

# PAINTING AMONGST OTHER THINGS



Natasha Kidd, *Overfill* (after 84 days), 2015, Canvas on panel, acrylic primer, plastic pipe and fittings, rubber tube, tank, peristaltic pump and emulsion paint, 180 x 300 x 20 cm

## Natasha Kidd - Artist Notes

### Overview:

Situated within an extended language of painting, my work has continually involved the production of painting machines or systems that paint. The early machines were born out of a desire to make visible the process of painting and to place the viewer directly in the 'site' of production. No matter how rigorously designed the systems or machines are they become something that can never be fully anticipated. Provoking a dialogue around stress, pleasure and anxiety as the paint drips, pours or spills out of or into a space – literally filling the site with the sound, smell and substance of paint. What has traditionally been seen as an inert object becomes something fluid – something constantly changing hour by hour.

**Teachers:**

The expertise of others has always been essential to the production of the machines (to the work). These conversations give form to the work and through this process I am constantly learning. Alongside my studio practice I am the course director of the BA Fine Art course at Bath School of Art and Design, teaching keeps me curious and learning with the students is essential. There have been a number of “teachers” that have played a key role in the development of my work, many of them are not teachers at all (my dad who builds the work with me, Tim Davies the Paint Technician at Bath School of Art, Alan Taylor the technical manager at the Slade during my time there, my friend and collaborator, artist Jo Addison). It is critical to acknowledge that a space for dialogue and collaboration is central to all the work. My ideas take form not through a single expertise but through a shared one. Knowledge and conversations are drawn into the production of the machine.... the eventual form of the objects/paintings grows out of a shared knowledge, experimentation, conversations and trials.

Key “teachers” would be Roger Ackling, Tess Jaray and more recently Claire Makhoul Carter (my PhD supervisor). They are important because they cared to rigorously question, they cared to look hard and listen acutely and they all created a valuable space of attention.

**Qualities:**

At the centre of the research is an ambition to unlock the art object from a static encounter with its audience. The machines are provocative and ironic. They allude to mass production but are utterly inefficient. They question authorship. The care and attention of others is essential to them. The machines come out of a dissatisfaction with presenting something fixed in time or static. I am intrigued by the event of the work, the performance, the witnessing ....live. In all the work potential is critical... The view encounters something that is in a constant state of incompleteness. I want to make visible that space of not knowing that is so prevalent in the studio.

**Painting:**

Because they use paint are they paintings? Paint is central to the process because it is a material that is in one state ...liquid but then in another solid. It has the ability to maintain its liquidity in the system but cling to the surface of the objects and dry at the

right rate. The paint is in a transformative state being mechanically controlled. Paint is the perfect material – it captures the moment of its previous liquidity. I seem to be more drawn to performance or instructional practices than painters. The works I make are governed by the rules of painting (even though they are long broken/stretch), maybe it's the "rules" that are important. I enjoy what the history of the discipline of painting provokes. The work has always existed or been framed by or within the language of painting. I often think of the arterial system of pipes like drawing – carefully composed wrapping the space. All of the works extend beyond the conventional picture frame (literally wrapping them selves around corners).

### **The painting as object:**

These works hang on the wall like an image but function like an object protruding into the spectator's visual field. It seems impossible to deny the relationship with the body....The paintings are filled up and emptied out almost simultaneously. The canvases are like bellies; they have become a container or a skin. The canvas or skin needs careful preparation. Through a slow and cautious process of sealing and priming the canvas is treated so that it can contain the paint that will fill its belly.

### **Care**

In *Take Care* by Anthony Huberman, he proposes that "things" don't simply sit still under someone else's terms. Instead he suggests that what makes objects compelling is "what they want and how they behave when they are set loose in the world". The machines I make are filled and set loose in the world - they require *Taking Care of*. Without attention they stop. The attendant is required to notice the painting and overfill it (to send a drip over the front surface) but only when the surface appears dry from the previous action. The material of paint and the act of leaving a residue establishes the logic for the "call" the paintings make. The request is more than simply to maintain or watch over the work, it is a request to keep them alive. In a review of *Painting in Time* at the Tetley for "This is Tomorrow" Mathew Hearn talks about the paintings as a record of their own performance. He says, "As paint dries on the surface of these monochrome paintings the transitional time signature of paint is marked and amplified". What is equally amplified and revealed by each drip as it has dried on the surface of the painting is the attention it has received.

**Details of the work in the show:**

Three 32cm square plywood panels hang on a wall. They hang at an equal distance from each other and at a height of 150cm from the floor to their top edge. Each plywood panel has a double thickness skin of canvas stretched over it. Three of the edges are glued and stapled so that the front surface is flat, leaving one edge open to form a sealed pocket. The stretched canvas has been repeatedly primed to make it watertight. These pockets become paintings when they are filled to their brim with emulsion paint. Using a peristaltic pump and a system of tubing, paint is circulated from a tank through pipes that loop above the paintings and back to the tank. Each painting has its own supply pipe that feeds paint directly into its open top. The paint is fed in by opening a valve in the down pipe to each one. Instructions for the “care” of this work are issued to the attendants at the gallery. These instructions request that at interim moments, the attendants open the valves in the pipe network, discharging small amounts of paint into each pocket, allowing them to overflow. Any residual paint drips into a collection bucket positioned under each painting before the valve is opened. The attendants activate each panel when the surface of the canvas appears dry and when there is no evidence of dripping off the bottom surface. They maintain the work throughout the duration of the exhibition.