

FRASER ANDERSON *Convertible Dirt*

Fraser Anderson's *Convertible Dirt* recontextualises his practice for different geographic settings. Drawing inspiration from a recent journey, the exhibition documents his intense pursuit to create work against his personal, social and economic odds. Travelling from Sydney to remote locations in the far northwest of the country, Anderson sets up his roaming home studio to delve deeper into escapist ideologies, to the point that his practice has become the art of escapism itself. There is a performance unfolding along this artistic journey that has no pause button, not even when he sleeps. Anderson has taken 'art in everyday life' to a dramatic distance. Curious about the practice of socially disengaged artists, his previous exhibition peered into fringe-dweller lifestyles to seek inspiration about different ways of living. What is remarkable about the development from the artist's last body of work to now, is that he is no longer the inquisitive voyeur into another's way of seeing, rather, he has become the central character.

No stranger to unconventional ways of sleeping, for the past decade Anderson has designated his home secondary to his studio. His place of rest comes only after his place to work is built, popped up, flipped open or laid down. More recently, Anderson has left the city and his community to test the operation of his architectural sculpture within the Australian outback. Anderson's attraction to the natural world is rooted in awe of its functionality and the harmony in which its structures coexist. We see in Anderson's sculptures a deep yearning for humans to find a way to integrate back into the natural environment. We also see this sentiment mirrored in his studio set up.

Anderson is settling himself gently inside a landscape. He is tracing paths back and forth to the water's edge, retracing his own footsteps, trying not to mark the landscape more than necessary. He has learnt to work with sand and salt water, he keeps a keen eye on the weather because his working hours are dictated by it. He is folding into the landscape with a rhythm most humans have lost.

Intuitively drawn from one location to the next, the destinations Anderson travels to accumulate organically. I wonder, is there some kind of mystical pull to a place that calls all ants in one direction, or all birds to another. Is he picking up on a natural flow that we have become deaf to? In the Colo River region lived a man who went by Swami, a self-proclaimed Guru, who built eco structures on his property and cared deeply for the local animals. He somewhat inspired Anderson's last exhibition, and perhaps, it was Swami's way of life that motivated the artist's new transient lifestyle. Swami recently vanished from the area and there may have been a metaphysical transfer of energy between the two artists. In turn, Anderson was able to step fully into the new role he had created for himself.

In the artist's sketchbook a page reads: 'UNTIL PETROL GETS ME'. He will only go as far as he can, but he will go 'till it runs out'. The impossible is treated as compulsory. Which begs the question, what is Anderson really testing here? Perhaps it's how one exists in the world when no one is looking or listening. Perhaps it's about resilience, stamina, isolation and control, not only of his body, but his work itself. The performative and temporal aspects of his practice make us wonder if we could do the same. It urges us to ask: who are we without our community?

The sculptures of *Convertible Dirt* exist somewhere between ancient and future times. Are we looking at an abandoned relic overrun and improved by termites? Maybe they are telling a story of natural selection, where humans have left useful tech behind, possibly a symbol of our demise, a permanent fold into the dirt and ground.

Driven by logic, Anderson examines modern technology in contrast to mud and bug-based solutions, exploring ecology from the ground up. Through his structures, he expresses a deep sensitivity and respect for his surrounding environment, encouraging viewers to ruminate on their own relationship with the natural world. He proposes a new era of collaboration, conceptualises working in tandem with animal and insect species that otherwise travel unnoticed – termites, dung beetles, frilled neck lizards – a joke is being had, the artist is at a loss, using humour to push through dark times, devising our way forward. Would these creatures harbour tried and tested solutions from the past millennia? Personally, I'd prefer to collaborate with any insect than AI. Although, maybe the termite mound is in fact actualized ancient AI. Are we in fact the last to the table with future tech?

There is a deeply emotional pilgrimage in the pursuit of home. It represents a place to rest, to seek comfort, an idea we can all understand. It's the practical tenderness of Anderson's art that taps into our basic humanness: these shelters can sleep and care for human life. But it's what we do with that life that counts. What are we if not the complete representation of our whole lives and who are we if not the truest expression of our lived experience, and therefore our art means nothing to no one if it is not an honest reflection of who and what we live by? As artists, we are all well versed in laying our inner thoughts on shiny concrete floors and white walls, but rarely do we speculate how those objects would hold up against a red dirt ridge. I'm moved by Anderson's level of commitment to doing so.

Convertible Dirt is an honest reflection of the artist's personal experience, drawing attention to our broken relationship with the natural world, while speaking to the hypocrisy within the human condition and the absurd ways in which we choose to spend our lives. There's a purist undertone to Anderson's level of authenticity, there's longevity to the performance of his character. Till death do they part.

Jedda Daisy Culley, July 2024

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