

Rare Candy and collaborators withdraw work from Berlin Biennale over authorship legibility concerns

Rare Candy, together with our collaborators Alden Epp, Spencer Lai, Natasha Madden, Ander Rennick and Amber Wright, have made the decision to reclaim our proposed work from Centre for Style's Dress Rehearsal exhibition in the 9th Berlin Biennale, curated by DIS.

This has been a difficult decision for us to make, but we have made it together. The decision came from our refusal to accept the conditions we faced exhibiting our work in the biennale - conditions we sadly felt did not honour the many sacrifices we had made in order to participate.

Our artists and our work have been incorrectly credited in essentially every media outlet associated with the exhibition, both internally from official sources and externally in various media coverages of the event. While we appreciate the efforts to correct many of these retroactively and after the removal of the work, we feel these oversights have enabled an almost complete dismissal of the authorship of our contribution to the biennale.

We took issue with the exhibition being framed under the loose rhetoric of 'community' and 'collaboration' without the proper recognition of the authorship of those of us who form that community, nor the communication required of a collaboration. We felt the dissolving of our work into an anonymous display, labelled as 'community', only served to blur the distinct voices within. As a diverse collective who has presented various collaborative projects for this exhibition, all of which have been realised through the intersection of our respective practices over a period of six months, we felt the loosely-applied use of this language around the organisation of the exhibition failed to recognise the value of these artists' contributions. Coupled with the lack of proper accreditation, we felt subsumed under several banners, one above the next, that drew capital from our labour yet neglected to acknowledge from where, or whom, it had come.

Reclaiming the work has been an action to remind ourselves and others of the necessity to resist the cooption of artistic labour that can occur when art is decontextualized from its community and repurposed to accommodate an overriding curatorial agenda, or in this case, several. Together we felt the context of the biennale and its multi-tiered hierarchy of curators did not accurately reflect the importance of the community that were instrumental in the production of the work itself. Sadly, we felt we needed to withdraw our work in order to protect our authorship.

Upstairs at Akademie der Kunste, beneath a leaky glass ceiling, we have left a remainder of the original install which we hope remains a generous offer to the biennale and one that speaks to the urgency of the politics we seek to address. Although we have removed much of the work, we have left the impression of our presence – empty glass vitrines with dust, hair, loose beads, and greasy fingerprints where the doors have been opened to remove the work. In addition to the retrieval of the physical works, the monitor installed to screen the sixteen minute collaborative film work by Rare Candy, Alden Epp, Spencer Lai and Amber Wright, entitled Don't mutilate my mink, has been switched off yet remains blank in the space. These palpable souvenirs amongst the emptiness indicate our continued involvement, yet resist the appropriation of our work-as-content we have sought to address.

We have brought our work back with us to Melbourne where we are planning to restage our contribution to the biennale within the context of the community that has produced it alongside us. We hope this will finally be a time to celebrate with those who have supported us.

We are still processing what has happened, and what has not happened, during our involvement in the biennale and wish to remain open to discussion around these issues.