

Material Environments: Bad Shit

The Tetley, Leeds, UK, 4th May - 8th July 2018.

Project Outline:

Keith Harrison was 1 of 4 artists invited to develop new evolving works for **Material Environments** curated by Ben Jones. The artists were asked to experiment with ideas of transformation, making visible to the public, as well as inviting their participation in, the usually hidden processes of research and production that define our environment.

Responding to The Tetley's history as a brewery, Harrison developed **Bad Shit** as an open-ended investigation into the transformative potential of the fermentation process. Harrison had first used yeast within a fermenting process in a live work made in response to Victor Grippo's exhibition at the Camden Arts Centre in 2007, also curated by Ben Jones for *Glittering Ground*. The work, *20 Whittington St*, was a living room carpet made of active bread dough and spices fired in situ over a weekend. Using yeast, sugar, and water once more in **Bad Shit** Harrison sought to further experiment with these mutable components and investigate what could be done with the gas they produce? The often volatile experimental fermentation took place within 13 interconnected barrels in 1 'brewing' general office room producing CO₂ gas which inflated a 3.5m red balloon in another room, formal and oak panelled, implying the differing status of its former inhabitants. The unpredictable production of CO₂ inflating and deflating the oversized balloon at will, sought to highlight a reversal of hierarchies, industrial and socio-political. Displayed alongside the fermenting barrels, was a continuous loop of the 80's video game *Asteroids* indicating the circulation, subdivision, collision and diminishing of unstable matter and gas. The uncertain outcomes suggested by the asteroids' trajectory and Harrison's intervention in the fermenting process propose a capacity for material and immaterial transformation.

Central to **Material Environments** was the *Tetley Weekender*, a series of experimental, interactive workshops where the public worked with Harrison to create their own micro **Bad Shit** editions using by-products of the alcohol production, a bottle and a balloon. Many of the bottle experiments and poisonous chemical hazard sticker tape remained to become part of the installation as a reference to the culture around alcohol creating a 'morning after', post event atmosphere during the final weeks of the exhibition, as gas production slowed and the balloons deflated. This live public process of production in the space initiated an unexpected and ongoing dialogue with a new audience about the work and its associations.