

*All existence proceeds from the flux of creation and destruction.*  
Heraclitus

*Rearrangements: Sculpture/Performance/Photography*  
Katy McCormick

The exhibition *Rearrangements: Sculpture/Performance/Photography*, unites performance works by the collaborative UK duo Adam Dade and Sonya Hanney with the photo-sculpture works of Canadian Lynda Gammon. These artists explore notions of sculpture, space, and performance vis-à-vis the photographic image from two vastly different perspectives, yet share an interest in the shifting edge between object and process, banality and transformation, stability and dissolution. In works such as *Salvaged 8*, Gammon composes architectural models with an ever-growing photographic archive of interior spaces. Far from respecting the photographic frame, she interweaves construction detritus with photographs, arranging fragments in an improvisational manner to create miniature architectural spaces. Dade and Hanney, functioning within a minimalist aesthetic, compose their *Stacked Hotel Rooms* in real time, reconfiguring the domestic architecture of hotel rooms to create temporary assemblages. These constructions are photographed and subsequently disassembled, restored to their original state in the course of a night's occupation.

Lynda Gammon's work, generally titled *Salvage*, is an ongoing series based on a collection of images of industrial-type spaces made over two decades. Born of a need to document her sculptures in the 80's, her interest in the photographic image grew, until the images became less about the sculptures themselves and more about the dynamic compositions to be found in her warehouse studio space. While living in Rotterdam in the early 90's, Gammon began to document spaces existing in between renovation and ruin. Alternating between shooting with simple Polaroid and pinhole cameras, Gammon has continued to build a personal archive of such photographs. Largely shot in artists' mixed use studio/living spaces commonly lodged in destitute or abandoned industrial buildings, the images document alternative spaces and lifestyles.

Gammon's assemblages, made of photographs "cut, re-photographed, enlarged, darkened, re-made . . . taped and glued together," only exist for the duration of the exhibition.<sup>1</sup> She allows "the chance encounter" to affect the shape and direction of the work. "I have no idea when I begin the work, the shape it will take or the size it will become."<sup>2</sup> Representing contingent spaces, teetering on the edge between representation and abstraction, her riotous combines invite exploration, despite their apparent impossibility. Made with recycled materials, stacked, folded, reworked and reconfigured within sculptural arrangements, the *Salvaged* constructions are punctuated by miniature pieces of furniture. These dollhouse spaces oscillate between what we know to be scraps of wood, Styrofoam, cardboard, and a world of imagined architecture, forgotten forays, and suspended daydreams. Gammon relates, "At some point in the process a coherent assemblage seems to coalesce and stabilize for a period. This is its finished state, its life. At this point I would document it as such and dismantle it. The pieces return to the archive boxes and the process begins anew."<sup>3</sup>

Both artists' works involve a performative interaction with materials, space, and the photographic record. For Gammon, the performance is private; it occurs in the process of construction, first in the studio, then in the gallery during the installation. Like an inverse "Anarchitecture," — the

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<sup>1</sup> Lynda Gammon Artist Statement, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

anarchic process of transforming architecture through an active process of splitting, reconfiguring or disassembling best characterized by sculptor Gordon Matta-Clarke — her works suggest the activity of building, shaping, piecing together, reframing, and taming chaos. The photographs serve as raw material, neither the beginning, nor the end of the work. For Dade and Hanney, the record, both photographic and video, *is* the work, as it is all that is left of the activity. For them, the “photographs document the monumental peak of the work, and were originally intended for the project’s presentation in the form of postcards. Each postcard featuring an inventory of the room’s contents.”<sup>4</sup> The video counters the assertion of the photographs, in particular, it serves to destabilize the notion of a finished sculpture embedded in the photographs. What it represents foremost, is the temporal nature of their process.

They work wordlessly, with great economy, moving lamps, end-tables, removing pictures from the wall. Watching the video, we hear the creaking of the floor, the occasional clack of tools. Working in tandem, they fold blankets, sheets, bedskirts. Using sign language, they communicate with gestures, nods, significant looks. The bed comes apart, things are unplugged, drawers pulled out, tables stacked. The chaise lounge goes on top of the end tables. Next to the desk goes the dresser, on top of that the inverted desk chair. The drawers, lamps, blankets, and pillows all fill gaps in the architecture of the construction. Silently they gauge the suitability of each object and each space to be filled. Dade states: “We look at everything. As the stack evolves it is sometimes necessary to pull out draws to produce a better stack and sometimes it isn't. How much time we have, the light, our communication and miscommunication all add to the mild panic of the moment. But we always seem to know at which point we are both content with what we have in front of us. In the end it's a mixture of aesthetics and function.”<sup>5</sup> Once all the room’s contents have been composed into a block, a photograph is made. Then the stack is disassembled and the room reassembled, the doing and undoing all recorded in the video. No one but the artists (and their cameras) ever see the actual constructions.

In *Hidings* (2001), the artists present four scenarios using a minimum of props and gestures. In each sequence, (shot in a dining room, a patch of forest, a corner photobooth, and a room being painted) the artists insert themselves into the scene in such a way that they “disappear.” Sometimes their erasure is due to the perspective of the camera and sometimes it is the result of turning a table on its side or pulling a dropcloth over themselves. In both *Hidings* and *Stacked Hotel Rooms*, the works allow a “temporary assertion of [the artists’] presence.”<sup>6</sup> Whereas in the *Stacked Hotel Rooms*, the work is undertaken as a giant puzzle — a sort of readymade rearranged, in *Hidings* their disappearance results in a banal scene embedded with a hidden presence. Both are anti-monumental abstractions in the real world in real time. Dade explains, “We wanted the viewer to experience the same amount of time we had to make it. Where time itself became intrinsic to the production of the work’s meaning. Boredom / lack of purpose / misuse of time has often been a valuable creative starting point for us, and allows for a certain reflection on being.”<sup>7</sup> At the same time these works function as “art for art's sake” in the most playful, whimsical sense. They are utterly straight, serious, boring, and enchanting all at the same time. They gently mock and simultaneously manifest a conceptual art practice that both reflects upon its form and continues its inquiry into the meaning of things.

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<sup>4</sup> Adam Dade & Sonya Hanney Artist Statement, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Adam Dade, email interview, October 31, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Adam Dade, in email to the author, October 31, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Adam Dade, in email to the author, November 3, 2006.

The artists' works grow out of temporal relationships with spaces that cannot be owned or possessed. In *Stacked Hotel Rooms*, we become aware of the nature of the social contract, which is pushed far beyond the usual disarray of sheets and towels. In the action of unmasking the domestic comforts offered there, they scratch the surface of the illusory nest or "non-place," exposing it for all its flimsiness.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Gammon's works, akin to the interventions of Matta-Clark, present marginalized spaces in a state of flux, as both place and non-place, frame and site. They are places that contain traces of lives lived, whose context is altered by the operations of an artistic activity.

The processes and activities contained in the works of Gammon, Dade, and Hanney, suggest an ongoing engagement with the idea of art as a transformative experience, even as the works reveal their relationships to the banal world of things. In the irreverent spirit of Fluxus and Anarchitecture, these artists view process as a concentrated framework for meditating on our existence in the flow of time. In their puzzles, stacks, constructions, improvisations, and riddles, stripped down and remade, there is no permanence, only the momentary space/time of this exhibition. Here, photography (and video) becomes the building blocks for a process that points back to the flow of time.

I am indebted to Jakub Dolejs, Toronto artist and former member of the Gallery 44 Exhibition Selection Committee who brought the work of Dade and Hanney to my attention.

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<sup>8</sup> C. Doherty, Melbourne Festival, 2001