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Methodologies with Kate Briggs (& Jan Verwoert)
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What happens fast for you in your work?

I misheard Kate when she first asked this question, and heard “first” instead of “fast”. The first thing that happens in my work is establishing an intention based on the context of the work: for example, the work will be in a closed institutional context, so the concept will be a private party in a warm environment. Or, the space I have been provided is a freight ship, and I intend to bring no material on board with me, so I begin with the (im)material of sound, and think about the role of sound aboard a waterborne vessel. These things happen relatively quickly, but they evolve – establish site, establish material (though all subject to change). What does happen fast is, after experimentation, weeks of play with materials and arrangements and form, is execution. Once the form is determined, or more accurately, once an individual form is identified as necessary to the whole form, it is made. I woke up early today and welded a table, a stand really, to hold a glass plate I made weeks ago, that will hold a loaf of Turkish pida bread with chestnuts in it I only recently discovered were harvestable from seeds I collected the week I arrived here, which I requested from the Turkish bakery this morning at 7am, to be picked up tomorrow at 8am. These things happen quickly – like the end of a normal labour (I only assume, through observation and friends’ stories), after the shoulders are out.

What happens slowly?

Kate actually asked, “what goes slowly”. So, so many things. The collection and assembly of all of the influences that inform the work, as it is being made. For the past four months, I have collected and injected experiences into my studio practice – so, the culminating moment of presentation carries all of these moments, but the threads between them, the generative connections they have, are slow in revealing themselves to me. What also goes slowly is my confidence in the path that I’ve followed, in relaying it to others. My ability to communicate verbally what I’ve conceived and produced. Developing an understanding of my materials is also a slow process – weeks in the studio being with a material, destroying that material, rebuilding that material, introducing materials, abandoning materials. These days are the best days for me – I’m remembering a Sunday when I listened to music I used to listen to high school as I cut and reassembled four tea towels I purchased at the market that morning into a rough-edged quilt, loosely indenting to perhaps include it somewhere, sometime – and it will never have been used. Slow making of things that aren’t useable, that provides the headspace and time to get to the point of fast making of things that have explicit use.

Jakob just noted that I’ve been writing a lot in this session. What happens fast for me is pouring out content over a surface – a word document, a studio space, an SD card, a roll of film, a pad of paper. What happens so slowly, is identifying what parts of that pool is useable, worthwhile, coherent, accessible, purposeful. Perhaps what happens slowly, then, is editing.

What is regular? (The dictionary definition of routine is things that occur regularly)

Josje just mentioned that things that are regular and things that are routine are very different things – some things happen regularly that aren't intentional, or part of a conscious routine. Some things happen routinely, through conscious assignment.

Things that happen routinely (regularly):

Conceptualizing a work within context: site, audience, duration, scale. Sketches of space (digital or physical). Research regarding these contexts. Thinking of the new work as for someone other than myself, and determining what I want to give them, what I want them to take away, how I call them, and myself, to action. Developing a method (often rigid – like a schedule, a to-do list) for production that is then almost *always* disobeyed at a certain point, with much emotional turmoil, resistance, self-flagellation, and ultimate self-emancipation.

(don't have time, but also a regular happening is an escape to my home from the studio, which often means incorporating practices/material methods that necessitate a home space)

Things that happen regularly (outside a determined routine):

Failure in production that leads to new form. Deviance from self-prescribed production method. Distraction, active procrastination that brings new content and heightens the intensity of labour. Clenched teeth and deadlines (self-determined or determined by an other).

(What is actually becoming more regular, and unplanned, is writing through moments when I feel lost, big rambling word documents I probably should revisit more regularly, but don't)

What is irregular, out of sync, interruptive, rare?

My reading practice is irregular. This is evident in the boarding passes or receipts or train cards that I use as bookmarks – not only are the date stamps humiliatingly revealing (sometimes from years ago), but also because they show that the books are begun or read most regularly in transit, in between, from one way or another, outside the house/studio/any stable space. Same goes for my digital folders of countless PDFs, harvested and sitting unopened (probably also date stamped, in some metadata of the file). They sit on my desktop, or on my bedside table, with lost intention. I mourn my interrupted, unsynchronized relationship with these materials. It is the element of my practice I am least happy with.

It is also rare for me to carry on a project, or specific body of work, for longer than past its first public incarnation. I tend to see my practice as lacking continuity that way – the material, spatial, and formal qualities of my work shift significantly from project to project. On good days, I see this as a strength in my ability to develop a making method specific to the context of my making. On bad days, I can very easily curse myself for lacking the rigour to hold on to a thought, for my eagerness to close the book or end the story.