



Edwards+Johann, *Concretions: The Act of Coming Together*

Audrey Baldwin

Concretions: A co-mingling and coming together of apparently disparate matter? The hubbub of the opening of Edwards+Johann's exhibition was a great example of this - though in sentiment, as opposed to sediment. Artists, studio-mates, educators and friends, small children and a small dog packed out the gallery.

The work exerted a pull over the crowd, multiple mediums absorbed viewers; paint blooms on photographs, sculptures, assemblages and pinched ceramic objects across a table. Colours enticed the eye - neon orange, fleshy pinks, teal and ochre against slate grays and subdued rocky hues. Deciding what to look at first was a challenge.

The performance by Julia Harvie and Josie Archer was an excellent way of focusing interest. Through their improvisational, yet deftly articulated movements, one could navigate the delightful cacophony of research, experimentation and processes throughout the gallery. The dancer's movements activated the spaces inbetween works; expanding the field beyond the objects to conversations to be had between and around them.

IMAGE LEFT TOP Edwards+Johann, *Concretions: The Act of Coming Together*, installation and performance image, opening night, 7 May at Chambers Gallery **BOTTOM** Edwards+Johann, *Perilous forces*, series 2, 2019, paint on C-type photograph

Barefoot, white clad, masked and powdered: the dancers became unpredictable but benign elements in the exhibition. With bodily throbs, hops and slow-mo lunges to elastic stretches and towering leans and floor writhes, they travelled around the gallery, coming together then quietly ricocheting apart.

Inviting other artists to engage with the work was a generous and trusting decision; but this is something that Edwards+Johann understand the value and potential of. Collaborating for twelve years, they have travelled and shown internationally, producing publications, videos, installations and more. Their most recent residency as the inaugural Volcanic Artists in Residence at Whaakari/White Island was the outcome of this exhibition. White Island is Aotearoa's most active cone volcano - an otherworldly place, ecologically sublime yet surreal. A place of constant flux seems fitting for this duo; with Ina Johann describing danger or risk as essential to growth and change.

The wall-based assemblages - part found volcanic rock and expanding foam - were peopled by lone miniscule figures obliviously documenting their surroundings. Grandiose framed works offered textures of rocks, with skins of paint layered over bold background hues that at first seem unnatural but harked back to tinges of alpine lichen, sulfur lakes and algae blooms. The floor-

based sculptures were like scale model asteroids or heavy souvenirs from the island, the ceramic works urn-like vessels for unknown excretions.

The front gallery space was all action and ooze, the rear gallery ostensibly more like a scientific observatory - photographs laid out in a long line like an array of specimen slides, tiny details added by hand using photographic dyes, watercolour and ink. Sharp lines pinned ambiguous forms into place, encouraging the viewer to process and dissect ideas, to ruminate on the fragility of nature's ecosystems and thus our own.

The exhibition was an impressive example of collaborative exploration. If anything, the artists could have pared back the volume of work with no loss to the quality of the show - as it sits some pieces read like the workings of a complex calculation and there is certainly joy and pleasure to be taken from that. The inclusion of performance is a critical development in a practice that is process-based and conversational. I look forward to seeing what Edwards+Johann do next.

Edwards+Johann
Concretions: The Act of Coming Together
Chambers Gallery
7 - 25 May