



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL MATERIAL INC.

The Shock of the New: Modern Materials, Media and Methods Joint Objects and Electron SIG Symposium February 8 to 10 2017 - Melbourne Museum

Abstract

Title:

A Boot Full of Fabulousness: The studio materials of David McDiarmid

Name of Presenter:

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Abstract:

David McDiarmid seamlessly blended art, fashion, design and gay rights activism into a creative outpouring that spanned the last three decades of the 20th century. As an artist, his creativity lay in an ability to bring together an appreciation for past and present material domesticity, with a total emersion in the popular culture of his day. He drew his materials from whatever caught his eye and put them together with the immediacy of an impromptu protest rally; and the results were as aesthetically breathtaking as they were politically and socially confronting.

With the death of close friend and artistic collaborator, Peter Tully in 1992 from complications related to AIDS, McDiarmid saw the importance of protecting one's artistic legacy. He arranged for Dr Sally Gray, a long-time friend, to be the sole executor of his estate. The arrangements he put in place during the final years before his own death in 1995, have had a direct bearing on the resources available to conservators caring for his artistic output.

In 2011, Dr. Gray initiated the transfer of an assortment of studio materials to the National Gallery of Victoria. It is an archive of the most 'fabulous' synthetic polymers. All the materials are decorative, ready-made, stock materials, mass produced for the commercial industry; featuring holographic diffraction foils, multi-lensed thermoplastics, lenticular synthetic polymers and glitter coated transparencies.

These materials provided an invaluable resource for research and treatment in the lead-up to the NGV's 2014 retrospective exhibition *David McDiarmid: When This You See Remember Me*. With this material now fully catalogued, this talk will look at the initial introduction of these materials onto the commercial market, the history behind their discovery by the artist, and explore some of the possibilities that an archive of this nature presents for conservation treatment and art historical research.

Brief Biography of the Author(s):

Helen Casey currently works as Senior Conservator, Exhibitions and Loans for the State Library of NSW. From 2010 to 2014, Helen worked at the National Gallery of Victoria, firstly as a conservator for Exhibitions and Loans; and then as a paintings conservator for 6 months in 2014. Helen graduated with a Masters of Cultural Material Conservation at the University of Melbourne in 2009.