



[MARK ALL AS READ]

[MARK ALL AS READ], Katie Paine, Nick Modrzewski and Nabilah Nordin, BLINDSIDE, Melbourne:
4 October - 21 October, 2017

A forgotten tea-break orange becomes an immovable piece of office-banter, consumed by the '80s gestural brutalist drawl of its office's decor. Blu-tac constellations both fresh and embedded magnetise on the rear side of a swivelling black leather armchair. A filo-pastry-esque stack of lacquered A4 paper sits balanced atop its sitter's ashy papier-mache-concrete bust—empty notes forgotten for so long that their layers slowly calcify.

Massage chairs, ergonomically designed prismatic footrests, conference retreats, segregated leisure areas with ping-pong tables, structured office exercise regimes. The commodification of attempts to combat the working body's place in bureaucratic structures of operation under capitalism is rampant. Considering the remnants of these proposed solutions to the eight hour working day, three practitioners with respectively diverse practices across sculpture and archival installation explore the limitations and possibilities of the body under these rigorous structures of reform, control and communication.

Rather than a blatantly contrived artist-hating-on-institution style critique, these artists brought together their collective experiences of working as artists and in contemporary office environments and transformed the galleries into a cluttered, Patrick Bateman apartment-cum-boardroom installation. *[MARK ALL AS READ]* reads like a 1980s-Rococo office, the virtue signalling sculptural opulence of Nordin and Modrzewski cleverly paralleled by Paine's critique of dogmatic structures through the historical lens of 19th century museological documentation. The installation in Gallery 1 is particularly haphazard—Nordin and Modrzewski's altered collection of post-apocalyptic archival obstacles as concrete-plastered desks, an exercise ball, a dismantled exercise bike and dust-fossilised computing devices taking up most of the space. Striking one upon entering is Paine's large-scale digitally-manipulated vinyl wall transfer composed of facsimile film still documentation of late-baroque sculpture at Florence's Uffizi Gallery. Her pseudo-billboard *The term Bureaucracy was coined by Rococo economist Jacques de Gournay [I imagine stretching out my arm to topple these insistent structures]* is simply composed yet effective among its sculptural counterparts in its thematic relationality, a black-and-white composition with yellow subtitle beneath reading: 'Betrayed by their delusions of grandeur'. Rococo and late-baroque artistic documentation and imagery occupies a particularly patrician place within both contemporary art and historical contexts, and Paine's work builds upon this sense of cultural entitlement. The work's placement as an overarching aesthetic element of a larger office installation draws parallels between the glorification of baroque imagery by cultural bureaucrats and the hegemonic control of working space and behavioural conduct in contemporary environments. Ironically, the artist's administrative

archival collections process mimics that of the museological institutions which she so apparently detests.

In Gallery 2, administrative white noise as a sound component provides an apt soundtrack in Modrzewski's piece where arhythmic tattering on computer keyboards creates a white-noise rainfall, the dull drone of an amplified scanner and microwave spin-cycle a work-lullaby. Using the polyphonic aural conventions of Roman-Catholic composition, the two sound pieces which rotate on a cycle comedically capture an obtusely enunciated repetitive declarations 'I had no chance, I had no chance to reply to your emails', the moroseness of monotonous office tasks. Further, utilising the highly structured stylistic components of unaccompanied Gregorian-style liturgical recitative—declared by Pope Pius X to be the most sacred form of choral praise in the Roman Catholic church⁽¹⁾—assists in lampooning the artist's critique of regulatory, ministerial praxis in both artistic and bureaucratic contexts.

Thematic parallels are built here between Paine's vinyl collage of Rococo goblet, Nordin and Modrzewski's use of the lectern as bureaucratic support structure for top-down dissemination of information, the former describing in a gothic-font border the visceral human response to information overload as incessant, irritant—'*like Plaque on Teeth*'. The pair's *Three Minute Meeting By the Office Plant* includes an iPad-displayed video work propped up by a romanesque lectern which overwhelms the senses in its compilation of screencaps, generic mumbling, meta-analysis of corporate behaviour, human-read and automated text-to-speech sound components.

Melbourne CBD Artist-Run BLINDSIDE's hyper-metropolitan outlook over billboards, city shrapnel and workers passing by on the street below proves a fitting space for *[MARK ALL AS READ]*'s office-paraphernalia-strewn aesthetic. Playing on the genericism of socially democratic, open-plan working space design in a globalised, post-industrial context, the exhibition forms both a historical trace of archive and the building blocks for a utopian cubicle-centric future.

(1) White, J.F., Mitchell, N.D. (1995). *Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today*. Collegeville, Minn. : Liturgical Press



Nick Modrzewski, Nabilah Nordin, *Three Minute Meeting by the Office Plant*, 2017. Mixed media.