

Press Release

LANGLANDS & BELL

Curators Signatures

November 16, 2020 - January 22, 2021

Monday to Friday 10 am - 5 pm Saturday 12 - 5 pm

Closed on Sundays, National holidays and Dec. 28, 2020 - Jan 3, 2021

Curators are the architecture of the art world: artists are the bricks and mortar.

Ben Langlands & Nikki Bell began collaborating in 1978. Their art explores the complex web of relationships linking people and architecture and the coded systems of communication and exchange we use to negotiate a fast-changing technological world.

While re-organising their studio archive and sorting through files of correspondence relating to their life as artists, Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell noticed the signatures of the curators they had corresponded with since they began working together and were struck by their individual character and beauty. The signatures range from those of young curators at the beginning of their careers to established and internationally prominent figures. In this exhibition at CCA Kitakyushu the artists display them as objects for contemplation so that we may appreciate their aesthetic qualities. The signatures vary widely, from extravagant and expressive flourishes, to deliberately abstract and minimal gestures. In each case one gains the impression of an individual distilled to their essence.

The signature is a deeply personal expression rooted at the threshold of individual internal and external worlds where intellect, emotions and personal ambitions are made available as a public presentation and put on display. In recent times the role of the curator has become increasingly prominent as the discipline has professionalised, in response to wider public access and engagement in proliferating cultural conversations and debates, around identity and interpretation.

Just as the functions and role of the curator have developed and evolved over time, so have methods of communication, letters, postcards, faxes, emails, social media, texts, etc. The signatures are a historical record as well as evidence of the continuing social, cultural, and technological changes we are participating in by making and exhibiting art. While we are looking at a simple mark on a surface, each with its own fundamental integrity, taken together as a group these signatures have a collective power to represent and convey wide changes in recent social and cultural history.

Through contemplation of the aesthetic object this project explores the self and questions of individual identity, at a time when these are being transformed and progressively eroded by the digital world. The signature is one of the last examples left where the body and language meet in a world of increasing virtualisation.

Langlands & Bell have exhibited widely internationally throughout their career. Their current exhibition "Degrees of Truth" at Sir John Soane's Museum, London runs until January 3 2021. "The past is never dead ..." an exhibition exploring the architecture of the 'Slave Castles' of Ghana will open at Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana, in 2021.



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