

Ordinary Usage

014/001-017

Start: 014/018

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No nSense: An antidote to individualism

In February 1908, on the West Coast of the South Island in Aotearoa New Zealand, Blackball miners went on strike for a thirty-minute lunch break rather than the fifteen minutes allowed under their award. A union leader, Pat Hickey, had refused to stop eating his pie when the manager told him his fifteen-minute lunch break was up. Workers were fired, leading to the strike, which caught the public imagination when the presiding judge took a ninety-minute lunch adjournment before fining the miners.

Over one hundred years later, the Public Share collective brings focus to the ten-minute tea break—a hard-won right, secured through organised labour. In 2015, the automatic entitlement to two ten-minute breaks during the working day was temporarily lost to workers during the last National Government. It was reinstated by the current Labour-led government via amendments to the Employment Relations Act in 2019. The collective invites exchange within the setting of this institution—the break—symbolic of the notion of workers rights.



- Artists
- Mediator
- Technician
- Café manager
- Web designer
- Landscape designer
- Lawyer
- Lecturer

- Six makers
- Art collective
- Collaborators
- Critical friends
- Support crew
- Co-producers
- Co-creators
- Co-operation
- Joint skill sets
- Shared authorship
- Side-by-side
- Friendship

Shared artist identity

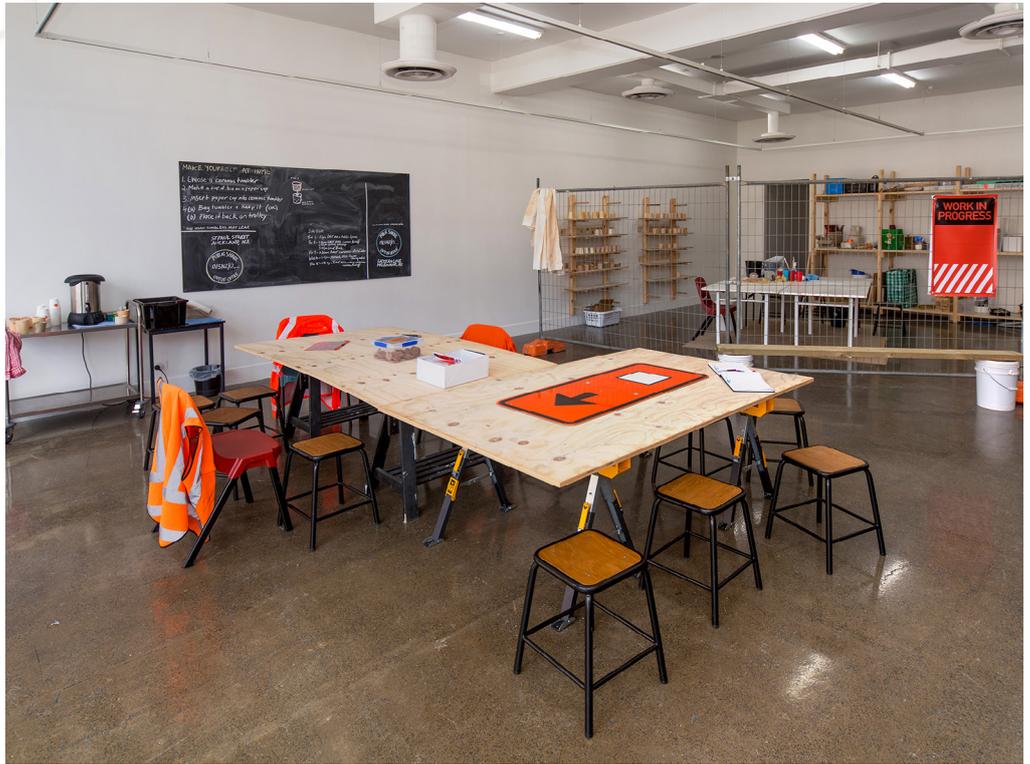
Nominating the pronoun *it* over the plural *they*, Public Share asserts a singular multiple. Six members, sharing an artist identity. Public Share operates as a locus, hub and an ethical perimeter for collective production as we turn outward as one entity and inward to our multiple selves. We shift away from personal authorship as our skills and labour are gifted into the care and concern of the group. Deliberately choosing not to be concealed within the collective through anonymity, we claim responsibility for the politics and ethics of our methods. Whilst we are named, individual contributions are not credited, for our labour belongs to us all. Our collective approach contrasts with production methods standing behind the individual “creative genius.” This notion quickly turns to myth when, on examination, contemporary practices often involve many uncredited makers. Our horizontal means of production is an assertion of our combined values. It’s also a framework of care in which we are collectively buoyed, and risks are shared.

Things we do

- Making
- Thinking
- Site exploration
- Site research
- Testing
- Collecting
- Talking
- Share meals
- Negotiation
- Consultation
- Discussion
- Facilitation
- Organising
- Writing
- Publication
- Social media
- Documentation
- Support

Concepts that drive us

- Sharing
- Making
- Exchange
- Social
- Site
- Materiality
- Production
- Workers rights
- Conviviality
- Cooperation
- Connectivity
- Sociality
- Labour
- Dispersal
- Distribution
- Reciprocity
- Generosity
- Care
- Pause



Out of Office tearoom installation, 2016, Project Space/Spare Room, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. Image courtesy of Public Share.

The idea of

- Sharing
- Hosting
- Honouring
- Pause
- Labour
- Rhythms
- Actions
- Acknowledging
- Materiality
- Temporality
- Duration
- Temporary communities
- Sociality
- Enjoyment
- Engaging publics
- Public engagement
- Conversation
- Relations
- Generosity
- Social gesture

Sites

- Morning teas
- Conferences
- Symposia
- Festivals
- Celebrations
- Exhibitions
- Foyer spaces
- Spaces between buildings
- Meet-and-greet areas
- Refreshment areas
- Worksite lunchrooms
- Temporary tearooms
- Portacoms
- Containers
- Tea stations

Notion of reward

Eschewing a neoliberal logic of production, personal recognition and financial reward, our projects assemble and disperse into and outward from a host site and community. Through the everyday ritual of the tea break, we form a temporary community of exchange. We choose, they choose. Every/anyone is free to elect or decline participation. Our practice recognises interdependency and would falter without the consent and enthusiasm of each project host. There is a conscious modesty to our rationale: from creation to engagement and distribution, Public Share is counterpoised against a capitalist productivist framework. The ceramic objects we make disperse with the participants; there is no monetary exchange, the "where to" and "what next" are seldom known.

The politics of pause

Contexts

Social art practice
Event-based installation
Participation
Tea break legislation
Workers rights
Workplace environs
Working day
Organised labour
Social structures
Infrastructure sites
Ceramic histories
Material practices
Storytelling
Public

Conventions

Ceramic
Object making
Sculpture
Manners
Provisional
Improvisational structures
Installation
Spatial arrangements
Social communication
Protocols
Permissions
Workplace rituals
Social events
Collective process
Collaboration

We simply ask that you “take 10.” Minutes. A break, a pause, an emphasis. Inside something very small, there is potential. Ours is a dialogical practice, for whilst we produce the objects, the exchange creates the artwork with as many understandings of what took place as there are participants. The work is both temporal and durational. Our events act as small interruptions in the notion of things continuing as they are, with the ritual of the tea break joining us together as a community of the moment. As the clay objects—which honour site, history and labour—disperse during and after the event, we hold no record of where they go and seek not the story of their future. Documentation takes the form of a snapshot in which we take care not to fetishise the objects or objectify the participants. Our projects are enacted together with our hosts as neither they nor others form an audience. The very ordinariness and sociality of a tea break uphold the value of democratic production—the everyday nature of the exchange inoculating our projects from the notion of passivity or receiver status of the participants. The artwork is in the exchange, with the ceramics we produce carrying forward the possibility of other moments of use and conversation.



Irregular allotments, 2014, Fulton Hogan worksite tearoom, Te Atatu Peninsula, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Image courtesy of Public Share.



SMOKO, 2016, Well-Connected Alliance worksite tearoom, Wiri, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Image courtesy of Public Share.

Objects

Hand-built
Material conduit
Social conduit
Tumblers
Tea cups
Tea tumblers
Mugs
Plates
Stirrers
Coasters
Sugar bowl
Teaspoon holder
Takeaway flyers
Posters
Banner
Signs
Tablecloth
Digital image/screen

Conviviality and the collective

Together we are emboldened, and thresholds are reduced. Risk is minimised, while responsibility is amplified. An artist's life can be solitary, and as individuals making art, we might experience loneliness. Public Share is not lonely—we privilege conversation, sharing and support, which spills out to embrace our individual practices. Artists often roll through fertile and fallow periods, through the vagaries of the gallery, the precariousness of funding and the heavy load of production deadlines. By each contributing a small weekly sum to our collective funds, we actively build a solid foundation of financial independence, which provides a certain liberty from reliance on funding streams. Our orientation to the workplace as "exhibition" site steps aside from the domination and conditions of the gallery. The collective structure of Public Share enables a scale of production, representing considerable heft and graft not conceivable as individual artists.

Across time, one of our different voices might rise to the surface and lead a production strategy. Counterpoised against an expression of conflict, we provide breathing space for the urgencies of each member—mulling, stirring, testing. Our ethics remain in concord while our differences are expressed. Time is not linear in this matrix; we seek not to progress to “greater” things.

Decisions

Objects
Prototypes
Clay
Shape/form
Surface/glaze
Handwriting
Instructions
Tape type/colour
Publication
Ephemera

Elements

Ceramic objects
Baking
Tea trolley
Trestles
Banners
Posters
Cup racks
Outdoor picnic tables
Plastic chairs
Office chairs
Tarps

Installation materials

Brown paper
Sharpies
Tea towels
Plastic containers
Serviettes
Baking
Tea/sugar/milk



Conditions Subsequent, 2016, Fletcher Construction worksite tearoom, The Arts Centre, Ōtautahi Christchurch. Image courtesy of Public Share.

Instead, we are circular and starburst, operating like a form of relay: one to the other, the other to one. Our practice upholds values of belonging and connection within the collective, the workplace and an expanded social field. We are not nostalgic for the tea break. Rather, we assert its currency and value today. The structuring sensibility of contractual relations is called into question through this social interruption, a break in the day, which traces to a history of workers asserting their basic dignity and everyday rights. Oblique and engaging, Public Share projects challenge the insecurities of labour and the dehumanising effect of extracting more whilst returning less, which is the nonsense of late capitalism.



Lots

Actions

001/ 26 plates - pinched	To dry
002/ 16 plates - indented	To blend
003/ 10 plates - folded	To pour
004/ 32 plates - thrown	To knead
005/ 10 plates - rolled	To roll
006/ 84 mugs - flat handle	To cut
007/ 13 mugs - round handle	To throw
008/ 3 mugs - no handle	To cast
009/ 2 platters	To pat
010/ 168 tumblers ¹	To turn
011/ 106 teacups ² - red line	To wipe
Stirrers ³ / 400 gold PS decal - not numbered	To fettle
012.1/ 71 tea tumblers ⁴	To stack/load
012.2/ 73 tea tumblers ⁵	To fire
012.3/ 114 tea tumblers ⁶	To mix
012.4/ 53 tea tumblers ⁷	To dip
013/ 44 teacups ⁸ - no line	To scribe/mark/sign
014/ 2016, 17 tumblers ⁹	To sand
014/ 2017, 52 tumblers	To test
014/ 2018, 13 tumblers	To wrap
014/ 2019, 11 tumblers	To pack
015PS/ 22 tea tumblers ¹⁰	To transport
015NZ/ 123 tumblers ¹¹	To travel
015AU/ 181 tumblers ¹²	To unpack
015ANZ/ 109 tumblers ¹³	To assemble
016/ 47 tumblers ¹⁴	To arrange
017/ 60 tumblers ¹⁵	To publish
018/ 80 tumblers ¹⁶	To invite
019/ 200 coasters ¹⁷	To greet
020/ 209 tumblers - 190 countries ¹⁸	To inform
021/ 500 stirrers ¹⁹ , MTTM	To explain
022/ 500 stirrers ²⁰ , KS	To make coffee
023/ 80 slip-cast cups ²¹ /4 types, workplace mugs	To offer food
	To clean up
	To disassemble

1 Public Share Te Atatu motorway clay and commercial clay
2 Alice tunnel clay, Waterview clay/spoils mixed with commercial slip
3 New seam Te Atatu motorway clay and commercial clay
4 Former nugget polish factory clay, 580 Ferry Road, Ferrymead and commercial clay
5 Former Paintbrush Factory clay, 10/14 Ferry Road, Ferrymead and commercial clay
6 The Arts Centre clay, Fletcher Construction site, Cnr Rolleston and Hereford and commercial clay
7 Pegasus Town clay, Te Kohanga Drive and commercial clay
8 Alice tunnel clay, Waterview clay/spoils mixed with commercial slip
9 Public Share Te Atatu motorway clay and commercial clay
10 ST PAUL St clay and commercial clay
11 ST PAUL St and Public Share Te Atatu motorway clay and commercial clay
12 Ormond, Eastern Line level crossing removals clay, Melbourne and commercial clay
13 Public Share Te Atatu motorway clay and commercial clay with grog from Lot 015AU
14 Public Share Te Atatu motorway clay and commercial clay
15 Raku-fired commercial clay mixed with grog made from Crown Lynn fragments
16 Electric kiln-fired commercial clay mixed with grog made from Crown Lynn fragments
17 GLOVEBOX Gallery on Samoa House Lane (beside RM Gallery), Auckland CBD and commercial clay
18 Clay collected from sixteen current and former female MPs
19 Clay collected from the key suffragist Meri Te Tai Mangakāhia's home, Whangapoua
20 Clay collected from the key suffragist Kate Sheppard's home, Christchurch
21 3D printed moulds, slip-cast with Public Share Te Atatu motorway clay and commercial slip

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About Public Share

Public Share (Deborah Rundle, Harriet Stockman, Joe Prisk, Kelsey Stankovich, Mark Schroder, Monique Redmond) is an artist collective that has been working together since August 2014.

Based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, the collective works collaboratively to produce cups, mugs, tumblers and stirrers for use at tea break events hosted at construction sites, conferences, exhibitions and festivals across Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia.

Public Share's activities are situated within the parameters of temporary public event-based installation, participatory and socially engaged art.