

A SERIES OF WORKPLACE MANIFESTOS

GLASGOW MUSEUMS RESOURCE CENTRE

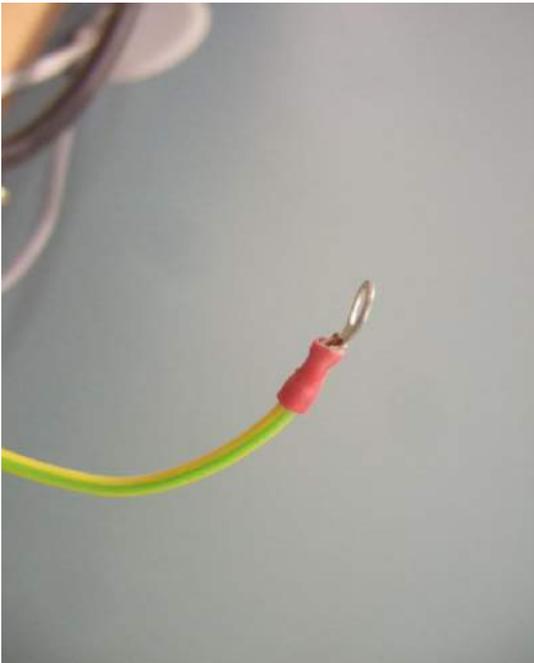
EMMA DRYE

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

2013 - 2014



The Morpho Manifesto



Morpho Negotiated Statement

Staff member B became a museum attendant after a career in the army in which he saw active service. He moved into community learning and access and now works hard to engage people from the local community to engage with the museum collection. Part of his work involves encouraging soldiers or ex soldiers diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder to visit and make connections with the objects in the collection. His manifesto for access and participation is built around the idea that engaging with the collection can be restorative and he describes as “providing a stable platform for both men and women to emotionally expand by exploring the range of human emotions that are encapsulated within our objects.” The museum supports and can give ‘peace’ of mind relative to past experiences. Making connections in the safety of the collection can inspire a reconnection with life.

Staff member B took me on one of his tours of the storage pods and pointed out what he described as one of his favourite objects in the collection – a tray of dead Morpho butterflies. The butterflies were collected by Soldier A and in passing he mentioned that there had been efforts made more recently to stop the practice of shredding the wings of these butterflies and others to make decorative art for the tourist industry in the area.

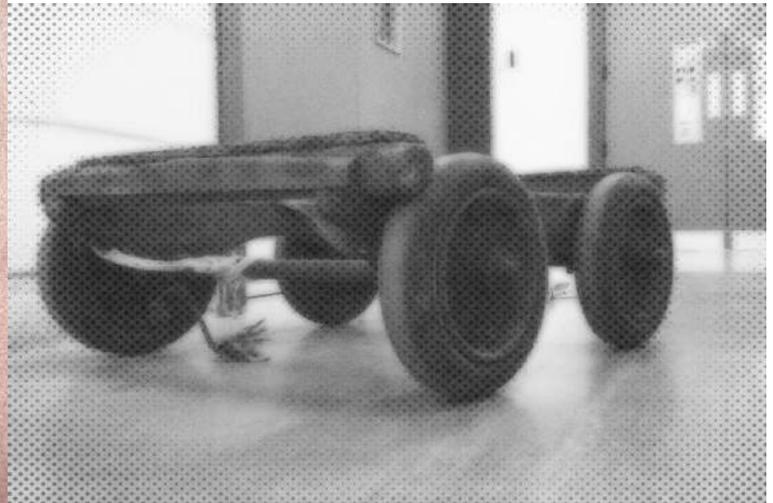
This presented a rich seam of interwoven imagery. Wingless butterflies and traumatised soldiers. War, fragility, physical mutilation, sadness, loss.

Staff member B suggested to me that by making a connection with one object, a visitor, an ex serviceman diagnosed with PTSD for example, who is experiencing difficulties or feels socially isolated, might find a way to engage with life more widely. In this way visiting the collection and viewing the objects becomes a potentially restorative act.

Emma Drye, 2014

I
walk
alongside
the objects

The Thermodynamic Manifesto







Thermodynamic Manifesto negotiated statement

Staff member E shared with me her philosophy that conservation is not a static function, but a dynamic one. The laws of thermodynamics which state that energy is not lost, only redistributed, provide a metaphor for this more energetic, fluid and relational process.

Staff member E described her role as akin to walking alongside the object, joining it for a part of its journey. She described hearing the 'voices' of all the people who have ever been involved with the object and all the people who will be involved now and in the future which engenders a certain sense of responsibility and conscientiousness. Despite this, the workshop is a quiet space and the voices in a sense are audible only within that meditative space.

Emma Drye, 2014



The Fork Manifesto

The Cat



Fork Manifesto - Negotiated statement

Everybody at GMRC is involved in navigating systems in order to reach their goals, and I strongly suspect everyone has had moments of systemic surreality and had a 'if you didn't laugh you'd cry' moment.

As Centre Manager, Staff member A traverses the bridge between the staff of the centre and the seemingly remote corporate and estates staff whose ways often appear, from the perspective of the spot in the labyrinth that an individual might find themselves in, to put form before function. Apparently quite innocuous tasks can take on surprisingly extenuated form. It takes a certain grace, patience and possibly gallows humour at times to come out of these experiences unscathed.

In conversation with Staff member A I was struck by his sense of humour and his ability to keep such things in proportion, or to bring them back down to size with humanity.

Emma Drye, 2014



The Fogg Manifesto



The Fogg Manifesto – Negotiated statement

This manifesto sprang from conversations with Staff member C about our youth and our professional development. We are both Fine Art trained which made for an interesting dynamic, and it was interesting to discuss the different routes we took from that point.

One of the things that has struck me about staff at GMRC, and struck me from my very first trip round as a candidate, is the vocational aspect to the work done here by many people. For myself, Artist is more than a job. It is something that people are drawn to do and something which gives one a strong sense of professional and maybe even personal identity. The same seems to be true for many of the roles carried out at GMRC.

I wondered how far staff here have a core of confidence and sense of their professional selves which might even run separate to the organisation, many of you will be affiliated for example to professional bodies and it might be that those bodies represent an ideal which is very important to you. I wondered if maybe this idea, thinking of myself, might even be independent of time passing.

I played with the idea of an ideal self as pictured when you are in your early twenties with life before you. For many people here careers have been built from those early days and I feel as if I can see a strength which enables people to be flexible enough to work within an organisation which comes from that internal sense of professional identity which is born of vocation. It is certainly something which sustains me to deal with the vagaries of being a self employed artist – a kind of secret core of strength born of belief in what I am doing.

We discussed the importance of layers in both our practices, and their symbolism with regard to ageing and life history. The importance of what lies beneath can be overlooked but may in fact be precious and vital.

Whatever the relationship our past may have to our present, I decided after conversations with Staff member C, to make a work which had a secret inside it and which required both our professional practices to conceal and reveal. This painting, which is made from a portrait of Staff member C in her twenties, has a secret painting underneath it, which Staff member C has accessed using x ray technology. That painting is for her eyes only.

Emma Drye, 2014



The Gift Manifesto

The Gift Manifesto – negotiated statement

This manifesto has come about through reflections on a conversation had with Staff member D.

Staff member D seems to me to be a very intelligent and widely knowledgeable person, managing an enormous museum which has a very complex set of needs. She sits in an office atop the Burrell and there is something of the Jean Luc Picard or Captain Kirk about her as she steers that enormous brutalist edifice into its turbulent near future of capital building and rehanging.

Our conversations were wide ranging and very interesting but towards the end Staff member D mentioned that she enjoyed choosing thoughtful and suitable gifts for people and it was a sort of specialty of hers.

This captured my imagination as the notion of the gift is so vital in art including in my own practice.

Giving can be reciprocal, communal or sacrificial – but the giving of gifts operates in an economy separate from the market economy. It is not necessarily transactional in nature – we don't always give in order to get back directly.

As well as the tangible job description stuff that staff comply with in a transactional model, everyone here is also contributing another layer as a gift – to each other and to the organisation. That gift cannot be bought and sold, but it can easily be overlooked or underestimated.

“ Works of art exist simultaneously in two “economies”, a market economy and a gift economy. Only one of these is essential, however: a work of art can survive without the market, but where there is no gift there is no art”

Lewis Hyde

Emma Drye 2014



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Collection.

Photograph of Sharman Lawrence as a cat by Enzo Di Cosmo.