

# Derya Akay *with bread,*

31 March - 17 May 2017

"These sites feel anticipatory, or like the calm after the storm [or, the mess after a feast]. They function like an image captured within the relentlessness of time."

- Anne Ellegood, *Vitamin 3-D: New Perspective in Sculpture and Installation*, 2009

As visiting artist (Autumn 2016), Akay conducted practice-based research, supported by Canada Council for the Arts, by constructing a temporary installation to host a community dinner performance. Ingredients were donated by local farmers and artists, all of whom were invited to attend the event. This research allowed Akay to spend time in the region, community, and to actively conduct research for the exhibition *with bread*. The project is aligned with his gardening and cooking-inspired artistic practice as evidenced by projects at Centre A Gallery (Vancouver, BC, 2014) titled "breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper" where the artist transformed the gallery space into a functioning restaurant. A current project involves the artist working with elder immigrant women to share their cooking knowledge through community workshops (Contemporary Art Gallery, Burrard Marina Field House Residency, Vancouver, BC, 2017). The incarnation at Campbell River Art Gallery offered an opportunity for the community to better understand Akay's background, practice and interests during a social gathering exchange where the artist performed the role of forager, cook, and maker.

*with bread*, is a phrase derived from the word company (from Old French *compaignon*, literally 'one who breaks bread with another,' based on Latin *com-* 'together with' + *panis* 'bread.') inferring the "breaking of bread" or the presence of bread as a material and performative component of a social exchange.

*The mosaic is not the floor.*

For the exhibition *with bread*, artist Derya Akay draws from the mosaic style "Unswept Floor" (Herakleitos, 2 BC). Mosaics decorate and protect a floor, transforming the occupied space. A mosaic utilizes broken glass, ceramics, stone, and mortar in order to recreate a seemingly unified image. Such processes demonstrate the desire to recreate the natural world in material.

"In the process of accumulation we are furnished with the means to accept the "theoretical objects" at once unsettling our sense of space with others and reflecting on the duration, the decay of the gathered things we encounter before us."

- Mieke Bal on Hubert Damisch, Lecture at Haus der Kunst, 2015

Mosaics having survived war and decay provide much information about the people and artist's lives of the time period as well as stimulating our imaginations. Gaps in the physical make-up of ancient mosaics require the viewer to bring their own ideas, meanings, histories. The "Unswept Floor" mosaic style depicts the floor of a room covered with the remains of a feast -- bones, fish, leaves, shells, flowers, pits. Realistically rendered in small pieces of glass and stone, pictures of objects strewn across a contained area conjure an idea of the feast; the material remains in conjunction to the invisibly consumed, while also conceptually layering an astute representation of a floor on a floor.

Mosaics display wealth. The labour, artistic technique and time required to create a mosaic serve primarily as decoration. An aggregate of materials becomes an assemblage unified by the viewer. *with bread*, arranges plywood panels throughout the gallery space in a *horizontal fall* (De Quincey, 1821). Object and pigment are arranged as possible interventions to the repeated form. Assemblages in concept, "Unswept Floor" in image, Akay's *with bread*, arrives at a crescendo of co-occurring time, histories, places, process; at its core derived from a dinner party held in the same space last September 3, 2016.

"In burning a corpse we obtain one gram of powder:"

- Kazimir Malevich, "On the Museum", 1919

In preparation for the scheduled installation time, Akay compiles and sends a box of items from his studio. Rejected artworks and sundry objects are transformed as they travel by Greyhound from the mainland to the island with the primary intention to be burned. With instructions from Akay, we document the burning, the fire recorded on a digital device. That night the frogs begin to sing, a rite of spring. An overwhelming excitement pulses through everyone involved. A spell has been cast, the past reduced to ashes with a new purpose, to glaze.

Everything is covered in a residue: the walls in paint, the plywood in plaster, the orchid in beeswax, the fabric in dye, the clay in ash. Each transformed as they are introduced to heat or a rapid mixing fashioned by a drill. Adhesion, stuck in unison. Alchemy, presented as process.

"[...]

But in a whirlwind of sound and fire,  
From her shining head they will flutter  
And fall and before her  
They will die, faintly fragrant still.

And, impelled by faithful longing,  
My obedient gaze will feast upon them  
With a reverent hand,  
Love will gather their rotting remains."

- Anna Akhmatova, *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova*, 1889 - 1966

Common materials such as glass, ceramic, and flowers coalesce and become stuck upon each surface. Each material holds its own historical gravitas, denoting use and aesthetic decoration and in some cases a trompe-l'oeil affect as a 3D printing machine copies the depreciations and markings of an orchid, a human heart into plastic. Presented horizontally, the panels arrange these materials as if balanced momentarily in unison to each other, or, as Akay has noted throughout the process, as though you are at the shore and you bare witness to the wave coming in and then leaving, presenting an array of objects, markings and colours through this ephemeral, repeated gesture.

Plywood panels cover and reveal sections of the gallery floor like preserved relics from another time, place, world. The viewer is invited to move throughout the space, turning their attention to the floor, down. Here, objects, dyes and manipulated materials wash up against the stark plywood panel covered with one coat of white paint. The viewer interacts with the floor works as the materials warp and turn between usefulness and ornamentation.

The artist's serial duplication of plywood panels throughout the space are strategies through which the viewer can read the aesthetically poetic and seemingly organic features. This linear process situates the artist at the centre of the installation, sharing the progressions of material manipulation as the viewer compares each panel to the next, each composition to the next. Decisions made by the artist - a thrown poker chip, hot water poured over plaster and natural dyes, spray paint misted in an upward gesture, a pig's heart cast and recreated in beeswax - are marked upon each surface, multiplying and referencing each other, working in concert throughout Akay's improvised form.

Akay's markings transcribe fleeting conditions in the transformation of materials over time, movement, light, heat, and perspective. The physical positioning of the panels throughout the space are roving, resistant against a vanishing point, consequently remaining parallel. This approach offers the viewer multiple perspectives in which to interact with the space, one that considers the binocular vision and phenomenological experience of the human body.

*with bread*, combines Akay's myriad of skills specific from his personal and familial background while also considering the formal and material imprints of organic decay within the institution.

"That those eat now who never ate before; And those who always ate, now eat the more."

- Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, 1821

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**Derya Akay's solo exhibition *with bread*, is curated by Julia Prudhomme and presented by Campbell River Public Art Gallery from 31 March to 17 May 2017.**

Curator Tours: Saturday April 8 + Saturday May 6, 1:00PM

Closing Reception + Poetry Reading with Jan Zwicky: Wednesday May 17, time TBA

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