***Personal Structures*, PAPER Pavilion, Venice**

**David Hancock / Jill Randall /**

The artist’s studio is traditionally seen as the location of individual development. It is a location usually unseen, constructed to encapsulate the artist’s being. It is a hermetic space, a space prone to the creative endeavours of the artist. Ovid’s tale of Pygmalion -- the artists who brings to life his statue, reanimated in the form of Galatea -- is one such example. This is a sacred space, a mythical space, in which magic happens.

The studio is the artist’s window to the outside world and informs their response to it. It acts as a filter through which the world is laid before them, a banquet of material. Through their methods of production, their ideas formulate and become tangible. The studio marks a threshold; a physical, tangible realm that marks the start of the artists’ imagination -- a symbolic chamber where the artist draws deep from within themselves. The studio comes pre-formed with its own mythology; a ready made architectural space equipped for the production of art making. Courbet, in his painting, *The Studio of the Painter, a Real Allegory* (1855), describes his studio as “the world coming to me to be painted.” Courbet splits the world of the studio in two: his muse and subjects representing the germination of the artwork; the other, the artworld who will receive, critique, and disseminate the work. The artist is at the cusp of these two worlds, separating reality from the imagination.

This notion of the artist as the mediator between two worlds is a theme that unites the artists selected for *Personal Structures*. Whether it is Jill Randall’s recreations of ad hoc structures or David Hancock’s still lives that fluctuate between object and subject, the artist functions as a conduit between the intangible space of the studio and the reality of the world outside. This is the space they inhabit and create their imaginary worlds.

Jill Randall’s work reveals the sublime and beautiful, the poetic and resonant in bleak and unpromising places. Her works explore the overlooked and secretive, celebrating the “ad hoc” and improvised, where geography and topography have determine settlement and building. These are the sheds, lean-tos, pigeon shed complexes, barns, and industrial buildings. Constructed out of discarded materials, they are creative endeavour in their own right. Randall is intrigued by this conquering of geography and the assertion of ‘territory’, the rural and industrial interfaces of these places, and the communities that have settled and inhabited them. They also explore the relationship of people to place, re-examining land and landscape, people and industry. However, it is the motivation for their construction that is also interesting. Yet Randall leaves the interiors tantalisingly out of sight. We know something happens within them, as this was the purpose of their construction, but as the to the task, we can only surmise. Randall only presents the exterior, capturing the construction in miniature, lovingly and accurately recreated, “model-railway” -style, with painstaking attention to detail, using recycled wood, paper and card, finding material equivalents for corrugated iron, wood and glass. Randall captures an intriguing exterior, yet these locations of creative endeavours are captured in miniature, and so refer back to the Randall’s own studio, the place of their construction.

This notion of capturing the world in miniature is something that David Hancock toys with in his still life paintings. The subjects are a series of Ball-Jointed Dolls (BJDs). Produced in Japan, Korea, and China, BJDs are customisable collectable dolls, enabling collectors to create unique identities for them, purchasing clothes, wigs, shoes, and other accessories. The dolls have become a way for Hancock to explore the concept of the artist’s studio, creating a self-contained world. The dolls are a manifestation of himself; each one created from scratch in order to address and inhabit a specific still life using a variety of collected objects. The doll is also problematic, a rupture in the still life. It is both object and subject. The still life confirms its status as an object whilst the theme and narrative expand its subjectivity. Hancock sees the dolls as a form of drag, a way of performing the act of painting within the studio and adopting a specific identity and narrative in order to address the role of a male artist and its impedimenta: its history, its privilege, its subjugation. For Hancock, the dolls are ungendered, reflecting the fluidity necessary to enact the narrative constructed in the studio, imbibing aspects of his own identity, relating specifically to the narrative construct. They each address a physical form that he can inhabit for the purpose of creating the painting that is impossible for him to physically manifest.