



TIGER MURDOCH: THE INSIDER

UXBRIDGE
MALCOLM
SMITH
GALLERY

HOW MANY
CONSTRUCTS
BEFORE THE
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For happy tales!

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THE INSIDER IN HOWICK

Tiger Murdoch, an Auckland-based art collective, came into being with an entry to the 2016 National Contemporary Art Award, and shortly after that, with a contribution to *New Perspectives*, a group exhibition curated by Simon Denny and Adnan Misal Yildiz at Artspace. *Building a Brighter Future* consisted of posters inside and outside the gallery confronting members of the public with the harsh glare of rising homelessness and inequality in Auckland. In subsequent projects, Tiger Murdoch have continued to use public spaces, institutional and otherwise, to stage topical conversations on poverty, discrimination, class hierarchies, injustice and exclusion.

In 2017, Tiger Murdoch exhibited *The Insider* at the Blue Oyster Project Space, exploring through social participation and provocation the meanings and valences of the term “insider” in the city of Dunedin. *The Insider* at Malcolm Smith Gallery this year extends the project to Auckland’s eastern suburbs. For the Howick iteration, Tiger Murdoch invite members of the public to share written and visual responses to the idea of the “inside” – “What is the Inside? What are the implications of the Insider?” – through posters in public spaces, social media and the gallery. Responses are formatted into large scale wall paste-ups that position, using the visual language of political communication, community voices, claims and contention at the centre of an institutional space typically reserved for the expressions and perspectives of artworld insiders.

Through their ongoing social practice, Tiger Murdoch attempts to democratize public spaces, institutional and otherwise, the former frequently curated (gated) to exclude threats to institutional brand and bourgeois values, and the latter thoroughly overwhelmed by exhortations to buy and consume. Such democratization, for them, involves a deliberate “focus on the other, the marginalized,” the peoples and issues excluded from public discourses and marginalized in public spaces by cultural, political and economic hierarchies.

To oppose a system, one must first conceive its nature as precarious. Doing so implies waking from a kind of hypnosis, breaking through the marmoreal representations imposed by the conservative bourgeoisie, and seeing the operative system as a fragile installation – a spectacle that ideology has transformed into a reality. – Nicolas Bourriaud (2016: 36)

Tiger Murdoch’s belief in democratization might appear idealistic, particularly in a country that has experienced more than two decades of neoliberal transformations (led by both major parties, National and Labour); neoliberal subjects are educated in the “inevitability of tooth and claw capitalism.” A different point of view suggests that Tiger Murdoch’s entire practice begins from the conception of the fragility or precarity of neoliberal social arrangements. In the long-duration history of human

societies, urban capitalism was more precarious than the social arrangements of hunter-gatherers, and typically, also more brutal and exploitative (James C. Scott).

This artwork asks audiences to engage in a public conversation on insiders and outsiders, “us and them.” The risk that such a work takes concerns the quality and nature of participation. Participants might well prefer to remain audiences, passive consumers of (palatable/tasteful) images and ideas. In this matter, practitioners of socially engaged art are not unlike institutional symptomatologists or social therapists; like therapists in traditional clinics, such artists contend with heavy defence mechanisms constructed at an imaginary level, whose objectives are to minimize anxiety at all costs. For Tiger Murdoch, it is enough if their work facilitates for some of their audiences temporary engagements of thought and emotion with the marginal and minor elements of social life. Such micro or minor engagements have the potential to seep through defences and to establish in the mind a line of flight.

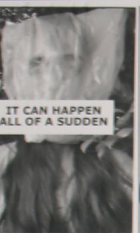
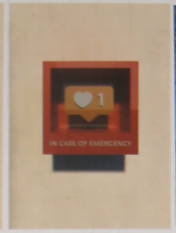
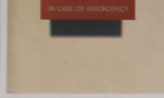
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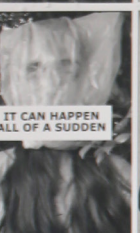
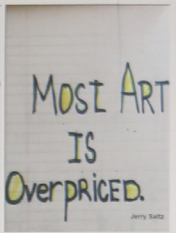
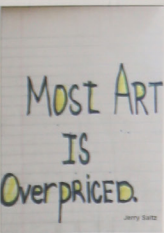
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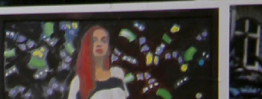
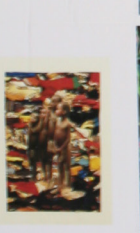
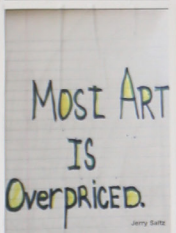
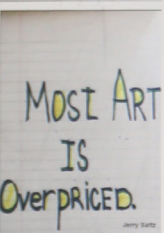
Leon Tan (PhD) is a creative practitioner, educator and registered psychotherapist. He is an Associate Professor and Director of Postgraduate Education in the Creative Industries Department at Unitec Institute of Technology, researches art and design in the public realm, advises artists and arts organisations, and maintains a clinical practice in Auckland. Leon is a member of Auckland Council's Advisory Panel on Art in Public Places (APAPPA) and a member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA).



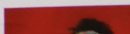
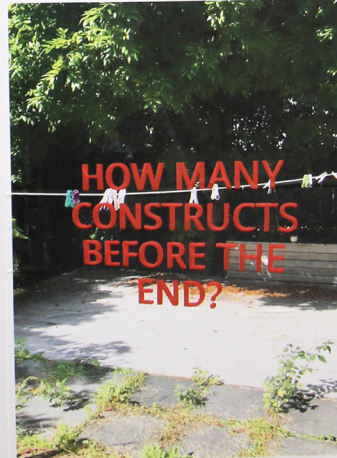
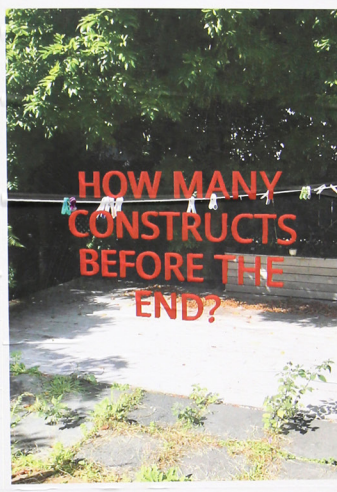
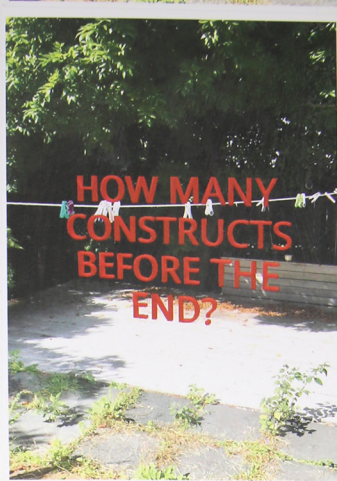
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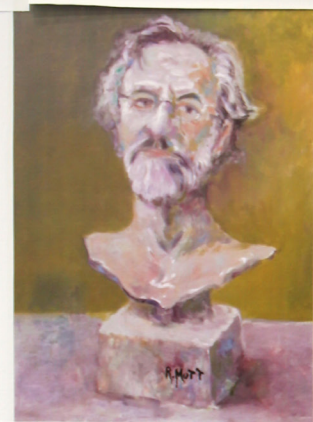








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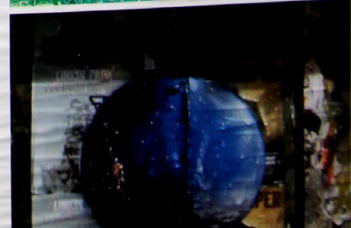
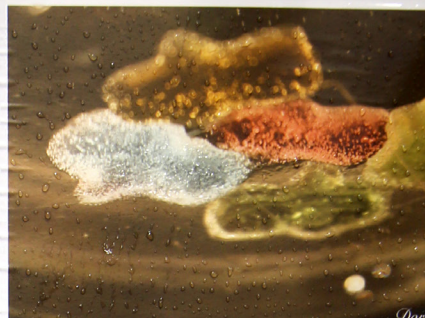
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Published by Malcolm Smith
Gallery on the occasion of Tiger
Murdoch: The Insider, 2018.

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Presented as part of:

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Thanks to:

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