

Out of Interest (Dan Moynihan's Suspension of Disbelief)

By Simon Zoric

"What is the nature of the search? you ask. The search is what anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life. To become aware of the search is to be onto something. Not to be onto something is to be in despair."

— Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer*

Dan's show was delayed once (covid), delayed again (gallery construction) then delayed a third time (gallery moving to another floor). In that time, almost two year's worth of delays, the idea for the exhibition morphed from one thing to another until Dan came up with the high concept of a group show by a solo artist. So it's like a group show, but all the work is made by Dan. I know group shows usually have an underlying theme that pins all the work together, but in this instance I take it to mean that it is an exhibition of disparate works that aren't necessarily connected in a way that you might expect from a solo exhibition. It is as if Dan is giving himself his own survey show. We are presented with works familiar from Dan's oeuvre: new versions of works we've seen before, bits of old works repurposed into new works, and new never seen before works.

Dan has an acute interest in cinema. He often makes objects that are a response from seeing something in a movie that has caught his eye, something specific. It's not something that I might pay attention to, it could be some kind of booth (personalised spaces where labour takes place is a recurring motif) or a line someone says. Sometimes the reference might be obvious to the viewer, but often it's not. I think the way Dan looks at cinema has affected the way he looks at the world because he also makes things from real life that I suspect stir a similar kind of feeling in him. These objects might look like something inspired from a movie, but they are not. I don't think it matters that much to Dan where it comes from, or that it's necessary for you to get the reference. I just think he is trying to communicate the feeling he gets from these objects through making the work.

I am not sure what motivates Dan's preoccupation with movies. In Walker Percy's debut novel *The Moviegoer* (1961) the narrator Binx Bollings feels more connected to and affected by the things he sees in the films he watches than the things that actually happen to him in his real life. Warhol, in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* says: "People sometimes say that the way things happen in movies is unreal, but actually it's the way things happen in life that's unreal. The movies make emotions look so strong and real, whereas when things really do happen to you, it's like watching television – you don't feel anything".

One 'real' thing we do see in the show is an old photo of Dan from his Maritime Union card. In it we see a young, almost unrecognisable pre-art world Dan, staring out in to a room of art works he could never have imagined making. Dan worked for 12 years as a carpenter, and worked a lot down on the waterfront, until one day, struck by a feeling of needing to get out of there, followed his girlfriend on a whim to Wollongong Uni and accidentally talked himself in to an interview in the creative arts degree, even though the application date had passed.

Dan was 28 when he began studying art, the same age I was when I first went to art school. I cannot speak for Dan, but for me this was a definitive moment because it was the first time I felt like I was doing what I was supposed to be doing with my life. The discovery of art is the beginning of the search, it is an escape from the everydayness of life. So when I look out in to the gallery space, possibly crammed with too many art works, I feel glad because I can see that Dan is not sunk in the everydayness of his own life. Dan is not in despair.