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## Gerry Bibby / Juliette Blightman



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'Gerry Bibby / Juliette Blightman', 2014, installation view at KUB Arena, Kunsthaus Bregenz

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The KUB Arena is a rather awkward space, occupying the ground floor of the imposing, Peter Zumthor-designed concrete building that is the Kunsthaus Bregenz. Alongside a ticket counter and corner bookshop, the arena is also host to a subsidiary programme of exhibitions. Its lobby-like nature was fitting for this exhibition of works by Gerry Bibby and Juliette Blightman, given the vital roles played by incident and encounter in each artists' work. For Bibby and Blightman (both Berlin residents, though born in Australia and the UK respectively), time itself is used as a medium, while language is their shared subject matter.

The centre of the space was dominated by Bibby's installation *The Drum Head. Act 4. Tectonic Mnemonic* (2014), a platform made of flimsy boards printed with a flesh-coloured brick pattern, on which a few chairs, water bottles, glasses and plastic fruit and vegetables were spread around. Books, catalogues and printed texts were wedged underneath the boards, while a digital printer sat prominently in the centre, scattered with pages of typed text. It could have been mistaken for the residue of a rather half-hearted relational aesthetics-type event. But, as is typical of Bibby's work, these traces referred to something not yet finished and in another place – a book being written by the artist, presumably elsewhere in Bregenz, where he was a resident for the duration of the show. The book will be the final product of a commission by the Amsterdam-based organization *If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want to Be a Part of Your Revolution*, which began in 2013 and has encompassed all of the artist's subsequent projects, including this one.

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How to represent the solitary activity of writing a book without becoming glibly demonstrative? As Bibby wrote in his wall text 'Notes to the Reader': 'Printed or posted, writing doesn't present itself as self-consciously physical, nor stable.' This installation was a possible arena for the publication-in-progress. The printer was connected wirelessly to Bibby's computer and could, theoretically, have begun spewing out pages of freshly composed manuscript at any time. The fragments of output and indications of genesis or influence were props designed to illustrate Bibby's overarching question: 'what is it that constitutes process, artistic or otherwise?'

Bibby's installation raised so many questions that to present it alongside the work of a second artist seemed like a lot to ask of the audience. The two bodies of work often seemed to interrupt each other, setting up an opposition based on apparent affinities. While time, for Bibby, is unruly, seeping around past, present and future, for Blightman, it can be pictured as completed, lozenge-like moments. A group of diaristic pencil drawings clustered together on one wall (*Touching Series*, 2014) described this episodic sense of time, while *at least you haven't changed* (2011) introduced a social dimension to these rehearsals of the past. Citing the names of four friends as collaborators, Blightman set up objects borrowed from them – a carpet, a record and player, a painting, an essay – in a quasi-domestic scenario that seemed to invite the viewer to participate. A series of four drawings, *Typing Time* (2013), handled language with the artist's characteristic levity, each showing a single word typed repeatedly on a sheet of paper: 'weather weather weather weather' read the first; 'silence', 'nothing' and 'love', each receiving the same treatment. The element of the piece from which it took its title was not on show, although it could be heard from an overhead speaker intermittently sounding out the hammering keys of a typewriter.

The whole exhibition was littered with language in various registers: text-based pieces, wall labels that exist somewhere between art work and description or quotes from other writers printed on the walls, not to mention the collected books and essays included by both artists in their installations. A three-day conference in early March added to these multiple voices, bringing to life the social contingencies articulated in the works themselves and inhabiting the installations that became their stage.

Despite its sparse appearance, this dual exhibition was almost overloaded with tangential incidents and questions, not only about what can constitute a work of art but about what constitutes work at all. It proposed interruption itself as symptomatic of contemporary ways of working: the influences, both personal and professional, on an artist's practice, or the splintering of work amongst other daily demands on time.

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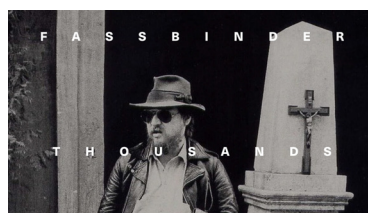
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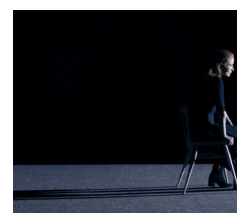
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