

Maggie Groat

Of Another Natural History 1 (2011)

FIIIPC FLWRRMDYCRPT (2015)

1. How is your process of producing collage grounded in the act of collecting?

The collection always precedes the works on paper and, in many ways, the act of collecting is the more laborious part of the process. One collage might reflect the material sources from years of collecting images, or a collage might emerge intentionally from one or two sources only. I am interested in where intuition and associative frameworks of collecting emerge within my own methodologies of collage.

2. Why, and how, did you become interested in collections of found objects/images?

My interest in the found stems from being surrounded by and raised within a culture of mass consumption and consumerism, and trying to find a way to subvert or push up against this. Acts of collecting found objects and images perform similar processes of capitalist consumption, selecting and buying based on personal taste, but at the same time reacts to it through the nature of what is chosen to be collected—in my case, discarded or unwanted material whether straight from the garbage or sourced from a secondhand economy. I am preoccupied with the question: what does it mean to live, and live as a maker, in a time of environmental crisis? Douglas Huebler's notion of the world as already full of interesting objects, and what Slavoj Žižek says about the potential future necessity of finding beauty in garbage, are two ideas I often refer to when guiding how and what it is that I make. Extending from these thoughts, I am also interested in where imagined collections subvert or confuse dominant ideas about the archive and colonial associations of collecting.

3. How did you proceed to the selection of domestic objects to create your artwork?

My practice has shifted significantly since my children were born. I spend a lot more time at home and, as a result, more time considering what it means to make a home and the histories and possibilities of domestic spaces. I wonder where the home can reveal possibilities of time travel, ritual, magic, intuition, layered energies, ancestral connections, future predictions, and the portals that blur, reveal, or extend the spaces between what is interior and what is exterior. It is these ideas that shape my selections of what is included either representationally or materially.

4. Do you sometimes use a guideline (theme, colour, etc.) when you start collecting? Or do you adopt an intuitive approach?

The answer is both. I might start with a particular idea—guidelines like colours or shapes, a few words, or even a whole title—but often this idea shifts because of the material I end up finding. There is a push-and-pull between intent and what I find, between planning and letting intuition, chance, or something else take over during the finding and making.

Sometimes the resulting collection or final collage is better than I thought because of this tension. Sometimes I can't make what I wanted work. Other times it's just different and can be surprising. I always work on more than one collage, and the making of multiple [collages] at once starts a conversation between them and ideas can shift due to this process.

5. Your selection of carpet samples as an artist has an effect on their status: they go from being utilitarian objects to fragments of an artwork. Does your approach consider this change of status? Does the change of status contribute to your artwork?

While the original meanings of the discarded carpet samples change because of their new context, and also as a reflection of my choices and the new ideas that surround them because of this, it is my intention that they are still considered as utilitarian. Visitors, who hopefully will choose to take off their shoes as one might do as a guest in someone's home, are invited to utilize this space, to sit down and spend time upon it. In previous iterations of this work, I have had people roll across the length of it, bask in the sunlight through a pink window, and had children play upon it (and I am sure many other interactions have occurred that I am not aware of). I am interested in what it means to make art in the long shadow of modernism. Works of mine like this one reference the readymade, minimalism, and colour field painting. I wonder: what does it mean for someone who makes work—from my position in and through my way of looking at the world—to make a work with these references to art historical movements dominated by men? The very nature of the work—as made from carpet—is meant to be engaged with and perhaps even experienced from *upon*, rather than treated as a work to be seen at a distance and “contemplated.” A thread that runs throughout my practice considers the relationship between aesthetics, utility, and what I term “something else.” I have also referred to it in previous exhibition and work titles (as “Functionals also Wonderings”) in thinking through ideas of the possibilities of when a work can operate from a place of ritualized utility.

6. Can you tell me more about the titles of your artworks?

Some titles of my artworks are more descriptive than others, and sometimes they are coded or abbreviated in order to point to, but not entirely reveal, longer titles. Ultimately there is a discourse going on between the works, the circumstances of their creation, and their intended meanings, and there is a degree to which I strategically convey specific things through titling and intentionally keep other things hidden. For example, some titles omit their vowels, and in doing so create a kind of new format for language that is both recognizable and made strange. Other series might utilize an acronym like *FIIPC* (*For insufficient interest in present circumstances*) to both code and order something as part of a larger collection. In the *FIIPC* collections, I might change or add to what follows to refer to or connect it to other aspects of the installation.