

Amanda Keeper(s) Roderick Introduction

Bella Kerr's Keeper(s) was shown at Mission Gallery in April 2013, presented as part of our dynamic programme of exhibitions and events, delivered by recognised professional artists, academics and curators.

Eagerly anticipated, it was one of the highlights of the programme that year, an incredibly successful and popular show, which attracted a diverse audience and practitioners. A multi-strand, socially engaged participatory project, it was delivered through collaborative activities, workshops and talks, the nature of which influenced the development of the work.

The exhibition represented a significant step in the confidence and maturity of Mission Gallery's Learning Programme, as well as the artists own curatorial practice. It has changed how we as an arts organisation approach work of this nature; the language and techniques used to facilitate our activities and how we engage with our audiences.

Education and collaboration was central to this project and is at the heart of Mission Gallery's aims. The student/tutor relationship and role has often been explored but never in such a positive and inspiring way as it were within this exhibition. Current and former students and colleagues, were eager to work alongside Bella and contribute to Keeper(s) conversations and investigations.

Keeper(s) led the way for how we approached the CIVIC exhibition one year later, curated by the artist. The research and development methods used to great effect with Keeper(s), connected the two projects, in terms of its visual language and exploration of how spaces are occupied. Kerr's fascination with collaborative and creative space within the gallery, nurtured, influenced and drove both projects development.

On a personal level, Keeper(s) encouraged me to spend more time looking at the space which I'd worked in for over fifteen years and thought I knew so well. Exploring it, transforming it with furniture, books and objects, reconnecting with it each time.

This project illustrated all that is great about Mission Gallery; its ethos and philosophy of being artist led; offering a platform and opportunity for artists to develop ideas and grow; a focus on imagination, creativity and freedom, combined with a desire to take risks and embrace challenges.

I look back on Keeper(s) with great affection and look forward enthusiastically to the continuation of this project, via its archive and online presence.

Amanda Roderick 2014
Director, Mission Gallery