

I used most of the final month of the Parramatta Artist Studios (PAS) residency to set up my show 'Concrete and Wax' with Maria Ionico. I installed my pillbox bunker on the front porch of the PAS gallery. I liked the fact that the shape of the bunker and gun emplacement slit is reminiscent to [Ned Kelly's](#) mask. Michael told me that homeless people often use this porch as a shelter from the rain. The day after I had installed it someone had left what looked like a bottle of piss inside the structure. The morning before the exhibition opening I realized someone had had a severe case of diarrhoea and had used it as a toilet. I'd like to think it was a homeless person caught short. Michael, Tom and I cleaned up the mess and hoped it wouldn't happen again. Since then, nothing else unfortunate has happened. However, a homeless person has put cardboard down inside the structure and is using it as a shelter. I am curious to find out what might happen to the work during the three months that it will be there. I enjoyed using the gallery as a project space because I would be asked by the public about what I was doing. I was interested in what they thought I was creating. One woman thought my pillbox bunker was a puppet theatre, whilst a group of school kids thought my sand covered models were graves. I also enjoyed the dynamics of the space with Maria and making a mess whilst trying out new ideas.

The show was a success in my opinion. The colours and textures of our work were very complimentary, and Maria's themes of displacement worked well next to my places of refuge. The Lord Mayor of Parramatta Tony Issa opened the show, whilst I had invited British Consulate General Richard Morris to give a speech. I received many positive comments about the show, including ones from the Australian Council. Aside from this show, I met the curators of [Kudos gallery](#) at another show opening. I'd agreed to show my work 'Next to the bomb shelter', which had just been sitting in my studio doing nothing, at a group exhibition '[Diorama Drama](#)' at [Somedays gallery](#) in Surrey Hills. Tia and Tom helped me transport the work to the show; this was a tricky affair due to the large, heavy and fragile nature of the work. We eventually managed to get it to the gallery in one piece, with additional cracked concrete embellishments. I had one final excursion to explore Sydney forts, this time at Malabar. I went with PAS artist Kay Orchison, who told me that he was involved in a covert art exhibition a few years back in the ruinous bunker. He also told me of his friend, who was tragically killed whilst exploring the storm water drains that run underneath the area. These bunkers were the largest that I have encountered during my time here, and the most graffitied. The area around the bunkers was overgrown and full of wildlife, and I was excited to see a hawk flying just meters away from us.

A trip to Sydney wouldn't be complete without an exploration of other areas of Australia. I had always wanted to see the Great Barrier Reef so a trip to Cairns was definitely on the cards. Unfortunately the rainy season was in full force. I was lucky enough to have one day of sunshine when I could snorkel around the reef, which was fantastic, however, because of Cyclone Ellie it rained almost solidly, so there wasn't that much to do. I was relieved to fly to Melbourne after much thumb twiddling and excessive alcohol consumption in Cairns. Melbourne is the cultural oasis of Australia, and I loved every minute of my time there. I endured the ridiculously hot day of the bush fires, and felt extremely sad about the huge tragedy. On the news there was a discussion about how to prevent the loss of life; interestingly enough there were suggestions that bunkers in people's back gardens could help.

Over in Melbourne I visited many galleries, mainly in the [CBD](#) and [Fitzroy](#), but also in less obvious areas such as Footscray, and East Richmond. I loved [Gerda Steiner and Jorg Lenzlinger's](#) 'The Water Hole' installation at [ACCA](#), particularly lying on a bed with a massive meteorite suspended from the ceiling swinging just inches from my face. I also enjoyed exploring the galleries in the Nicholas Building, [the Abbotsford Convent](#) and [Westspace](#). I met with Sarah Goffman at her opening in [Gertrude Contemporary Art Space](#), and saw more of her work at [Breenspace](#) in Sydney, which I thought was fantastic. I went to see Woyzeck at the [Malthouse Theatre](#), which was a surreal musical interpretation of the story with songs courtesy of Nick Cave and Warren Ellis. Queensland in comparison is a cultural desert. I went to the two galleries in Cairns, and both were pretty traditional. A show of paintings by the [Lockhart art gang](#) interested me the most. Back in Sydney, PAS artist [Tom Polo](#) exhibited at [Firstdraft](#) and at [Campbelltown arts center](#), which were both hugely successful shows. [Juliet Darling's](#) quirky film 'A pair of one' shown at [Roslyn Oxley](#) was interesting, and I also enjoyed [Louise Weaver's](#) Leigh Bowery outfits for stuffed birds at [Darren Knight gallery](#).

Well I'm back in London wearing three jumpers and a scarf indoors, and I feel sad that my residency is over. During my residency I met so many interesting people and made good friends. Not only did this residency provide me with the fundamental basics, but also gave me a very important support network - working alongside open and fascinating people, and meeting important artists and curators within Sydney arts. I hope to maintain these contacts, and return soon to what I think is one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

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