

Midpointedness

Sometimes, when works arrive at the gallery, ready for installation, I feel a small pang of loss. In the studio, their mutability seems infinite and each encounter reveals another sequence of ideas and actions. In the gallery, all possibilities are at an end; perhaps it's no wonder museums have been likened to mausoleums with the dead occupying its rooms.

However, this view would suggest that art is no more than road kill; something that has the potential for evolution until it's knocked dead by exhibition. Perhaps it's more accurate to recognise the pang as acknowledgement of the part played by my own practice of curator. I have created the context for these works; I'm the one who has foreclosed on their wider possibilities in favour of a position within a particular construct.

Fortunately, works of art are more difficult to contain than this self-regarding view suggests. Robust as a curatorial proposition might be, the works aren't illustrations. No matter how firmly the context is asserted, the gallery is also a site for resistance. Notwithstanding the exhibition design and information strategies that are directed at audiences in an attempt to keep them on the right track, other ideas and propositions are kick-started by viewers whose own experiences mess with curatorial enterprise.

I often lead groups around the University of Warwick sculpture trail, pausing at Liliane Lijn's *White Koan* to discuss her reading of Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* and her interest in Greek mythology within the crucible of feminism in the 1960s. Meanwhile, audiences assert folklore that it was a tomb where someone once died or that it belongs within an aesthetic of space exploration technology, all of which leads to a wide range of discussions; from other beings suspended between heaven and earth, to the nature of Teflon. Sometimes you have to forget what you know to find a different springboard for ideas.

At the University of Warwick, our art collection of some 900 works made in the last 60 years or so, is displayed in the public spaces of the university; in corridors, seminar rooms and foyers; in the gardens, quadrangles and fields. Notwithstanding a loose attempt to locate works in situations where their content has some relevance, the encounter becomes the main event. In an attempt to provide some generous starting points for enquiry, we have formulated a series of questions to structure thought processes into knowledge creation:

- What do I see?
- What does it make me think about?
- How was it made?
- Why is it here?

While the first and the third points of enquiry are centred on the artwork and demand that the viewer pays attention to the work, the parameters of the second and fourth questions are as wide as the viewer's own experiences and state of mind. Like the artwork in the studio, they can be revisited and changed; melded with a plethora of different readings, random observations and recollections: all as much about the viewer as the work. In terms of the University Art Collection, some of the more entertaining or appealing narratives become folklore; Richard Deacon's sculpture *Let's Not Be Stupid*, is known to staff and students as "The Kissing Penguins" to the extent that until recently, this name was found on Google maps. The campus mythologies around works of art appear to serve three purposes: they fix meanings, they designate ownership of the work by the community and they render the work invisible. For visibility to be regained, ironically, the work has to disappear and be relocated. With the rupture of mythology, they come back into view.

On 18 May 2016, we installed a new sculpture by Laura Ford at the transport interchange of the University. Facebook records responses.





???

Like · 149 · May 20 at 10:57am

I genuinely hope warwick never stops buying these vaguely threatening artworks

Like · 57 · May 20 at 10:58am

Looks like an idealization of neoliberal society, as fantasized by the VC et al.

Like · 26 · May 20 at 10:59am

This and other time-geographical topics will definitely be covered in my upcoming seven-part webseries, "why the VC would definitely have bought the koan, had the koan not already been there when he arrived"

Like · 5 · May 20 at 11:04am

What is wrong with this place?

Like · 6 · May 20 at 11:04am

These look like the statues outside leadenhall market in London...

Like · 4 · May 20 at 11:16am

The one that stood on the corner of leadenhall street and bishopsgate disappeared a couple weeks ago. Possibly the same one?

Like · May 20 at 7:04pm

Tbh I haven't walked past it this month so it could well be

Like · May 20 at 7.22pm

I think it's by Laura Ford, she makes loads of them. Not sure why we need one though.

Like · May 20 at 11:18am

Looks like something from Resident Evil

Like · May 20 at 11:30am



"J'zargo bids you farewell."

"J'zargo bids you farewell."
Like · 24 · May 20 at 11:33am

Budget black panther cosplay?
Like · 12 · May 20 at 11:34am

Student looking for their grades
Like · 2 · May 20 at 11:36

KOAN
Like · May 20 at 11:37am

Does Warwick have an official furrysoc or something now?
Like · 5 · May 20 at 11:37am

That was my thought, I was going to tag you in the post
Like · May 20 at 11:52am

I mean... the bag could just be shaping around some neko-ears...
Like · May 20 at 11:58am

Looks like a cat but it's actually a bag, I was disappointed too
Like · May 20 at 12:12pm

What about that tail/third-leg thing going on?
Like · 1 · May 20 at 12:20pm

The Kissing Penguins were better.
Like · 1 · May 20 at 7:26pm

What do you mean "were"? They've come back!
Like · 1 · May 20 at 11:09pm

CATipalism
Like · June 9 at 11:07pm



Some guys poking the devil cat with a boom. Whatever film that is... Does anyone know what they were doing?
Like · June 14 at 8:20pm





Perhaps filming and re-enacting a scene from *The Master and Margarita*? The guy on the left looks uncannily like Woland and the cat resembles Behemoth from the novel. Interestingly Behemoth is literally a 'devil cat'.

Like · 6 · June 15 at 7:39am

Once I was at the bus stop late at night and a group of students were sitting around the statue with hoods over their faces, their heads bowed.... They were playing drinking games...

Like · 6 · June 15 at 10:00am

That's what they wanted you to think. Hidden in plain sight indeed...

Like · June 16 at 12:46pm

Hidden in plain sight ... this is perhaps another way of looking at midpointness. The art object is both a repository and a trigger for different ideas and experiences. And as life continues, we reflect and change so each encounter shifts until it feels as if all possibilities are at an end and we stop seeing the work until something startles it back into view. Ultimately, once we've shuffled off our mortal coils, some ideas disappear without trace while others continue in a litany of histories that clarify and confuse. Meanwhile, simultaneously integral and separate to this white noise of mutable understanding, art goes on and on.

Sarah Shalgosky
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