

Making it

A life after art school

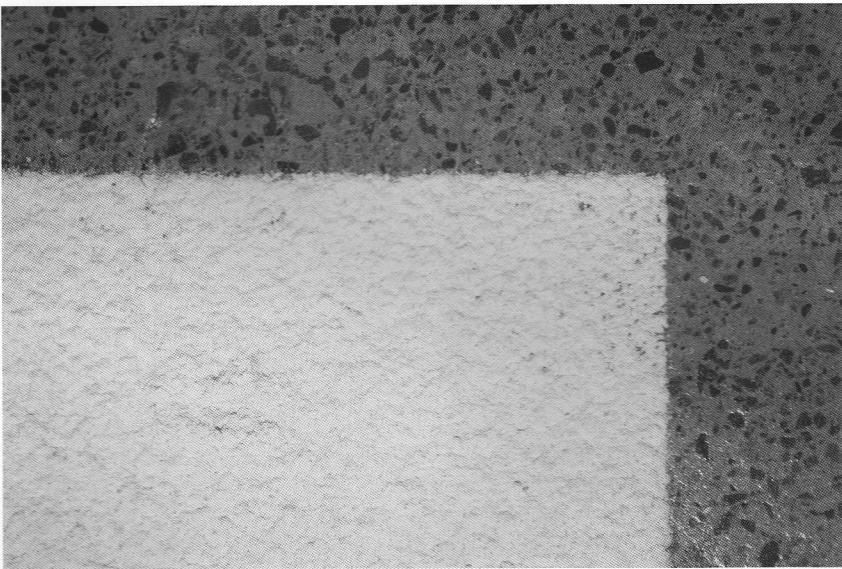
If you read my weekly newsletter some of what follows will be familiar as it's an extended and rewritten version of issue #149.

Every week I write a shitty first draft (sfd) for my newsletter. After re-reading my sfd for the other week I realised there was something I wasn't saying. That something was much more interesting, much more edgy and naturally I felt it was much more difficult and risky to write. So that's what I've tried to write about...

It's not something you hear everyday, having a calling to make art. Well I don't hear it everyday, so when I did it caught my attention and has been in my thoughts all week. I think it must be quite something – not only as a thing to say, to acknowledge, but also to feel and to live with. I imagine a calling brings an incredible unwavering sense of certainty, perhaps dangerously leaning into a sense of entitlement at times. I wonder at what the implications of having such a feeling of vocation are, of what expectations you have of yourself, of your work, of others. I wonder how such a calling colours your perception. I really don't know how it works, and that intrigues me. I guess it's different for everyone.

I once stopped making work for six months. The studio had become a place where the joy of making was being beaten to a pulp with successful combinations of misplaced ideas about making work and making a living. This career I'd been pursuing for most of my working life was making me miserable, so I took a break. I was an artist no more, I became a 'normal' person (whatever normal is?) and I loved it. Walking into town I noticed the colour of people's shoe laces and enjoyed them for what they were without having to work out how I could use that day-glo pink colour in a painting.

Six months after not making, of thinking about my practice, of still going to exhibitions, of doing design



Gary Peters: *Ground work* – test detail. Tempera on concrete, 2012.

Ground work

work, and of simply living, I was able to regain perspective on my practice and understand that my drive to make art had nothing to do with making money. I'd make art whether there was a financial reward or not – and often there's not. Which doesn't mean I don't want to find a way to make a living as an artist – I do. It's simply that making money has nothing to do with why I make my work.

That was two, maybe three years ago. It took me a bloody long time to really accept and embody the fact that I make stuff. It's what I really want to do. It's what I've pretty much always done and is where I'm happiest. Accepting this and understanding it in my body at a physical level, I'm in a pretty great position. I can cut out a lot of crap from my life. I make work with everything else falling into place to support this. Kind of. Mostly. Well, it's bloody hard work. And finding a way to support myself, spend time with friends, build relationships and all the rest of that regular life stuff – I'm working on that too.

Gary Peters

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August 17 – September 7
Opening night August 16, 5.30pm
Toi Poneke, Wellington