

Reflecting Location

A solo exhibition by Calum Hurley
Essay by Brydie Kosmina



praxis ARTSPACE
welcomes you to attend
@calumhurley
calumhurley.com

Opening Night
Thursday 19 September, 6-8PM
praxis ARTSPACE
68-72 Gibson Street
BOWDEN SA 5007
WED-SAT 11-4PM
praxis ARTSPACE@gmail.com
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Artist Walking Tour of Bowden
with Calum Hurley
Saturday 5 October, 3-4:30PM

19 September - 11 October 2019
Presented at praxis ARTSPACE

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The mirror-sculpture which sits at the physical and metaphorical centre of object designer Calum Hurley's exhibition, *Reflecting Location*, functions as a distorting prism through which to observe and reconsider the space we live in, and our position within this system. The reflective sculpture intersects the displaced and distorted images of the city, rewriting our familiar location. In reflecting (and rereflecting) Adelaide, Hurley asks us to revise and rewrite our space, and our relation with the geography of the city. Hurley's visual map of Adelaide represents both physical and psychic geography: we physically orient ourselves in the Praxis gallery space, in the suburb of Bowden, in the city of Adelaide; we psychically orient ourselves in the places that Hurley films, constructing a visual map of the slow route through the city and western suburbs that he has made.

There is a recurring concern in *Reflecting Location* with light, shadow, and the displacement of image. Within the video clips themselves, the unintentional play of light reflecting off of windows, pools of water, passing vehicles, or buildings catches our eye, dancing at the edge of the frame. This constant displacement of light is furthered in Hurley's use of mirrors to refract the image onto the walls around the gallery, a distortion of light that brings the audience into the work: the image can be reflected on to us, and we can become the light or the dark. Through the inclusion of different light levels – sunrise, blazing morning sun, wintery afternoon light, the famous pink skies

of Adelaide sunsets – Hurley creates a rough timeline: day to night, reflecting the ever-repeating life cycle of the city.

The cyclical repetition of the city implicitly juxtaposes between the organic and the mechanised. Many of the clips do not feature human life, instead quietly focusing on the automatic functions of the urban landscape: roller doors open as if by chance, traffic lights flick from red to green. This movement without apparent human intervention mirrors the unpredictable play of light caused by reflection both in the videos and in the gallery, aligning the organic and the technological in their random nature. The urban space becomes an almost-sentient, mechanised creature, existing, moving, breathing in and out. Hurley's *Reflecting Location* thus invites us to reconsider the world we live in, and our own position in it. In celebrating the urban habitat, Hurley urges a quiet recognition of the human imprint on the world. The man-made – concrete, glass, brick, metal – intersects with the organic – sunlight, wind, rain, plants – and prompts a revising of our (perhaps) artificial separation between human and non-human. What, if any, divisions between the 'organic' and the 'created' exist in the Anthropocene, the current age in which we have changed the foundations of the planet irreversibly? How does mechanic/organic space and location shape the human condition in the present day? Hurley's refraction of the human habitat does not answer these questions, but urges us to recognise the urgency of the search for the answers.

In stopping to capture these quiet urban moments, Hurley has paused, sitting with the space, breathing in time with the breath of the city, existing contiguously. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche writes in the introduction to *The Dawn of Day* (1881) that "in an age of 'work': that is to say, of haste, of unseemly and immoderate hurry-skurry, which is intent upon 'getting things done' at once" we must learn "how to read well: i.e. slowly, profoundly, attentively, prudently, with inner thoughts, with the mental doors ajar, with delicate fingers and eyes"¹. Written in the late nineteenth-century, Nietzsche's sentiment is equally applicable today: in an age of work, of hurry, of the never-sleeping city, sitting with the moment and reading locations and the people in them with delicate fingers and eyes is an act of quiet respect for ourselves and our planet. Michelle Boulous Walker similarly argues in *Slow Philosophy* (2017) that we have a renewed need for slowness, for "the patience involved in 'sitting with' the world and of being open to it"². Hurley's videos reflect this need for quiet, slow reflection (both

literal and metaphorical reflection). In pausing to capture these moments which would otherwise be lost, Hurley demonstrates a practice of sitting with and being open to the world that we, the audience, must emulate in the gallery space. We learn to speak the language of the city from early in our lives: Hurley asks us to translate it.

Reflecting Location continues outside praxis ARTSPACE, with walking tours run by Hurley in the gallery's surroundings. These tours provide an insight into the slow meditation on space and location that Hurley prompts us to consider in this exhibition. We can choose to take the slow observation of the gallery space with us as we return to the urban geography of the suburbs and the city. In taking the familiar location of Adelaide and reflecting it, Hurley also inflects it with additional meaning(s). Hurley's intervention in our organic and urban geography alters our mental image of the space, and invites us to reconsider location as we continue our lives within it. The reflection of location exists at the intersection of multiple discourses, both physical and psychic: the reflection of light within the videos; the reflection of images off the mirror; the reflection of our geographical space; the reflection we ourselves must have on our position within this space. A flash of sunlight on an office window; the ripple of rain in a cracked gutter - Hurley reminds us to look for these everyday imbrications of the organic and the urban, provoking a continuous reflection on the location of our human lives.

- Brydie Kosmina

1. Nietzsche, Friedrich William. *The Dawn of Day*. Translated by John McFarland Kennedy. (Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg e-book edition, [1881], 1911), 14. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/39955>

2. Boulous Walker, Michelle. *Slow Philosophy: Reading Against the Institution* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 8.