

# Richard Maloy: Things I Have Seen

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Principal Funder



## Richard Maloy

### *Things I Have Seen 2017*

Video (14 hr 03 min 32sec)  
Courtesy of the artist

Alongside the world of cinema explored through Len Lye's short experimental films, the Govett-Brewster celebrates the work of artists working in longer formats. Prompted by the summer solstice on 22 December (the longest day of the year) we present Richard Maloy's (b. 1977) *Things I Have Seen*.

First exhibited in 2017 at Youkobo Art Space in Tokyo, *Things I Have Seen* documents a series of performances by Auckland-based artist Richard Maloy. Each performance involves Maloy recreating another artist's work in clay in his Tokyo studio. Over 14 hours through 48 performances, Maloy works from memory to translate his recollections of a physical or visual encounter into a new form. The subjectivity of experience and learning becomes apparent as the viewer grasps for the identity of the source, challenged by their own recall of experience as they observe Maloy enacting his.

Paul Brobbel, Senior Curator / Len Lye Curator



Richard Maloy *Things I Have Seen* film stills 2017, courtesy of the artist

## Essay

### *Found in Translation*

Zara Stanhope

In this work created in Japan Richard Maloy opens out the question of what can be taught and what learnt through subjective forms of research and experience. His approach suggests a cross-cultural address of the concept of a master or elder who holds and teaches wisdom. In Japan the respect due to senior figures for their skills or achievements has its own term 'sensei'. A comparable sense of reverence for authority figures is not always practiced in the West. Maloy's work pays heed to teaching models and the evolving processes of art practice and research, and the translation that comes into play in any study of an archetype.

Essential to Maloy's own practice is also a concern to expose the artist's material processes of making. He frequently discusses his interest in bringing the procedures usually restricted to the studio into public space; of giving the audience a window onto the workplace. Works may be literally situated publicly or mediated through photography and video. This group of videos literally offers a view onto Maloy's art making in Tokyo in 2017, where the artist investigated the idea of other artworks as 'the model' for making, establishing a methodology for his studio activity.

The materials used by Maloy are generally characterised by conditions of malleability and economy: butter, clay, cardboard packaging and wood have supplied the constituents of sculptural projects and installations small and large. The choice often has a logic connected as much with site as the politics of recycling. Aiming to envelop the Japanese history of ceramics in working with clay, it was serendipitous for Maloy that the in Tokyo residency owner, Hiroko Murata, was a former sculptor working with clay and could offer an existing source of material.

Looking at Maloy's manipulation of masses of butter (in the exhibition *Yellow Grotto*, 2008), some images of the substance pressed flat like dough, another a video of the artist wrangling his own weight in the greasy matter, suggests Maloy is perpetually testing the possibilities of sculpture and art as his subject. What appears as playful experimentation is simultaneously practice as research. This interest was flagged early in this practice in the photographic series *Attempts*, 2010 showing images of art school studio table tops. His stated objective with *Things I Have Seen*, 2017 is to employ the learning system of the 'artist model', the study of the work of another artist, first hand or through its subsequent representation.

In these videos Maloy works from memory to recreate in clay an artwork he has once seen or experienced. There is a synthesis of looking and making: Maloy's forms are based on sculptures, land art, paintings once seen, and, armed with this knowledge, the audience seek to interpolate existing artworks from his rudimentary forms. Looking, learning and interpreting are at the heart of this making and viewing, informed by our own cognitive and cultural experiences.

Maloy works from memory rather than example, and this intuitive methodology privileges recall as being as important to the viewing interpolation as it is to Maloy's action. Which artwork is this informal shape modelled on? As fast as we search for clues, the artist is disassembling the production in order to return the clay to a base material ready for reworking. Despite the consistent camera angle suggesting structure, the artist's physical translation is not transparent and we as viewers must admit the subjectivity of the learning process. While Maloy offers us video documentation as a learning tool perhaps the education lies in recognising and embracing a lack of understanding? His interpretation of the 'artist model' translates the essence of previous artworks into something new, initiating fresh perspectives. Rather than the traditional meaning of translation as a direct conversion retaining the same meaning, Maloy conjures a type of transubstantiation allowing for interpretation based on a dialogue with the original.

The translation performed by Maloy during or as modelling produces works (or a work) in its own right. Looping between original and copy, the objects made in the studio register their foreignness, suggesting the awkwardness of translation, the slipperiness of visual language and disjuncture of cultural interpretation. Like the linguistic process of translation, Maloy's tangible mimesis or conversion of artworks implies that research and learning is a feedback loop, a loop of understanding about understanding. Like the clay that is being worked and reworked until it returns to Murata's garden, Maloy's making raises questions about the transformation of material into new models while suggesting that difference is produced in the flux of translation.

This text was first published by Youkobo Art Space, Tokyo, on the occasion of Richard Maloy's artist residency & exhibition in 2017. Republished with courtesy of the artist and writer.

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