

Cyd Bown : MR VR Sculpture and Installations Project (June 2017 – ongoing)

Cyd Bown is a contemporary artist working in sculpture, video/light projections, installations, and virtual and mixed reality environments (and concepts). Statement below:

Up until a few years ago I've been working and creating mostly large-scale sculptures and installations, that perhaps can be best described as dreams or fantasy spaces made real.

Then I got hurt and couldn't physically move or work, it was unclear how much of my mobility I would regain. This opened up my thinking and compelled me to consider other ways of working. When Virtual Reality became more accessible in 2016 I was so excited - I could move in there, and work and create and contribute through VR. Although thankfully I have regained my mobility, in an odd way I am grateful as it opened me up to these other ways of working.

From June 2017 on is the first work I've made since being able to move again. At play is the exploration of the promise of boundless virtual worlds/spaces tethered to a physicality (finite play space). I am creating a set of conditions that I also hope will lead to a psychological outcome in which theoretical possibilities and physical limitations are examined, focusing upon the fragility of and our dependency on our bodies and environments.

There are some very interesting research projects being led by Dr Takuji Narumi of the University of Tokyo on how cross-modal interactions affect perception and perceived metamorphosis of shape (also using cross-modal interactions).

Further, in our increasingly built and mechanized world/s particularly in urban spaces or cities, I want to create a space that feels hopeful, welcoming, where is a space for me or you within this shifting environment?

Much of my formal education is in Anthropology and Linguistics. I have worked in research, translating poetry. Language and translation continues to be very interesting to me (including visual language, and the direct translation from an idea to a physicality and so on). In my earlier studies, I found that I especially appreciate A.L. Becker's (a linguist, Beyond Translation) approach in translation in realizing there are silences between or gaps across languages, how everything sayable isn't sayable in the language you are most familiar with, and that there's a space beyond language. I also appreciate Jacquelynn Baas' in Unframing Experience, and how she spoke about a learning mind, and creating spaces of mental freedom and removing frames that limit our perception.

Perhaps in summary my current research interests are animated by perception, translation, and our understanding and experiences of virtual spaces and environments and our bodies (dependency on, fragility of etc). Most recently influenced by my experience of immobility and my previous research and studies in language and translation. There is a profound and rapid shift happening in how we perceive, experience and relate to our environments, our bodies and each other, that is increasingly urgent.

I am aware of how im/mobility (physical / environmental conditions) affects us (i.e. grants or limits access), and see the virtual / virtuality as a space where potentialities can be radically open and creative. And I see the act of opening up and increasing access as profoundly valuable.