

## PERSONAL BOW

Kate Owens, Dicksmith Gallery, September 2009

‘By now he has taught us the value of immediacy, the beauty of chance meetings and partings, the integrity of the unstressed sign.’<sup>1</sup>

“It’s personal’ I said.

Sophie looked at me. ‘It’s such a strange word *personal*. I’ve often wondered exactly what’s *impersonal*.”<sup>2</sup>

A Bow.

The bending of the body into a ninety degree posture — neck and head extending forwards, feet firmly planted on the ground. From straight up the body pivots from the waist folding over like the pages of a book. Muscle memory, a mark of respect, a submission... A knot with two loops and two ends. Within the form is the anticipation of something to come, an event, a special occasion? There is a tension, a pull, a force field, an inevitable action.

*Personal Bow* is a series of events, marks or actions, which have been performed and articulated by Owens through a process of discovery and revelation. I am refraining from describing the works in the exhibition as finished as they feel more like the leftovers from an on going process.

A flaneur of the material world Owens is sharply attuned to our shared environment and its subtle changes in colour, light, texture and form. Once discovered or remembered her project is to, somehow and within her own means, find the potential in the chance moment, capture the essence of the thing and somehow reclaim it through whatever means possible, however fragile or transient they may be.

What she presents are traces, basic marks from an event or happening; something which has occurred in real time. Once complete these personal performances find permanence in the gallery but still present complex questions about their finished status. They are dependant on their environment; affected by the light and the marks of others and some will only go on to exist in memory or documentation. In this sense Owens completes a circle, what was once her encounter with her everyday becomes our encounter with her art.

Like an amateur scientist or investigator Owens is intrigued by what things can do and how they work. She likes to take things back to their elemental state so once broken into their constitute parts she can re-learn what they do and then go onto re-inscribe them with new meaning.

Her personal motto is to forget what we think we know or assume we know about the things that surround us. And that everything is possible after failure...

—ANNE-MARIE WATSON

Exhibitions Organiser, Camden Arts Centre

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1 MARCIA B. SEIGEL talking of Merce Cunningham in *Ballet & Modern Dance*, 1979, pp 44.

2 SIRI HUSTVEDT, *The Sorrows of an American*, 2008, pp 269.