

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

7-8-2024 9:00 AM

Nuthin' Lasts

Steve deBruyn, *Western University*

Supervisor: Soheila K. Esfahani, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree in Art and Visual Culture

© Steve deBruyn 2024

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>



Part of the [Art Practice Commons](#), [Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Commons](#), and the [Sculpture Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

deBruyn, Steve, "Nuthin' Lasts" (2024). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 10192.
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/10192>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact wlsadmin@uwo.ca.

Abstract

Nuthin' Lasts is a Master of Fine Arts thesis project comprised of the dossier and exhibition documentation presented at the Artlab Gallery from June 27th to July 18th, 2024. My multidisciplinary work and related research explore connections between materiality and autoconstruction. The Comprehensive Artist Statement is the first chapter of the dossier and explores the working methods I employ within my practice, as well as my interest in temporality and historicity. I describe my process and how it integrates improvisation and transformation, as well as the importance of ephemerality. The second chapter includes documentation of my work during the MFA program and the exhibition at the Artlab. The third chapter of the dossier is an interview with artist Abraham Cruzvillegas about his practice and connection to autoconstruction and ephemerality.

Keywords

Sculpture, installation, ephemerality, autoconstruction, object, materiality, improvisation, provisionality

Summary for Lay Audience

Nuthin' Lasts is a Master of Fine Arts thesis project comprised of the dossier and the exhibition documentation presented at the Artlab Gallery from June 28th to July 18th, 2024. My artwork uses familiar objects to create large art installations. My connection with these objects often begins toward the end of their 'useful life', after they have been discarded and forgotten. My work extends the life and use of these objects through connections to their past. The history of each unique material I use is considered when I am creating my work through intuitive, ad-hoc processes. I also explore the ephemerality of my work; that is, why it is made to exist only temporarily and not made to be archival or lasting beyond initial exhibition.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Soheila, a fantastic advisor, Jess, a fantastic editor, Izzy, great with the feedback, Patrick and Tricia, thoughtful and generous teachers, and Celia for letting me follow my dreams.

Table Of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Abstract..... | i |
| Summary for Lay Audience | ii |
| Acknowledgements..... | iii |
| Table Of Contents | iv |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Comprehensive Artist Statement | 4 |
| Practice Documentation | 26 |
| Interview with Abraham Cruzvillegas | 41 |
| Bibliography | 54 |
| List of figures/Image Sources | 56 |
| Curriculum Vitae | 57 |

Introduction

In my art practice, I examine a methodology of working in the forms of sculpture and installation, which revealed itself to me through process and elimination, pivoting, refinement, and stuttered starts and restarts. The specific work referenced here was made while working through the MFA program at Western University and signals, within the historical context of my body of work, not quite a full rebirth, but maybe a complete disturbance of my process and its outcome. There is also a sense that I have freed myself from some past constraints. I did not use these constraints as a limiting factor but more as a set of rules or an informal manifesto that attempted to ensure consistency and act as a quality control guardrail for my practice. In retrospect, these self-imposed parameters did serve me well, but perhaps only to provide an eventual framework to realize what was possible in how I might approach my practice.

I gave myself the two years of this program to attempt to loosen my formulaic approach and distance myself from what had become a slightly pigeonholed aesthetic and methodology. I explored more intuitive ways of self-expression, fore-fronting the present and, eventually, leaving a wake of ephemeral gestures that felt more natural and more true-to-self than I had originally imagined was possible.

My work has always been rooted in DIY culture/aesthetics and goes back to my skateboarding youth when obstacles (ramps, etc.) served as my first introduction to materials and processes that I still espouse wholeheartedly to this day. This has led me to a means and a motivation to continue those youthful DIY explorations and to exploit a dynamic interconnection between autoconstruction (the active process of self-building) and

manufactured states of existential unresolvedness that reflect real-life aspects of identity, motivation and crossing points of liminality.

By facilitating convergences of these motivations/methods/interests, this thesis aims to (re)settle some of my personal questions on motivation, relevance, and materiality. The comprehensive Artist Statement focuses on the key attributes of my practice; my relationship to my materials, my process, and my interest in making art that isn't necessarily meant to be permanent. For the writing practice component of this dossier, I interviewed Abraham Cruzvillegas, a Mexican artist practicing in installation. The practice documentation section features the work I have completed throughout this program and for my thesis exhibition.

Through an examination of autobiographical experiences, artistic outputs, and their architectural manifestations, this writing aims to discern the nuanced relationship between my practice and the unresolved state that runs through it. My exploration of this intersection aims to shed light on potential for empowerments and liberations in the act of navigating (invented) liminal spaces between certainty and ambiguity. Furthermore, it wholeheartedly embraces the transformative possibilities inherent in embracing the unresolved and posits their possibilities as breakthroughs; anchors in the work that appear through these investigations.

This statement contributes to the foundation of a broader discourse in my work going forward on identity formation, existentialism, and the embrace of the discarded. By elucidating this interplay, I aim to uncover insights that inform artistic development, therapeutic practices, and societal understanding in a complex and quickly changing contemporary moment. I will mention here that while environmental concerns inhabit a large area in the concept and

motivation of my practice, I will not be elaborating further on that aspect. I believe that now, the environmental concerns are already established to be a given for all artists. My delving into this topic would be cause for many more statements that have been written better elsewhere by others.

Comprehensive Artist Statement

I adore wood.

It has been a consistent material throughout my artistic practice and remains a source of inspiration as well as an infinitely malleable material. This began in childhood, when sticks and logs were frequent representations of forts and weapons, and construction scraps and discarded furniture became innovative and unique skateboard obstacles. I look for wood, I find it, I collect it, and (I daresay) I come close to hoarding it. I prefer my wood to be structurally sound (i.e. not rotten) but, other than that, I have no preference for its type, shape, colour, etc. It's all fair game to me and as a material starting point. I see infinite possibilities with this material and the fact it is so frequently discarded as the byproduct of construction projects and other sources has kept it consistently available.

Within the domain of my practice, I will almost always go to this known and dependable material as a starting point. With it, I seek to explore precarity, cyclicity, entropy, and provisional states of being through rote process, ad hoc craftsmanship, and performative gestures.

Any new project always typically begins in collaboration or fusion with the found material/object. My version of fusion is based on the nuclear definition of bonding atoms together to create energy. But rather than atoms, I seek to combine timelines, references, and meanings into new positional points within their ephemerality. Through this evolving and self-invented process, I intend to make installations and sculptures that can transcend the original

function and meaning of the materials used. Instead, these pieces serve as un-referential parts of a looming characteristic whole.

“Tainted Goods” is a descriptor that Dan Adler focuses on in his book *Contemporary Sculpture and the Critique of Display Cultures*, which describes discarded objects and their incorporation into sculptural form as:

“... assemblages that make reference to combinations of contexts in abrupt and unresolved ways: occupying a human scale and exhibiting signs of figuration, they aspire to be fully fledged characters— centered in their presentation of easily identifiable identities— but they fail to do so, coming across as flawed, faulty, and fragmented. They perform badly as characters partly because their bodies incorporate found things and reductive, abstract shapes which have been handcrafted. And they are often made up of humble, non-precious, and oddly outdated stuff, allowing them to appear as entities that have been forced— often absurdly, often pathetically— into a predicament, as material that is struggling to matter, to be something (and/ or someone) worthy of attention, despite their difference from conventionally coherent characters with more obvious currency as products. These anti-characters seem tainted, offering few coherent qualities. And yet they are still worth the struggle to know, a struggle that is ongoing and often precarious”¹

By using objects common to the modern urban experience and endemic to our late-stage Capitalist encounters, I hope to achieve this predicament: the struggle for these characters to know.

Ubiquitous objects draw ubiquitous references due to the collective societal connections and meanings they elicit. In my practice, the collection of these objects is the consistent start of the process; but the act of creation, interaction, and fusion is the catalyst

¹ Adler, Dan. 2018. *Contemporary Sculpture and the Critique of Display Cultures: Tainted Goods*. (Boca Raton: Routledge) p. 11-12

that positions them in this ongoing struggle to know. (De)fusing these goods in a performative and quasi-collaborative process manifests as a burst of concentrated activity, involving spontaneous actions, decision making, and improvised solutions made in dialog with the whims (or lack thereof) of the 'tainted objects' themselves. This way of working results in haphazard and barely controlled situations in the studio or, preferably, directly in a gallery space, that take on a 'greater than the sum of its parts-ness' and begin to posit new meaning.

There are always a few steps back taken in the event of a perceived misstep; all imperfections and resulting actions are embraced in the service of moving forward. Failure is an option and is part of the process; sometimes materials are forced, bent, and otherwise persuaded to operate within their new roles. This is emphatically embraced as part of the work-in-progress, and fosters further contemplation, repositioning, beard-scratching, dialog, exercise, rest, and all manner of action/activity.

I see this process as a way of, as Dan Alder describes, "contend[ing] with the 'figuring figure,' which may be defined as a process by which we remain in a constraining (but endlessly productive) dilemma, shifting between states of knowing and seeing."² He continues to describe the "process as one of active figuration that— little by little or all of a sudden— makes multiple elements touch that previously were separated: they bang together in a chaos (Mischbildung³) that may render impossible their efficient recognition as terms, so that the process of intelligible subsumption breaks down."⁴

² Adler p. 11

³ German term meaning 'Mixing formation' according to the Duden German dictionary.

⁴ Adler p. 11

The act of engaging with the work in ways that always keep it in that state of provisional existence facilitates a shift in our perceptions as new aspects become 'known' or 'seen' as additions, or contradictions to, what was last 'known' or 'seen'. This practical engagement presents a contextual framework that explores existential and profound methods of activation and (dis)associative assignation between myself and whatever materials I happen to be engaging with at that moment. My intuitive emphasis on imperfections (a direct result of the 'good enough' practicality that designated when a skateboard ramp or, perhaps more universally, a tree fort or even a pillow fort of childhood, was finished) guides my practice away from the excessive and ubiquitous homogeneity associated with mass production as I work with my newfound (or hoarded) tainted goods to manifest sculptural forms and broader installations that encapsulate an intricate dialogue passing intuitively between artist and materials.

My process embodies the principles of autoconstruction (that I will discuss in detail in the following section) and a cast-into-the-wind sense of chance, trial, error, beginning, finality, and all spaces inhabited in between. This dynamic method engages with and subverts the historicity of these materials/objects and underscores the delicate balance between control and relinquishment, resulting in artifacts that encapsulate the essence of an ongoing, ever morphing, collaborative endeavor. My re-interpretation of my source materials presents them to the viewer as re-constituted, and often hapless characters striving to establish identities removed from their former selves. They are unable to shake the glaring references that remain attached to their former purposes, however, leaving them in an existential state of limbo that asserts an unsettling current state of being.

This is in stark contrast to my previous work, the skateboard ramp, which firmly establishes a function while still bearing the evidence of its inherent parts' former uses. This historicity is palpable to the viewer, who, in turn, must reconcile the looming figures in the gallery with the comfortable, known materialities of everyday life. These sculptures have become, at this point in their timelines, (and again, in the words of Adler) essentially 'de-meant'. He describes this notion as carrying "a great deal of interpretive weight, as I associate the tainted goods aesthetic with an unexpected condition of empathy (and sometimes sympathy) sparked by encounters with a series of subjects that have been reduced to objects (and vice versa)."⁵ He elaborates further that sculptural objects of this nature can be de-meant, all while occupying a human scale as manufactured characters struggling to find an agency of their own but failing to do so effectively:

"often absurdly, often pathetically— into a predicament, as material that is struggling to matter, to be something (and/or someone) worthy of attention, despite their difference from conventionally coherent characters with more obvious currency as products. These anti-characters seem tainted, offering few coherent qualities. And yet they are still worth the struggle to know, a struggle that is ongoing and often precarious."⁶

This precarious struggle becomes an essential part of each sculpture and highlights a key thread to their current existence; this may not be the end of the journey for this specific set of objects/materials.

My sculpture *White Island II* (figure 1), which has been displayed twice (installed in a gallery setting and again in situ in a public place) is still in process and is currently awaiting its next incarnation in collaboration with nature, inhabiting an outdoor space in the corner of my

⁵ Adler pp. 11

⁶ *ibid*

garden where it is subject to my experiments in cultivating moss. It is my hope that the tainted object will acquire a further patina thus creating evidence of this collaboration with nature and furthering its struggle for meaning. This is a position in the timeline where the object becomes further tainted, perhaps vulgarly transformed into yet another sculpture afflicted with an identity crisis or relegated to the side of the studio as a washed-up throwaway of its creator's whims. In my work, I investigate this process as a chance to (re)acquire a more comforting, permanent, and suitable identity.



Figure 1: White Island II sculpture in situ, found wood, found metal, paint, 6'x2'x2.5', 2022

The liminality of being between creation and disintegration emerges as a pivotal thematic focus in my work, inviting viewers to traverse the unformulated boundaries that lie between definition and dissolution; that these works exist in a timeline where they could be disbanded at any point highlights their precarity and tension. The sculptural entities that result from this practice inhabit a transformative space, challenging established paradigms and encouraging not just distanced contemplation, but intimate exploration. My work expresses itself through invitation— begging questions, self-reflection and striving to elicit atypical modes

of reaction. Instead of relying solely on rational thinking or preconceived plans, I choose to emphasize intuition and spontaneity.

This approach involves trusting my instincts and allowing ideas to emerge organically. The viewing experience can be coloured with uneasy senses of precarity, but is ultimately followed by a serene introspection, bringing about a moody, yet playful existentialism. The presence of an informal and constantly transitional state serves as a visual representation of nuanced and dynamic facets encountered throughout individual experiences in navigating the ephemera of the everyday. In this instance, the sculpture acts as an enigma in the process of, or failing to, reconcile itself and its parts, echoing Adler's notion that the "material and abstract qualities of the object address the viewer as one who contributes to the production of meaning, but who is denied a sense of seamless resolution."⁷

When a plastic parking bollard is stripped of its position as an object of power and obedience, it reverts simply to a material form and begins to enter the realm of the unintentional. The ubiquitous DayGlo™ orange stripes on a parking bollard that once said 'No' so forcefully now speak of colour, form, and possibility.

My piece *Bed* (figure 2) is an example of this. The barricades that are meant to limit access have been converted into the supports for a bed, stripping them of their former authority and giving way to an uneasy welcoming. Yes, you could sleep there but is there some Princess-and-the-Pea-esque underlying reason to recoil from the idea? Our minds are

⁷ Adler, pg 14

conditioned to seek the approval of the implied authority and it can be hard to go against that.



Figure 2: Bed sculpture in situ, found wood, found metal, paint, 15' x 12' x 9', 2024

Autoconstruction

Autoconstruction, a term that has origins in the field of architecture, describes necessity-based processes of home building that typically involve found materials that are locally available in one's surrounding environs. Practitioners of autoconstruction are mostly untrained in construction techniques and build in such a manner as to circumvent local building codes and

best practices. This is typically due to socio-economic conditions, and auto-constructed structures will vary greatly in terms of design, aesthetics, materials, and functionality to respond to the local environment and the specific needs of the builder.

My methodology has some similarities with and takes some inspiration from artist Abraham Cruzvillegas and his ongoing "autoconstrucción" project; an ongoing and ever morphing body of work that takes its name from a term rooted in theories of temporary/provisional architecture. My own version of autoconstruction acts as an entry point into the physical processes of my work and remains a constant and dependable participant. But I have framed it within a simultaneous, existential unresolvedness to experiment entry into states I have begun to call 'Provisionality'.

This term is the closest analog I have found that encapsulates the ambiguities, improvisation, and fluidity included in my practice and provides a place to grapple with uncertainties, unanswered questions, and shifting senses of self/motivation. Utilizing a multidisciplinary approach that draws from philosophy, necessity, craft, sociology, and objecthood, this artist statement seeks to uncover patterns and insights that underscore the profound impact of DIY, the unresolved, and each object/material's importance on my sculpture/installation-based practice.

The artist Abraham Cruzvillegas, taking as inspiration his own upbringing, has responded to this term with his own ongoing "autoconstrucción" project, which he describes as "an approach of inventive improvisation and instability in which change becomes a permanent

state, reflecting the chaotic and fragmentary nature of life.”⁸ In his work, he strives “to produce no metaphors or allegories about anything, neither representations nor propaganda.”⁹

This approach or description helps to distinguish the use of found object from the artistic concept of the Readymade, in which the conceptual framework is provided by the artist and imbued in the object. In the case of the Readymade, the real-world, mundane associations of a particular object are meant to be kept as part of the work but, more importantly, subverted in often simple ways; turning an object upside down or juxtaposing two objects that would ordinarily not be found together. Snow shovels, bottle-racks, and bicycle wheels were not so much used in the act of creation by Marcel Duchamp but rather in acts of curation that broke down perceptions of meaning in the direct and deliberate pursuit of creating art.

Autoconstruction in art can be seen as having roots in Readymade but treats the source objects more as participants in an active and fluid interaction rather than simply objects plucked from their mundane uses and re-posed at the behest of the artist’s whims. Whereas Duchamp had full manipulative control over his re-positing of meaning and presents “an object that radically questions the borders of any definition of art [and] an object that cannot be ignored because it has been accepted in practice as art,”¹⁰ autoconstruction starts to dip its toes slightly into the field of object-oriented ontology. This suggests an equal playing field

⁸ Preece, Robert. 2022. "Improvising and Transforming: A Conversation with Abraham Cruzvillegas." *Sculpture*, July/August: p. 56-65

⁹ Preece, p .58

¹⁰ Goldsmith, Steven. 1983. "The Readymades of Marcel Duchamp: The Ambiguities of an Aesthetic Revolution." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 (2) p. 197-202.

between artist and object where a momentary apprehending of fluid meaning is the end goal and best-case scenario. This natural coalescing of object and intention is a result of happenstance just as much as intention and it can feel as if something has been 'captured' in the process of creation. This is almost akin to how sculptors in marble claim that they can see the finished sculpture in the stone before they set to it with chisel and mallet; something is being found and revealed.

Unlike Readymades, the found objects in Cruzvillegas's autoconstrucción projects are seen more as necessity and, as subjects of the material world. They avail themselves to shifting identities and are able to be fully removed from their former intentions and realized anew. Similar to the actor's function in a dramatic production, objects move in and out of roles as needed (or not), leaving real-world personas at the door, and exist inside the theatre as vessels of a creator. There is a responsibility to the artist to portray their character precisely in a convincing way, as the audience's understanding of the production is built around its being as a fabrication. The object in autoconstruction takes this concept further and strives to achieve that 'permanent state' and, through a sheer force of will, become the character.

Autoconstruction in the architectural version can be pretty cut and dry: an old sign can become part of the roof; a crate can become a chair. But in the version espoused by the contemporary art world, complications can, and likely will, arise in the creation of these 'new identities.'

In my practice, I focus my methodology on what I term as 'provisionality', which builds on the autoconstrucción of Cruzvillegas by adding elements of cyclicity, temporal

destabilisation, and precarious positionings. The work is kept in a constant provisional state and my involvement becomes a series of steps forward and back; touching or not, gathering, (re)moving, (re)contextualizing, and approaching as needed. The spontaneous nature attached to my process is also cause for periods of seeming inactivity between acts of physical making and 'Arting'; the term coined by Adrian Piper in her 1975 essay *To Art (Reg. Intrans V.)*. I am 'Arting' when I am engaged (or not) in my practice for "just because I am arting, this doesn't mean I'm doing art, for it doesn't mean that I am continuously producing art, nor that at some point I will presumably get the art done. I may well *never* get the art done."¹¹

When dealing with so many variables, such as 'can I find a specific material?' or 'is this process going to get the results I want?', a lot of my 'arting' happens behind the façade of in-studio/gallery process through day-to-day observation, ideation, and a design strategy based in immediacy, rather than a sketchbook. Auto-construction begs for taking direct action on the materials from the beginning. Like the work itself, my concept-to-realization strategy remains in a provisional state, only to come to terms when the (auto)construction process happens.

My sculpture *Garden (figure 3)* is an experiment in re-contextualizing traffic barriers as objects conducive of growth and access in the form of garden trellises and was created through a burst of activity based on several weeks of focused and re-focused conceptualization; there was a plan, but one constantly in flux as variables were ascertained and navigated. The installation I had seen in my mind's eye and had decided on before I set to work was very quickly abandoned as the materials revealed proclivities that I had not accounted for.

¹¹ Piper, Adrian. 1975. "To Art (Reg. Intrans V.)." *The Fox* 1 (1): p. 60-62

In the process of making, I realized that I could not bend things as far as I had hoped and the material's resistance to bending in this process asserted its agency in the work. Like the growth pattern of the runner beans that were planted to climb the structure, a linear process took many twists and pivots, thus the final installation was created through the process of autoconstruction.



Figure 3: Garden Installation, wood, found objects, fabric, paint, soil, bean seeds 15' 15' x 9', 2024

The Temporal and the Provisional



Figure 4: *Voyageur (Stairs)* Temporary public sculpture/performance, wood, paint, approx. 7'h x 15'w x 5'w, 2022

My artwork seeks to create referential touchstones using easily recognizable and loaded objects plucked from daily life in attempt to stimulate the audience to access their own personal relationships to encountered objects, thus nurturing a nascent need to confront the object's inherent meaning or seek to de-mean it themselves. The repeated repurposing of materials employed in my work serves as a conduit for narratives that encapsulate the cyclical nature of growth, decay, and rebirth, as well as broader socio-political topics like precarity and access. Precarity is a term that fits well into my work, both in the literal meaning of something that might deconstruct or fall but also in the abstract sense of an insecure existence. Precarity can be found in situations where one has a tenuous connection to, or hold on, certain aspects

of one's life. Access, like precarity, can be something one might have no control over and can be a cause for insecurity. Many of the objects I use, such as parking barriers, are heavily loaded with the connotations of access.

My practice references these and other topics through loaded objects that are plucked from timelines and re-loaded again and again in a constant turmoil of meaning and interpretation. My process, through immediacy and improvisation, seeks to transfer my own projected meanings and creates opportunities to relinquish control and, as stated by Paul Klee, the "associative properties of the structure, once exposed and labelled, no longer correspond wholly to the direct will of the artist."¹²

I am sometimes acting as a conduit in my process. Collected objects present particular meanings for me and I respond in kind as curator and collaborator alike. It is part of my work's purpose to express that there is an available mutability in all objects and access to this liability to change requires a shift in perceived meaning on behalf of the viewer for activation. The fact that I, as the creator of the work, do not have full agency over its changes in state-- and therefore must join the audience in deciphering its perceived meanings-- informs and fuels my process.

In my drive to effectively produce these shifts in perceived meaning belies a compulsion to inject destabilisation of meaning into my process in as many ways as I can. A patina of use

¹² Klee, Paul *On Modern Art* (1948 London: Faber and Faber) p. 37

and historicity serves to ingrain a sense of linearity in each work, to situate it in a place within its own existential timeline, beyond documentation. It serves as the only real evidence of a shift in meaning.

The object itself, in the words of Lacan, may speak: “what is realized in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming.”¹³ This is a good position from which to situate my work— a place that seeks to exist only within a timeline that does not possess any aspiration of permanence. It is a situation in time and space in which, as Adorno posits, “is conceivable and perhaps requisite that artworks immolate themselves through their temporal nucleus, devote their own life to the instant of the appearance of truth, and tracelessly vanish without thereby diminishing themselves in the slightest.”¹⁴

The piece *Stairs* (fig. 4) from my *Voyageur* series combines found lumber with found red household acrylic paint into an act of folly constructed and utilized by a character reminiscent of a bushman or a tinkering grandfather, tropes that can speak of warmth and adventurism but also of outdated modes of anti-establishment machoism. The stairs are poorly made, ostentatiously painted, and serve as a metaphor for conquering nature through pride and

¹³ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection* (sourced from Grosz, Elizabeth. 2001. *Architecture from the outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. (Cambridge: MIT Press) P. 154)

¹⁴ Adorno, T. W. 1998. *Aesthetic Theory*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) p. 177

privileged access. They existed for mere hours and were eventually recycled into different works with different meanings.

This was an intentional celebration of impermanence within a societal framework that often venerates permanence at the cost of potential future relevance. It was also a reaction to what the character in the work would see as an historical triumph, one for the history books, a great gesture of man's indomitable control over the natural world. Intentional temporality underscores inherent transience in the perpetual cycles of creation and dissolution found in nature and our daily surroundings in the context of the glacial scale timelines that reveal aspects of Earth-bound existence in ever-changing, sometimes dire ways.

In Elizabeth Grosz's description of 'The Thing' she writes:

"The Thing is born in time as well as space. It inscribes a specific duration and concrete boundaries within the broad outlines of temporal succession or flow and special mapping. It emerges out of and as substance. It is the coming-into-existence of a prior subject or thing, in a new time, producing beneath its processes of production a new space and a coherent identity. The thing and the space it inscribes and produces are inaugurated at the same moment, the moment that movement is arrested, frozen or dissected to reveal its momentary aspects, the moment that thing and the space that surrounds it are differentiated conceptually or perceptually. The moment that movement must be reflected upon or analysed, it yields objects and their states, distinct, localized, mappable, repeatable in principle, objects and states become the object of measurement and containment. The depositing of movement, its divisibility, and its capacity to be seen statically are the mutual conditions of the thing and the space. The thing is positioned or located in space only because time is implicated, only because the thing is the dramatic slowing down of the movements, the atomic and molecular vibrations, that frame, contextualize and merge with and as the thing. [...]"¹⁵

¹⁵ Grosz, Elizabeth. 2001. *Architecture from the outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. (Cambridge: MIT Press) p. 168-169

As ‘things’, my work flickers in and out of existence in constant cyclical motion, to be plucked out of the ether and gathered into the current provisional state demanded by the conceptual framework of the piece in question. This is how the old man and his staircase came into existence, and they exist now only as a document, a ‘momentary aspect’ in real space. But they are also indelible parts of the cycle now. They will inform the next and the next and the next every time mutual conditions are met.

In a sense, I might be attempting to make the same piece repeatedly and that is another reason it is ephemeral: I can recreate it at any time, in any place, from any available objects and have it hold the same significance. It is the movement that I am reflecting upon and analysing, and this movement is readily available when one is open to reacting to the coherent identities of an object in the context of its unique temporal succession.

When positing my work in meta-states, timelines, or being at some point mid-stream, I come to the word ‘provisional’ as one that may begin to encapsulate an underlying theme. It might be helpful here if I align myself with ‘the ironist’, as defined by Richard Rorty in 1989:

“as someone who fills three conditions: (1) [They Have] radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary¹⁶ [they] currently use, because [they] have been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books [they have] encountered; (2) [they realize] that argument phrased in [their] present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as [they philosophize] about [their] situation, [they do] not think that [their] vocabulary is closer to reality than

¹⁶Rorty, Richard. 1989. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. (Cambridge: University Press) p. 73-75

Rorty defines the ‘Final Vocabulary’ as “a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, and their lives. These are words in which we formulate praise for our friends and contempt for our enemies, our long-term projects, our deepest self-doubts and our highest hopes. They are the words in which we tell, sometimes prospectively and sometime retrospectively, the story of our lives.” – ‘Private Irony and Liberal Hope’ chapter of *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*.

others, that it is in touch with a power not [themselves]. Ironists who are inclined to philosophise see the choice between vocabularies as made neither within a neutral and universal meta vocabulary nor by an attempt to fight one's way past appearance to the real, but simply by playing the new off against the old."¹⁷

It is this sense of the 'meta-stable'¹⁸ that can perhaps be blamed as the agitator behind my proclivity towards keeping things provisional. My treatment of the objects/materials I use as posited in this paper is an obvious manifestation of the ironist position. But there is also a deep connection in the timeline of career and lifespan of an artist that is/will run deeply through the work as being evidence of an all-encompassing sense of provisional positions.

Through this provisional lens, comfort can be taken in this constant state of motion punctuated by moments of arrested negotiation. This work will continue to be in a constant state of being built, rebuilt, moved, changed, destroyed, etc., an embrace of the *tainted object* and a comfortable resting place for my own psyche and motivations. My comfortable point of (sometimes) static observation in this situation and the ongoing flow of the work itself can exist in points belonging to the same multiverse.

'Provisional' in the context of my work is meant to access the existential state of being unresolved, and by using autoconstruction as a convergence point, a potential for empowerment and liberation of the work itself begins to emerge. It can achieve and thrive on that meta-stable; a near-constant redescription that can vacillate between beauty and ugliness, function and uselessness, finished and unfinished within the timeline of the tainted good and skip past (or alongside) "the platitudes which contextually define the terms of a vocabulary

¹⁷ Rorty, 1989

¹⁸ Sartre reference sourced from Rorty, 1989

currently in use.”¹⁹ This frees up the work in many ways and allows for abundant space to create a bit of confrontation that demands closer, and even potentially careful inspection.

Individuals can navigate the liminal spaces between certainty and ambiguity among works of installation and sculpture that can seem unfinished, precarious, or even bordering on unsafe. This can happen all while engaging in an inner dialogue that chooses to follow/evade references as they appear and not feel a need to tie down a current relevant context or established academic framework to perceive what they encounter.

The installation *Untitled (Bed)* (figure 1) uses the brightly coloured municipal ‘street furniture’ of traffic barriers to explicitly draw references to access and control but juxtaposes them with the ultimate symbol of comfort and belonging in the use of the materials of a bed. The transformative possibilities at work here seek to embrace the unresolved in the way of the ironic: fostering a resilience and adaptability in this piece has been undertaken in response to the immediate relevance of place, time, and situation. This makes for, in turn, a more relevant experience for the viewer. This uncoupling from imposed criteria will always be an invented contradiction in this work. This opens feelings of unresolvedness that actively engage in the construction and reconstruction of an ongoing body of work to pivot through varied meanings and identities.

The precarity here is both literal and referential, as this piece speaks to the struggle of the precarious situations of the un-homed in London, Ontario and beyond but is also a delicate and vulnerable structure itself, liable to weather and human interaction, while being at

¹⁹ Rorty, 1989

constant risk of collapse. Provisionality provides a succinct way to highlight the profound impact of unresolved elements that can appear in the autoconstruction process; it encompasses temporality, entropy, and DIY methodology and culture.

The next time, and indeed any time in the duration of this provisionality, there will be a likelihood that, as put by Serra, “the process of conception can be reconstructed and the specificity of a work in relation to its site can be measured.”²⁰ The resulting measure can and will be different every time as a direct consequence of the process and its response to the site specificity and instance point within the cyclical timeline. My artwork sets out to effectively function as an ouroboros hungry to digest its own provisionality ad infinitum, defined by a predictability of nature yet, unique in its unwillingness to adhere to a singular timeline.

²⁰ Richard Serra ‘The Yale Lecture’ in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 1096. (I here use the words of serra in delightful contrast to my own work)

Practice Documentation



Untitled (Wayfinder) sculpture, found wood, paint, 10'x5'x1.5' 2023



Plumb sculpture (suspended), found wood, hardware. 7'x3'x3' 2023



Mid (UFO/UAP) found wood, motor, found objects, clothing, paint, cardboard, 11'x15'x3' 2023



Mid (Rack) found object, clothing, wood, paint, 5'x3'x2' 2024



Nuthin Lasts found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024



Nuthin Lasts found objects, paint, 72" x 78" x 22" 2024



Nuthin Lasts found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024



Nuthin Lasts found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024



Nuthin Lasts found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024



Nuthin Lasts found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024



Nuthin Lasts found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024



Nuthin Lasts found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024



A Gift... found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024



Garden found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024



Garden found objects, paint, dimensions variable, 2024

Interview with Abraham Cruzvillegas



Figure 5: Autorreconstrucción: Social Tissue, 2018

Abraham Cruzvillegas (B. 1968) is a Mexican artist working mainly in sculpture and installation, but he also frequently spreads his practice across several mediums. No method or interaction in his work is off limits and his projects increasingly dabble in performance and audience participation, often through collaboration with ever-evolving casts of local musicians, dancers, cooks, and even skateboarders; those who he calls “an expanded community of friends and colleagues.”²¹

²¹ Preece, 2022

His body of work might seem at first to be rooted in and inextricably linked to sculpture and a style of assemblage with a heavy focus on found, locally sourced objects that have been left over or discarded wherever he happens to be making his work. Indeed, Cruzvillegas's work is very much a sort of assemblage of found objects, yet the method of his process involves deep layers of improvisation and ingenious solutions, as well as a constant response to his surroundings as the work is being conceived and executed.

The ongoing and fluid process(es) that make up his practice are the engine that truly drives the success of his work in galleries worldwide. In his own words:

“[t]he results are always surprising to me, and it's me who learns more, witnessing transformation and dialogue as common strategies. Since I started writing lyrics for songs in 2008 and giving them to musicians and bands to create sounds for them, recording and having concerts, my sculptural work has been changing into something else; it is becoming more convivial and party-like, involving local communities that activate the exhibitions with their own interests and skills, besides the musical or dance aspects. This again leads me to listen and to learn, to witness, just like any other visitor.”²²

This methodology exposes the true brilliance of his work: the act of activation. There is much more going on than a gallery filled with sculptures. Viewers of his exhibitions need not so much see the work but hear it described, see pictures, and hear him and others talk about the exhibitions. The process involved can be tantamount to fully taking in his art.

Researching not only the *what* of Cruzvillegas's work but the *how and the why* is what keeps me revisiting it for frequent inspiration. It operates as sort of its own deck of Eno's

²² Preece, 2022

*Oblique Strategies*²³; one can figuratively 'draw a card' from his work if in need of some inspiration and see where it takes them. Maybe nowhere, maybe they start over, maybe it is or has already been done and they can walk away.

This fluidity and immersion with a present sense of detachment might come as a comfort to artists in making progress past stumbling blocks that have a habit of popping up during the act of art making. In my opinion, the fluidity is *the* crucial aspect of Cruzvillegas's work, which makes it relevant to not just contemporary sculptural/conceptual practices but to the overall practice of artwork made to be displayed in a traditional art gallery.

There is a response to the beaten path of contemporary gallery practices that goes beyond the act of making and displaying. His work is not made in a studio, curated by assistants, and shipped around the world to be unpacked and handled, white glove, by professionals highly trained in the industry of art handling. It is conceptualized beforehand and executed in situ in the expectation that things are going to change.

There is no activation of this art without the explicit method of constructing it specifically and deliberately every time. In his practice, sometimes there is some sort of formula to be followed that serves as a starting point. And this is less a set of rules than a mini manifesto for a certain work. The act itself and the excitement and the discovery of the act, as

²³ *Oblique Strategies* (subtitled *Over One Hundred Worthwhile Dilemmas*) is a card-based method for promoting creativity jointly created by musician/artist Brian Eno and multimedia artist Peter Schmidt, first published in 1975. Physically, it takes the form of a deck of 7-by-9-centimetre (2.8 in × 3.5 in) printed cards in a black box. Each card offers a challenging constraint intended to help artists (particularly musicians) break creative blocks by encouraging lateral thinking.

well the manic-yet-controlled execution, is the core of my excitement for this way of working and why I chose to practice in this way.

Works such as *The Ballad of Etc.* (figure 6) start with a simple and elegant plan, almost a recipe or formula, that sets rigid rules yet results in improvised pieces. In this case, to make each piece, the recipe consisted of the use of a set combination of materials (wood, metal, rock, plastic, a native plant, all sourced locally) that were combined with a piece of *Maque* (a traditional pre-Columbian lacquerware) sourced from the family of an activist local to Cruzvillegas's hometown. The pieces stand alone in the gallery that point in time but through elements of precarity, the use of living plants and site specificity the ephemerality and therefore the presence of the artist as well as the materials as part of a greater timeline can be felt.



Figure 6: *The Ballad of Etc.*, *Molinia caerulea/ Panicum virgatum*, 2019

The constant element that runs throughout Cruzvillegas's practice, whether it is in the form of sculpture, performance, or installation, is that he is *present*. It is not the same presence as Abramovic's performances. In this case, the visitor will be able to sense the performative aspects of the process of making, feeling the essence of the performative without the need to actually witness it. This can serve to inform an artist who might be struggling to find a solution for how they could bring process to the forefront of their practice. An artist may see themselves as the performer when *doing* the work and the objects resulting from those processes seem more like the documentations of these intimate and private little performances.

This is an inspiration in my practice; I am the work while I am doing the work; I am in a constant performance when I am executing my own work. There is always a relationship happening. Once the work is done and all that remains is the evidence, there can be a sense of post-performative release; I am able to move on into a more critical phase of the relationship.

Cruzvillegas, amongst other methods, seems to have this 'post' period effectively reconciled through the increasingly frequent collaborations he has with others that see the gallery activated beyond his initial 'completion' of an exhibition. Continued activity within the space that navigates and re-imagines the work as different elements of function keeps the initial act of creation alive and moving forward, thus continuing the initial process. The work has an active agency. It is busy. It is alive.



Figure 7 Autoreconstrucción: Social Tissue, installation, 2018

Autoreconstrucción: Social Tissue (Figure 7) is an example of activation in his work. It is a striking installation made to be shoved around, performed on, researched in/around, and is accessible to diverse groups of visitors. Skateboarding in an art gallery, though probably no longer considered the transgressive act it was seen as twenty years ago, was embraced as part of this installation, bringing fluidity and a sense of spontaneity and maybe even physical risk to this work.

The idea that a skate session could break out inside the installation of an internationally recognized artist in an art institution goes a long way towards keeping activation going, whether it happens or not. One might not want to skateboard in the gallery, nor care if

someone else does, but the possibility that it might happen makes the sum worth more than the parts.

“The very presence of his autoconstruccions within the white walls of the gallery space highlights the stark difference between the generic materials of their construction, the often-bizarre sculptural results, and the traditional aesthetics of the art world. The dialogue opened by Cruzvillegas’ practice enables the audience to view in a new way; the sculptures becoming hybrid creations,”²⁴ that the viewer can take, leave, and comprehend as according to typical gallery expectations or can be taken in any other direction.

In addition to these performative aspects, my interest in Cruzvillegas’s work and how it relates to studio practice also very heavily stems from how he is relating to and utilizing his materials. In its simplest form, the key interest here is in the sourcing and handling of materials; fluidly basing selections on what is immediately close at hand, with little pickiness as to one object over another. For Cruzvillegas, “[t]he materials themselves compound the multiplicity of references in his work, as each material references not just its traditional utility as an object or material, but how this changes in relation to other materials.”²⁵

Objects that surround us demand to be used. The artist, of course, can refuse these demands. This makes for a process of fluid improvisation to achieve what exists (at least partially) in the mind’s eye. Outcomes are never written in stone and pivots can be made; one

²⁴ Coghlan, Niamh. “Built For Life” *Aesthetica Magazine*. Accessed September 3, 2023
<https://aestheticamagazine.com/built-from-life/>

²⁵ *ibid*

process that worked last time might not work this time and a response to a particular space is always necessary.

This is taken a step further when working away from home, and especially internationally, when cultural factors might make some materials inconsistent or unavailable, forcing an adoption of unfamiliar objects in unfamiliar spaces. This is where the willingness to re-direct to suit what is at hand becomes a crucial part of the work.

The concept of *Autoconstrucción* (and increasingly its counterparts, *autodestrucción* and *autoconfusión*) is one that is associated with Cruzvillagas's work and embraced/put forward by the artist himself. Defined by Cruzvillagas as "describ[ing] an approach of inventive improvisation and instability in which change becomes a permanent state, reflecting the chaotic and fragmentary nature of life."²⁶ *Autodestrucción* and *autoconfusión*, on the other hand, are "additional forms of personal and collaborative research undertaken with family and friends that result in a constant process of learning about materials, landscape, people, and himself."²⁷

This is the more self-referential side of his practice and seems to be more directly a response to his audience, including critics. The installation *Song* (Figure 8) is an improvised song made up of lyrics cut and pasted from articles, reviews, and other mentions of his practice in print over the years. This material, close at hand for any artist who might 'keep up' with their own career is cobbled together like a sculpture into an ephemeral piece to be performed once and left in a

²⁶ Preece, 2022

²⁷ *ibid*

gallery as evidence only. The recorded performance not being played again in the gallery but existing only on cassette tapes, some scattered shreds of words on the floor and a few ransom-letter-style pages on the wall. The effect to the casual gallery visitor might be of having missed 'the main event' but the remains (including a drum kit used as the accompaniment to the performance, seemingly begging to be played) hold onto that energy long after the work is gone/over.

In my practice, I am also interested in creating this feeling of 'evidence', I like to think that the gallery always has an air of something about to happen or something recently happened. This is the constant search, through research into Cruzvillegas and others that seek to find and utilize a personally unique style of activation, based on a solid foundation of concept and written support.



Figure 8: *Song, installation/performance evidence, 2022*

The following is a short interview conducted with Abraham via email during the late summer of 2023. Responses are unedited unless otherwise noted.

Steve deBruyn: Where are you at the moment? Physically and working-wise?

Abraham Cruzvillegas: I'm in my studio, in Mexico city, listening to 'Un rayo de sol', with The Chakachas. I'm not working now, recently I've got some interview requirements, and I need to find the time to go back to make my work. I just came back from home, where I have lunch everyday with the kids, and sometimes with friends. Today we had. A nice greens salad with cheese from Cherán, and picadillo and black beans, with a very spicy homemade sauce, and a fresh infusion.

Sd: Is there anything that we haven't seen yet you can give us some hints about? Where are you showing next? What's exciting you today?

AC: I've been working in organizing art exhibitions, but not with my own work: this month we opened a couple of group shows in two different galleries here in town. The first one, at Banda

Municipal gallery, was based in the fact that the three participating artists (Brenda Castro, Luis Carlos Hurtado and Luis Rochín) are originally from states besides the sea (Sinaloa and Campeche), linking together both sides of the country, and with their works, Pacific ocean and the Caribbean.

In the other gallery -funnily called Campeche as well, like the state, and as the street where it is, in Colonia Roma neighbourhood- I arranged a show with the works of twenty four artists, from different places from abroad , and also from Mexico. The main purpose, fuel and engine for this project is friendship and affection, not thinking on subject matters, themes, techniques, or so. On the other hand, I'm part of a curatorial team for a big exhibition that will open in October at the MASP (Art Museum of São Paulo), in Brazil. Soon more details...

Sd: I kind of want to focus in on some aspects of your work that I see relating to my own practice (hence my interest in your work) and that I haven't seen come out (at least explicitly) in a lot of interviews I've seen of yours. I know you do have attachments to some objects; the groove from your father's wheelchair being your favourite sculpture, for instance, and attachment to place, community, family, etc. is baked into everything you do but as far as the *objects themselves* go there seems to be the set recipe of re-evaluating of their worth and consequent re-purposing into art objects and the work is made. You seem to treat all objects as opportunities with equal value and thrive on having a constant supply of materials at your disposal wherever you go sourced from the local surroundings but in what ways do the finished sculptures *matter* to you?

AC: In fact, I deeply prefer detachment from the finished sculptures, as you said, both affective and hermeneutic. This means many possible interpretations and understanding of my works, rather than pretending to get a finished or only meaning. I prefer my art to be free from myself, autonomous all ways.

Sd: Do you feel a sense of 'post-partum' when you finish constructing the exhibition and leave the space to move onto the next one?

AC: No, I just try to overlap projects, so to connect processes, that way I have no opportunity to feel any nostalgia whatever. Evidently, many times this is not possible, then I try to reinvent myself, testing new activities, writing, organizing shows, drawing, making research, teaching, etc...

Sd: I know a lot of your work is precarious in nature and not really made to be collected or even stored. This is a strong point to your work but at what point does the (de)attachment happen, if any?

AC: My previous question answers this one, but in any case, I love precariousness in all meanings possible, including physical and conceptual precariousness.

Sd: Sometimes you are using materials that has a lot of inherent historicity, such as beams dating to the 19th century that 'have a lot of things to say' and some have less (a cut off pants cuff) or even none (a contemporary piece of a barbeque grill) but they all get the same treatment and become in dialogue with each other through the finished sculptures. There seems to be such an interchangeability to the objects that make up the whole and maybe even the sculptures themselves. My question is at what point, if ever, do you get attached to certain sculptures or even certain individual elements? That 19th century beam for instance; say you could use it in a sculpture only once and then it might be destroyed. Would you act differently towards that object? Would you hesitate to use it? Perhaps hanging onto (hoarding) it for a long period of time?

AC: Many times I've faced the situation of getting rid of an entire set of sculptures from an exhibition. Then I have to take decisions like keeping tons of 'materials', which means a high price in terms of storage, or just throwing them away. I always try to understand the context, and to learn of the specificities of the local economies, so through this I produce my own questions, that some times are not really related to attachment or a special appreciation of the objects by themselves. As you said: I prefer thinking that everything deserves respect in a horizon of equality and dignity. I just keep with myself what I think I can use or reuse, I never deal with the concept 'garbage'.

Sd: Your movement towards your installations becoming "more convivial and party-like" through the addition of performers of all kinds seems to address this objecthood situation a little bit and it is an interesting progression in your work. Is there a time in the future where we might start seeing *less* objecthood in your work?

AC: Definitely, it's been happening since a while -performing, for example-, but it doesn't mean that I'll stop working with other materials. I do believe that my main artwork is the construction of an immaterial educational device, in which the one who learns is me.

Sd: How important is the process in your work rather than the end product? Is the work situated in the process of making? I know that in videos I've seen where you've been working on something while being interviewed, there is a lot to be seen in your engagement. You give these histories of each separate element, but we also see you create situations or problems (such as a sculpture stuck in a door frame). Is there a performative aspect you are actively engaging in during the creation of your work in general?

AC: Art works in an exhibition are in a stage of their existence that is as important as the process of its own making. Many times, art works are mere residues of an elaborate process that can be hardly perceived by viewers in a museum or gallery, but this doesn't make them less important, because those are carriers of the next stage, involving the gaze of audiences, producing more art with their questions, understanding, or misunderstanding.

Sd: Is Autodestruccion the future of your work? Do you feel like you have enough reference material to move into a 'post-x' phase of your practice?

AC: With every new project and exhibition or publication, I'm moving constantly to the possibility of learning.

Sd: I see Empty Lot (2015) as an outlier in your catalogue (and also as an artist but also a landscaper, one of my favourite works of yours) slightly conceptually but definitely aesthetically. It also seems more formal than where you usually go and the time-based aspect where it was allowed to come into its own through the growth (or non-growth) of plants really added a new element to your work as opposed to what we've seen in the past. Its very subtle in its topicality and can be read in so many ways. I think it would fly well in Canada for instance, where discussions about invasive plant species are frequent and pressing. Is this a project you might end up revisiting at some point? Re-interpreting it in some way?

AC: Exhibition I have been making [are] diverse projects and exhibitions involving these questions, I have been working with biologists, historians, geneticists, philosophers, environmental activists, and landscape artists, but I'll not go back to that specific project. To none.

Thank you, good luck.

Bibliography

Adler, Dan. 2018. *Contemporary Sculpture and the Critique of Display Cultures: Tainted Goods*. Boca Raton: Routledge.

Adorno, T. W. 1998. *Aesthetic Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bishop, Claire. 2012. *Artificial Hells : Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso.

Coghlan, Niamh. "Built For Life" *Aesthetica Magazine*. Accessed September 3, 2023

<https://aestheticamagazine.com/built-from-life/>

Goldsmith, Steven. 1983. "The Readymades of Marcel Duchamp: The Ambiguities of an Aesthetic Revolution." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 (2): 197-202.

Greeley, Robin Adele, ed. 2016. *The Logic of Disorder: The Art and Writings of Abraham Cruzvillegas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Grosz, Elizabeth. 2001. *Architecture from the outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oblique_Strategies

Hudek, Antony, ed. 2014. *Object*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Klee, Paul *On Modern Art* 1948 London: Faber and Faber

Lange-Brandt, Petra, ed. 2015. *Materiality*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Levine, Marcus Boon & Gabriel, ed. 2018. *Practice*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Piper, Adrian. 1975. "To Art (Reg. Intrans V.)." *The Fox* 1 (1): 60-62, 64.

Preece, Robert. 2022. "Improvising and Transforming: A Conversation with Abraham Cruzvillegas."
Sculpture, July/August: 56-65.

Richard Serra 'The Yale Lecture' in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed.
Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 1096.

Rosenmeyer, Aoife. "Abraham Cruzvillegas." ARTnews.com, May 16, 2018.
<https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/aia-reviews/abraham-cruzvillegas-2-62519/>.

Rorty, Richard. 1989. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: University Press.

Wood, Charles Harrison & Paul, ed. 2002. *Art in Theory 1900-2000*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

List of figures/Image Sources

Figure 1: *White Island II sculpture in situ, found wood, found metal, paint, 6'x2'x2.5', 2022*

Figure 2: *Bed sculpture in situ, found wood, found metal, paint, 15' x 12' x 9', 2024*

Figure 3: *Garden Installation, wood, found objects, fabric, paint, soil, bean seeds 15' 15' x 9', 2024*

Figure 4: *Voyageur (Stairs) Temporary public sculpture/performance, wood, paint, approx. 7'h x 15'w x 5'w, 2022*

Figure 5: Abraham Cruzvillegas *Autorreconstrucción: Social Tissue* 2018

<https://www.crousel.com/media/uploads/artists/Abraham-Cruzvillegas/exhibitions/Autorrecons/web/Abraham-Cruzvillegas-nelly-rodriguez-1188.jpg>

Figure 6: Abraham Cruzvillegas *The Ballad of Etc., Molinia caerulea/ Panicum virgatum, 2019*

<https://sculpturemagazine.art/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/7-AC-The-Ballad-of-Etc-scaled.jpg>

Figure 7: Abraham Cruzvillegas *Autoreconstrucción: Social Tissue* 2018

<https://www.artnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/17cruzvillegas220220182.jpg?w=681&h=383&crop=1&resize=681%2C383>

Figure 8: Abraham Cruzvillegas *Song, installation/performance evidence, 2022*

https://www.lamaisonderendezvous.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DSC_9184-768x1151.jpg

Curriculum Vitae

Steve deBruyn

London, Ontario, Canada

Education

2024 MFA, Western University, London, ON

2022 Advanced Diploma in Landscape Design, Fanshawe College, London, ON

2002 BFA, NSCAD University, Halifax, NS

2001 Fine Arts Diploma, Fanshawe College, London, ON

Solo Exhibitions/Artist Residencies

2025 *DARE Residency* Foundation for Contemporary Art, Sophia, Bulgaria

2025 *Caution Tape* Institute for Contemporary Art, Yerevan, Armenia

2024 *Nuthin' Lasts* Artlab Gallery, London, ON

2024 *Camp Innit* Siskinds Gallery, London, ON

2023 *Elf-Cat* Laplace, Barcelona, Spain

2023 *Steve deBruyn Art Show 2023: Elf:Cat:Per* Satellite Gallery, London, ON

2020 Research/Creation Residency, Centre Sagamie, Alma, QC

2019 *The Woods In Colour* Langage Plus, Alma, QC

2017 *Pile On* Niagara Artists Centre, St Catherines, ON

2015 *Tourne le Tricks* Galerie R3, Trois Rivieres, QC

2015 *This City III* YK ARCC, Yellowknife NT

2015 *Through Hoops* Galerie Sans Nom, Moncton, NB

2014 *Rendre Ronde* Centre d'exposition L'Imagier, Gatineau, QC

2014 *Works From Some Times* Arnica Artist Run Centre, Kamloops, BC

2014 *Cadre et Isolez* BANG Centre d'Art Actuel, Saguenay, QC

2014 *Make it Round* Struts Gallery, Sackville, NB

2014 *Get Away Vehicle: Part One* White Water Gallery, North Bay, ON

2014 *De Contractant Général* Galerie B-312, Montreal, QC

2014 *Il passe à l'intérieur* Maison de la Culture de Trois-Rivieres, Trois-Rivieres, QC

2013 *Pipeline* Judith and Norman Alix Art Gallery, Sarnia, ON

2013 *Poussant dans les Bois* Centre d'exposition de Val-David, Val-David QC

2013 *Smackerels* ARTsPLACE, Annapolis Royal, NS

2013 *Of/Off (Course)* Harcourt House, Edmonton, AB

2013 *Rolls Through* Forest City Gallery, London, ON

2012 *No Kick Flips!* Action Art Actuel, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, QC
2012 *Sur les Galets* Galerie de la Ville de Matane, Matane, QC
2012 *Untitled*, Grave, Victoriaville, QC
2012 *Pour Rouler Sur L'Ecart*, Rouyn-Noranda, QC

2011 *Wood Push Wood* Artspace, Peterborough, ON
2011 *Bulldog River Roll* Open Sky, Ft. Simpson, NT
2011 *Wood For Pushing* Open Space, Victoria, BC
2009 *Skater DIY* AKA Gallery, Saskatoon, SK

Selected Group Exhibitions

2024 *Third Shift* St John, NB
2024 *Neuroscience Research Day Brain Art & Social* The Wave, UWO London, ON
2023 *Static Unearthed* Artlab, UWO, London, ON
2023 *Annual Members Show* Forest City Gallery, London, ON
2022 *Annual Members Show* Forest City Gallery, London, ON
2020 *The Square Foot Show* Westland Gallery, London, ON
2013 *Art of Recycling* Ontario Police College, Aylmer, ON
2013 *ArtSpot 1* Old East Studios, London, ON
2013 *JNAAG Juried Art Show* Judith and Norman Alix Art Gallery, Sarnia, ON
2013 *Nothing Going On Upstairs* The Ancillary Gallery, London, ON
2013 *Borderline* Living Arts Centre, Mississauga, ON
2012 *Ramshackle* w/Steve Heywood Corner Gallery, London, ON
2012 *Mini Golf: A Social Practice* Cambridge Galleries, Cambridge, ON
2012 *Breaking Trail* w/Grant Wilson The Space DIY, Barrie, ON
2010 *Coffee Shakers* w/Chris Lockerbie Paper Chase Café, Halifax, NS
2010 *Gr8bits* Ace Art Inc. Winnipeg, MB
2008 *Salon Style* Community Outreach Gallery, London, ON
2007 *Box Social* Forest City Gallery, London, ON
2007 *Draw Fuse* Gallery, New York, NY
2007 *Fake Stupid Daddy* HQgalerieboutiq, Montreal, QC
2006 *A Hat and a House... Not Afraid Anymore* Sub. V, Montreal, QC
2006 *The London International Outdoor Art Festival*, London, ON
2006 *Skateable Scraps* Artlab, UWO, London, ON
2005 *Through the Looking Glass* Covent Garden Market, London, ON
2005 *A Different Honest* Le. Gallery, Toronto, ON
2005 *O. Billy* Forest City Gallery, London, ON

2005 *O. Billy & Friends Art Exhibition Part II* The Ancillary Gallery, London, ON

2005 *Under Pressure Festival* Montreal, QC

2005 *New Young Artists* The Wareroom Gallery, New Dundee, ON

2005 *O. Billy & Friends* The Ancillary Gallery, London, ON

2005 *The Sasquatch Information Centre* Artlab, UWO, London, ON

2004 *Annual Juried Exhibition* Artlab, UWO, London, ON

2001 *Eleven by Eleven* MacIntosh Gallery, London, ON

2000 *Annual Performance Festival* Forest City Gallery, London ON

2000 *The Tile Show* Forest City Gallery, London, ON

2000 *Third Year Show* H Gallery, Fanshawe College, London, ON

2000 *Digipop* Artlab, UWO, London, ON

2000 *Mall Show* Galleries at Galleria, London, ON

1999 *Multiples* Artlab, UWO, London ON

1999 *Annual Juried Exhibition* Artlab, UWO, London, ON

1999 *Annual Members Show* Forest City Gallery, London, ON

Artist Workshops

2023 *Beats and Looping*, Satellite Gallery, London ON, one day, adults

2015 *Spray Painting/Public Mural*, Yellowknife NWT, 2 days, ages 10-up

2014 *Ramp Building*, Saguenay QC, 3 days, ages 12-18

2014 *Skateboarding/Ramp Building/Graffiti Art*, Struts Gallery, Sackville NB, 5 days, ages 10-17

2012 *Spray Painting/Public Mural*, Matane QC, 2 days, ages 12-up

2012 *Ramp Building*, Saint-Jean-Sur-Richelieu QC, one day, ages 12-up

2012 *Ramp Building*, Victoriaville, QC, two days, ages 12-17

2011 *Beginner Skateboarding and Ramp Building*, Fort Simpson NWT, two days, ages 10 -up

2009 *Zine Making*, Nutana High School, Saskatoon SK, one day, Grade 10 class

Self-Published/Editions

2023 *SKATE* zine, ed. Of 25

2023 *Fun With Chores!* Bookwork, ed. Of 3

2022 *The Voyageur* zine, ed. Of 25

2020 *Annuaire 2020 des Pantoufles Elfes* bookwork, ed. of 24

2020 *Le Chemin Currant de la Pantoufle Elfe* zine, ed. of 10

2015 *Wallpaper* zine, ed. of 7

2013 *On Again* zine, ed. of 6

2010 *Wingman #1* zine, Ed. of 10
2009 *Miss Ray Ray* zine, ed. of 15
2009 *Aesthetic Solutions for the Holidays* zine, ed. of 25
2009 *Beaters* zine, ed. of 30
2009 *Don't Change* zine, ed. of 25
2008 *Busted Limbs* zine, ed. of 35
2008 *More Decorating Ideas for the Holidays* zine, ed. of 35
2007 *So... You're Horny: The Phonecard EP* CD-R, open edition
2007 *Had a Blast* zine, ed. of 15
2007 *Decorating Ideas for the Holidays* zine, ed. of 25
2006 *rap album cover* zine, ed of 4
2006 *Nuthin Lasts* zine, ed of 18

Awards and Grants

2022-24 Visual Arts Department Awards for Research and Materials, Western University
2014 Canada Arts Council Emerging Artist Grant
2013 Ontario Arts Council Exhibition Assistance Grant
2013 London Arts Council Grant
2012 Canada Arts Council Travel Grant

Exhibitions Curated

2013 *Nothing Going On Upstairs* The Ancillary Gallery, London, ON
2006 *London International Outdoor Art Festival* London, On
2005 *O. Billy* Forest City Gallery, London, On
2005 *O. Billy & Friends Art Exhibition Part II* The Ancillary Gallery, London, ON
2005 *O. Billy & Friends* The Ancillary Gallery, London, ON

Teaching

2023-24 Teaching Assistant, Western University, Foundation Visual Arts
Teaching and marking for a weekly lab section of the course. Professor Tricia Johnson; full year undergraduate course, 26 students.
2022-23 Teaching Assistant, Western University, Intro to Digital Photography (hybrid online)
Producing pre-recorded photoshop demos and marking. Professor Colin Carney; full year undergraduate course, 42 students.

Selected Bibliography

Artist Proves... Metro London, March 14th, 2013
Steve deBruyn s'installe au Grave La Nouvelle Union, August 1st, 2012

Ramp 'n' Roll: The Skater's Life in Art Victoria Times Colonist, Sept 8th, 2011
Open Sky Festival Enters 11th Year News/North NWT, June 27th, 2011

Art Related Work Experience

Director, Community Outreach Gallery, 2006-2008 London, ON
Gallery Assistant, Michael Gibson Gallery, 2003 -2004 London, ON
Intern, Center For Art Tapes, 2002 Halifax, NS
Technician, Museum London, 2001 London, ON
Athletic Photographer, Fanshawe College, 2000-2001 London, ON

Affiliations

Member, Forest City Gallery, London, ON