

In terms of living  
As a body  
To relate or be isolated from  
Things we can't relate to

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The sound in  
the form  
of a word

'...It is as if the organic and the inorganic have re-found a possibility for intimate partnering. In this partnering, things reveal their subjectivity, while humans reveal their thingness, to the point where it becomes hard to say who moves whom, who choreographs whom, and who is choreographed by whom.'  
(A Lepecki)

The day before I was introduced to Arini Kai Cullen Byng's (AKCB) new work, I read an article on learning from the Slant Step: 'an object that modestly requests a more effortful type of reading than what we normally engage in', a thing which existed for half a century without apparent knowledge of its designed use despite its utilitarian and worn material composition.<sup>1</sup>

This thing - as with the kit of things AKCB presents here - bypasses immediate identification and invites some other remedy for participating in the world with radical openness.<sup>2</sup>

### In terms of living

Here, there's a slow read that negates presumptions. The slant step is performed again with stand-ins (Ange, Jess, Otto, Simon, Georgia), though this round we know each other. Materials find themselves as mediators of relationships and objects as models of potential engagement in a slippery social context: things as bodies, bodies as thoughts, thought as things. Each of these within 'The sound in the form of a word' prompts us to relate without assumption, to find an opportunity of empathy and otherness, a solidarity beyond what we know as this.<sup>3</sup>

### As a body



L: Original slant step, an ambiguous object purchased second hand in 1965 in California by artist William Wiley and gifted to his then-graduate student Bruce Nauman. R: Bruce Nauman, Mold for a Modernized Slant Step, 1966. A reenactment of the slant step in hand formed in plaster.

There exists a tendency or desire to relate that is met with an asserted other with a different agenda. I anthropomorphise it while simultaneously and irrespectively it exerts itself on me. We move together, tuned or indifferent to one another. The site between us (bodies and things) may offer an ambivalence which enables a release from hierarchy.<sup>4</sup>

### To relate or be isolated

'The sound in the form of a word' is the pre-emptive title of AKCB's new work, finding its language in the learnings of meditation practice.<sup>5</sup> This education is like any, experienced with interrupted circulations and a haltering awkwardness in its iterative enquiry. The mantra here is found in the ambivalence between known words and preconditioned forms.



Still from 'The sound in the form of a word'. Arini Kai Cullen Byng, 2017.

### From things we can't relate to

Photography settles in again, her native indexical practice expanded here as a reassuring device for the sculptures and performers. Neither moving image, stills or object provide a script. Instead their force splits the reenactments into versions of our actions across multiple live events. Three versions are already proliferating across CCTV, stories, documentation shots. The repeated image is part of this mantra, eroding into its own medium the further it spreads.

In this moment, the photography is performing more than we did. Arini's arbitrary instructions: *Move to the left or the right. One or two or none of you could walk off the frame. Lift it, or look at it. Consider lifting it.*

These things afford us parametrics as we move through rooms by touch. Surfaces become prompts that bind ourselves to our perceived experience. What is the agency of these things—if there were a handle, would it wish to be held? Things are AKCB's navigational currency, bartered out of ownership into an image, and disseminated again. We're mouthing those words.

We can speak about specific objects but this is about the liquidity between precarious states, shifting relations and reassurances. This was a means of relating: an emotional vocabulary that was built through mediating objects, bodies of thought — transitioning. We're looking to know each other more, sensitive to prompts in each others' soundless bodies.

These things make a place and we have been groomed to be anchored by this set. Here however, the mediation we enact affords us a more sensitive kind of encounter, further released from presumption and definition. Ontologies collapse in this dance to an array of open relations between us. The mantra is endless, this is a slow read.

(GCBH)

*The sound in the form of a word*

Digital video

13:23 minutes looped

Arini Kai Cullen Byng

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<sup>1</sup> Reading Things by Gordon Hall, 2016

<sup>2</sup> Remedial art practice

<sup>3</sup> About releasing relations, posthumanism

<sup>4</sup> Is this another OOO show?

<sup>5</sup> The Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique is a simple, natural, effortless process practiced 15-20 minutes twice daily while sitting comfortably. Also big in California.