



MATERIAL CULTURE IN A MATERIAL WORLD

OUTER
SPACE

Miguel Aquilizan, Jordan Azcune, & Jessica Dorizac
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Material culture is an arbitrary placeholder in the English vocabulary that is created to mean something we all know, feel, and embody on a day to day. We have this impulse to put things we experience into words that become empty, detached. Perhaps, we are asked to do it. A pressure to encompass our intuition through a theory. Especially one that comes from the language of the West – an ongoing history that makes an organised practice of detaching people/objects/things from place and contexts. In that state they are frozen.

Miguel Aquilizan, Jordan Azcune, and Jessica Dorizac invert this way of knowing through 'Material Culture in a Material World' (2023). Where does each object belong? What category can we put them in? A material or medium? There is an inherent placeless-ness that we feel in communing with these works.

Enter the space. The room is loud but also still. Smell the sweetness of the melted bees wax. Put your hand over the pot of liquid hugged by a mass of abandoned/collected chair feet. It's tempting to put your whole hand in, maybe a finger – just the fingernail in case it hurts. Play with it on your skin, peel it off when it dries. There is a tension at the first altar co-created by Aquilizan and Azcune. Dip what is hanging from the tumultuously composed wooden vessel, frozen as what it is, but forever transformed under the setting of wax. By the end of the exhibition period this standing invitation to submerge, cast, hang, and sacrifice something that is near to us, will be adorned with what we offer. Action is recorded by the dots of wax dripped by the impreciseness of human gesture.

A nave is created by 'Fever Dreams' (2023). In our home we call them santo's: religious deities that take form as shapeshifters by Miguel Aquilizan. Decaying, unnatural, but organic. Synthetic organisms. Sit with them, look closer. Artificial life. Cemented growth in pearls and sequins. Voids framed with gold that look into rough gypsum. They stand upon physical evidence of the want to gather. Op shop finds and studio ones. Things we pick up and put power to – the make-up of hybrids on their stage, they are one. It is against our will that we cannot decipher their faces, but it is our intuition to acknowledge their towering presence. We can try to find ourselves in them, but they are made to look over us. They do not belong here. They do not belong to you or me. They threaten yet protect our existence and what we know of the world.

Jessica Dorizac's collected paper works 'Friezes and Studs' (2023) is a wall-bound offering. Should we take the invitation and enter these portals? Like stained glass windows of a church. Clean, cut, calculated, layered forms that are familiar to us but take us nowhere. I remember these shapes from fencing and old houses in the Philippines – the motherland we share. Loud fluro colours binding the centre of each to a rectangular portal. I remember these colours from the Nauvoo riche "birthday cake" houses and tombstones. The cheapest colours you can get from the hardware store back home. Column-held double layers overly decorated with cream trimming. I often think that these structures oppose the quietly embellished awnings of the humble Queenslander. Dorizac finds a way to make hybrid of these two. But we only catch these on a brief moment. The rhythm of witnessing from a car window. A tension in the inability to fully observe, to fully understand. Walk while you look at the work.

There is a place that we are led to. A liminal one. An in-between space. We are asked to venerate it. Warm to it. Familiarise with it, but never understand. It is a tight knot that we tread throughout our movement of the gallery floor. We can enter through Azcune's 'Coming in the Clouds (purple rain)' (2023), petal-shaped tear-drop portals found on the opposite wall. They are alien. Iridescent, made from overflow wax in the studio. A chimera of sorts. An experimentation with incompatible materials – water/fire/wax/drying/setting/wetness. I am a child seeing pools that resist gravity and logic. Returning to the innocent rituals of cleansing and renewing what governs my way of thinking. I want to honour it from a distance, fighting the urge to touch the perfectly blemished surface. Fight the urge to dig a nail into it. The studio floor becomes our altar in 'Understand' (2023). Accidental drops set over five years colour the canvas. Wax-less passages that track his pacing, from liquid to casting, and moments of stasis.

Wisdom solidified. Follow the cycles and repetitions of this act on the protective cover of something so insignificant. Again, look at it from a distance. Fight the urge to pick at it; to peel something off its new conditions.

I received an email from one of the artists at 9:54am on the eve of my birthday. Opening it I find the commotion, the organised chaos – that is the collaborative process of creation for the reunited artists. I am met with this settlement of words haphazardly put together, un-named, but in precise summation of the three Meanjin-based artists' works at Outer Space:

Carve	Heat	Cut	Melt	Scar	.....
Dress	Divide	Pour	.....	Mold	Paste
Drink	Glue	Engulf	.....	Toss	Paste
Blend	.....	Cement	Knead	Drain	
	Clad	Etch	Brush	Plaster	Hack
Calcify	.....	Robe	.....	Brace	Fill
	Tip	Chip	Wound	Magnify	Dissect
	Raise	.....	.....	Choke	Release
.....	Chop	Erect	Flood	Grind	Erode
		Enhance	Emboss	Exhaust	

On an infinite scroll, the works' birth, metamorphosis, and its fruition, thoughts, conversations, and social movements were handed to me virtually. They mention like an "abstract print poetry," followed with a "lol." Is this today's (im)material culture? The documented back-and-forth holds these artists' way of birthing something new and finding place. Evolution after failure to articulate; to destroy.

– Aniway Aquilizan, 2023

Aniway Aquilizan is a Meanjin-based artworker, writer, community facilitator and artist. Their research is focused on shared cultural practices of dissent, diasporic identities and memories, defiant temporalities, and re-imagining colonial and imperial exchanges. Migrating from the Philippines with their family in 2006 serves as foundation in finding alternative systems of storytelling and connection through collaborative artmaking. They have worked on many collaborative projects with Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan and their four siblings through their artist collective – Fruitjuice Factory Studio since 2016.

Miguel Aquilizan (b. 1986, Philippines) is a trained sculptor (University of the Philippines Diliman. Fine Arts (Sculpture) and jeweller (Griffith University, Queensland College of Art. Certificate of Fine Arts (Jewellery)). He is also a member of the family collective Fruit Juice Factori, whose practice is deeply rooted in collaboration and play. In his personal practice, M Aquilizan explores aspects of society and history, specifically spirituality, the occult and nature, through poetic narratives that are assembled, scavenged or found. Challenging cultural memory and interrogating notions of cultural displacement and ambiguity due to globalisation, migration and colonialism. He currently lives and works in between Brisbane, Australia and Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines at the Fruit Juice Factory.

Jordan Azcune is an artist and maker based in Meanjin/Brisbane who is driven by materials and their processes. Fascinated with colour, optics, and spiritual connection, his artwork relates to the natural world, the body, and architecture. He is captivated by natural bee's wax and its connection to heat, its elemental state of being both liquid, and solid. Azcune mines wax to find the limits of its potential, expanding its possibilities through colour, treatment, and processes. The outcomes of these experiments navigate the fields of mathematics, fantasy, and chance, and are paired with metals to present camp offerings that captivate and intrigue.

Jessica Dorizac is an artist and designer whose work is currently informed by play and the language of ornament and design. She attempts to navigate the multiplicities of place, identity and history, rooted in decoration and ornament, through materials and processes of handicrafts and trades. Dorizac is a member of the Queensland Bookbinders Guild and is currently living and working in between Queensland, Australia and Laguna, Philippines.