

AN INTERVIEW WITH KENNY PITTOCK

By Anna Leonedas



Kenny Pittock in his studio

Kenny Pittock took a photo of his local petrol station every day in 2011. It saw him prioritise his art over his life for an entire year, turning the seemingly simple exercise into a stressful burden. *Petrol station every day of 2011* is one of the works in MUMA's current exhibition, *Art as a Verb*. Kenny discusses his inclusion in the show, his practice and how making art has become a compulsion.



Petrol station every day of 2011 (detail)

AL: Would you do a piece like *Petrol station every day of 2011* again?

KP: I still don't know how I feel about this piece, it's sort of dealing with that balance of whether you are willing to prioritise art over life, and I guess that's what *Art as Verb* is about too. I don't know if I'd do it again, maybe in a different context. Once I have an idea I think, '*oh, I guess I have to do it*', and I create these guidelines that I can't bend. It's just funny because you make these decisions that make your life really difficult, and you think to yourself, '*why would you do that?!*' But then on the other hand, if I didn't do works like this then I wouldn't be in shows like this.

AL: How would you describe your practice to someone who hasn't seen your work, and why do you make art like this?

KP: If someone asks me what kind of art I make I usually just say '*the best kind*'. After that I say '*I don't know, it's hard to explain... If you're interested then hopefully you can just come see it sometime.*' But I guess maybe my art isn't really that hard to explain at all. I just draw, sculpt, paint, take photos, make videos, write stuff etc., sometimes I do these things in the studio and sometimes I do them while interacting with the public. All I'm really doing is just responding to what's directly around me. In that way, my work is mainly about contemporary Australian culture and iconography, people and identity, and maybe looking for where the lines blur between the public and the personal. I think if the work is fun, people will be more receptive to what I want to say. Often my work can be sentimental and melodramatic because I'm a loser. Also I try for the work to be accessible, positive and honest... whatever that means.



Train drawing (2012)

AL: You document a lot of your work on your [blog](#) where you often write about small events that inspire art pieces. From a single event, you tell a fantastic story and come up with a final artwork as a whole documented process that has involved your readers and followers. Do you have a direction in mind when starting projects, or do you follow where these events and posts take you?

KP: I don't really look for ideas, they just kind of happen to me. I guess also a big part of what I do is I make sculptures of contemporary things, usually out of kiln-fired clay. I make them in a life-size scale so I can take them into a real-world context. Often the documentation of doing that becomes as much the work as the work itself. Sometimes I try to work with what might be considered a global issue and sometimes it's something very small. The process is always a bit different as I try not to repeat myself too much. I try not to repeat myself too much. I try not to repeat myself too much...



Chips, sauce, Esky, jam donut, football, and thongs (2014)

AL: Given much of your art is based on and bleeds into your everyday life, do you ever switch off?

KP: If I go too long without making art then I get frustrated and uncomfortable, even more frustrated and uncomfortable than usual, but I do try to switch off. I think for my mental health I need to. I'm not very good at that though, which is why my mental health is so lousy. It's hard, but now more than ever I'm working on getting better with my priorities because I think if you want to live a long, happy life then taking time out with friends and family probably needs to be more important than anything else. Also I think it's important to try and just be a human being sometimes, especially if you want to make art that's about being a human, because if you spend all your time making art you can just get a bit too disconnected.

AL: As part of *Art as a Verb*, you were invited to read manifestos that have inspired your artistic practice. What have you read that has influenced your practice or really resonated with you?

KP: I don't know how I feel about manifestos. I prefer reading autobiographies. Autobiographies aren't labelled as manifestos, but people reflecting on their decisions and how they dealt with things can get pretty close to being a manifesto. I think that's more influential than a group of people saying '*this is what's right and this is how things should be done*'. Mainly the people who inspire me are just good storytellers, whether it be musicians or filmmakers or painters.

AL: What do you believe your role as an artist is?

KP: I'd like my roll to be multigrain with sesame seeds on top and vegemite and cheese on the inside. I might even microwave it for twenty-five seconds to warm the bread and melt

the cheese. Ha, yeah ok, sorry. There are two reasons why I rolled out that joke, the first is because I'm hungry and the second is because I was trying to cover the fact that I don't have a good answer to this question. I think maybe my role as an artist is to just try and be engaged with people and things. I guess maybe if I articulate something then it's possible it might be helpful for someone who feels a similar way, or maybe it could make someone think differently in a positive way. Sometimes I just feel like a jester, and that's fine too. I don't know what my role is, I just try my hardest, and Mum says that's all anyone can ask of me.

See Kenny's thoughts on his inclusion in Art as Verb [here](#).