and early eighties, Czech artist Jiri Kovanda began developing a series of odd temporary material forms. Their placement outside of the gallery context, and their temporality, were an indirect result of his residence in a country under Soviet rule. [Tower Made of Sugar](#)<sup>4</sup> was a stack of sugar cubes against a wall; [Salty Corner](#), [Sweet Arch](#)<sup>5</sup> was salt and sugar sprinkled around a corner and a curve; [A Pile of Needles and Nails](#)<sup>6</sup> was small stacks of pine needles and nails on the ground in a pine forest. These quick material gestures have a sense of lightness to them. Although Kovanda's use of materials do not explicitly provoke thought or conversation, they are evocative in their slightness, their inconspicuous placement and eventual display as a series of uniformly documented in a single image on an A4 page with typewriter text that specifies a date and location and is presented in a gallery setting. These works speak to a social condition and context of a Soviet-era Eastern European society subject to constant surveillance.<sup>7</sup>

Roman Ondak's practice is considered to be closely aligned to Jiri Kovanda.<sup>8</sup> Ondak's projects give

the impression of a slightly off-kilter comprehension of the conceptual art from England and America during the 1970's. Jessica Morgan suggests that this idiosyncratic reading of mainstream conceptual art – perhaps due to the dislocation living in Soviet Eastern Europe – has influenced his wry understanding of this legacy, which surfaces in oddly candid interpretations within in his practice.<sup>9</sup>

Ondak's nonsensical material gestures resonate with me in their subtle ability to interrupt the everyday. He often employs his sculptural process as a tool to speak to broader social and political concerns within the sites that his work is situated in – works such as [Occupied Balcony](#)<sup>10</sup> which consisted of a Persian rug hung over the balcony of the town hall in Graz, Austria. The specific placement of such a 'foreign object' in a particular setting had a humorous tone while still being unnerving. Jan Verwoert explains that the rug's cultural understanding is as a symbol of bourgeois domesticity and something not out of place in the mayoral office. Verwoert outlines the political significance of its placement in Graz:

“As a piece of symbolism, the Persian rug on the balcony straddles the conceptual boundaries that demarcate the world of the comfy home from the realm of the former empire, subverting the political maxim of ‘divide and rule.’”<sup>11</sup>

In [Bay 133](#) scaffolding was chosen as a material to explore for its associations with urban modification and temporary structures that support the construction, demolition and repair of buildings and large structures. What conjures a reading of the work is the viewer's knowledge-association of the materiality of the object. This relationship and reading of the work isn't isolated to the object itself – its odd placement, and general lack of 'action' that is associated with scaffolding, creating an intervention in line with Roman Ondak's work [Camouflaged Buildings](#) in the project [One Day Sculpture](#).<sup>12</sup>

In [Generic Objects](#) Gean Moreno and Ernesto Oroza describe generic objects as being objects where the aesthetic value of the material is overlooked due to their high level of functionality and efficiency within daily life's systems of circulation.<sup>13</sup> Scaffolding is a specific example of a generic object circulating around the city, used in different construction and deconstruction tasks. The use of scaffolding as a central material component of this project is precisely because of its outstanding generic qualities.

One of my central concerns is to interrupt the system of circulation, taking a material out of circulation, removing its functionality and highlighting its aesthetic form. It is the embedded function and particular generic qualities of this material that has drawn me to scaffolding – provisional construction and temporary occupation of space in relation the particular place of the scaffolding form. The organisation of an attempt to have a small set of scaffolding constructed at 151-157 Cuba Street has been one of the central driving forces in a this investigation. I see a relationship between the idea of a generic object and thinking about this car park as a generic site; a constant circulation of cars filing and filing out.

The project has circulated and progressed as a long series of drawings that act as placeholders for the form until this point. Tracking the progress as knowledge is gained, and understanding of form grows, so too do the small and delicately drawn computer generated drawings.

From one to nine, to three that fall over.

Feeling melodramatic and cut down.

Four that make up one and back to just one.

The one that is slightly different to the first one.

The one that I handed to John.

Scaffies attempt two. Cold call #2. 17.06.2014

Acrow/ Pryadeck.

The first attempt was not useless by any means – now I have a greater understanding of how these companies work. I have a base knowledge of how the jobs are quoted and a roundabout figure for the cost of one single modular form. With a form in mind, the articulation of the job went smoothly. Treated with respect and less like a silly girl, my experience in dealing with John was less traumatic. The small blue book was used as a tool, a prop and a manual to discuss the project. I gave one to John, in some respects fulfilling its purpose. In response to the drawings I provided a final translation occurred.

I understood only the notations and sizes on the formal scaffolders' drawings. The language was still the barrier. I was still feeling like an imposter. It's like learning the formal qualities of a foreign language but lacking a colloquial grasp. Inside that culture everyday idle banter is impossible to grasp.

With a strong desire to see the form [actualise](#), the drawings started to lose their appeal for me – becoming more like a visual account of the process to the point of realisation. There is only so much time, energy and brainpower that can go into something imagined. Like hitting a wall – now that the project is assuredly possible, the aspiration has fallen away to show a new reality that, to me, comes with more complexity and possibility.

A single tower in the middle of the car park, in line with the window of Enjoy. More of an oddity, more of a structure,

more absurd and less rational, leading to more questions and thought as to why it is there.

Worrying that the object in the drawings and the beauty was held on those pages, I was concerned about the process of translating from image to object – from my plans, to their plans and then to the physical manifestation of the object itself. Scaffolding as a material has a practical use and the utilitarian nature of it has a large impact on its aesthetic qualities. The scaffies are labourers, not artists. The gap, though, the possibility of the translation failing was an interesting thought to ponder. I had to keep reminding myself of the pull towards commissioning the construction with the rationale that it needed to be **proper, real** scaffolding built by professional ‘others’. This is where I found ease in in place of worry around the possibility of the form not meeting my expectation.

Standing in the gallery overlooking the construction below, a structure slowly took shape. It had only existed in my head. It was a painstaking and slow process. Observing the construction of scaffolding produced a shift in my thoughts about this object. It was not a negative reaction. It was destabilised the rationale I had formed until this point and heightened a sense of loss in the tightly formed logic I had worked on to bring this object into reality. Experiencing the scaffolding in this tangible form was generative for a number of reasons. In conversations with people who had inhabited the site for the duration of the work – the man fixing the paving stones around the perimeter of the car park and the owners of the chai van – I learnt about the speculation that was produced as a result of the alien nature of its

presence in the site. The structure also acted as a tool to draw information from the owner Ian Utting, information that was integral in forming the narrative for the site investigation.

A monument to Ian, to the possibilities for the future. Action is a site where the only action is the filing in and out of cars and the regular presence of Ian, pottering in the courtyard, conversing in the car park, keeping an eye on his plot of land. The translation from thought to form, to multiple iterations of different forms, to a plan drawing and then the actual form. The actual form is different from the form in the plans: with every step an alteration has occurred. It is not yet completed. The next translation will be in [Time to save a little more](#), where the audience will encounter the scaffolding form as a representation, a faint image within the gallery that the car park looks directly into.

Originally intending a much larger version of what I achieved, and instead of occupying 9 parking spaces, I just occupied one. The occupation was much earlier in the year and more fleeting. The failure of my aspirations for this object to come in to being raise the retrospective question: what was I thinking? In considering the aims and intentions of this project, the tone is now quiet, thoughtful and contemplative. The motive is not to cause a spectacle. The scaffolders came in and then went out.

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