

# Alex Felton

## *As The World Churns*

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**Kristan Kennedy:** Let's start from the beginning. I was thinking back on how this arrangement came to be. In some ways you have been "in residence" at PICA for a long while. Even though our former offices were limited in their access, you visited often...

**Alex Felton:** (laughs) Yeah, I found a way in.

**KK:** Yes! You found a way in, you were an occasional fixture, an active loafer. You stayed there to do your own work, steal wi-fi, read, maybe observe... And then, of course, there were all of the times you visited me in my office at Washington High School, when we were getting ready for exhibitions. Wherever we moved, you moved with us. We are used to artists interrupting

us—it might even be what we live for—but the "work" of art or that of art administration can often be messy. Sometimes we try to hide that from artists because we're on display in the space of an office, otherwise the curtain is lifted and we are just crazy people obsessively emailing, trying to make impossible stuff happen.

On one of your visits I was panicking trying to find 100,000 matches for Claire Fontaine. I asked you why you would possibly want to witness me working, that it was boring and complicated and painful... I was in the worst state of mind.

**AF:** Right. What did I say?

**KK:** You said (and I am paraphrasing!) that you like to be around the work of making art happen, because even in its most complicated or banal moments it made you hopeful that art was WORTH working for. That made me remember something I had almost forgotten, but had no real proof of: that we are all in it together. So that was the impetus in inviting you. You had already made yourself...

**AF:** ...at home.

**KK:** Yes, at home, but also you were someone who embodied the role of an artist within an institution: to keep us on our toes, to keep it real. With PICA's move to a more permanent and accessible home, there became a mandate to invite artists and audiences to infiltrate our space. In a sense, to sanction the voyeurism and make it official.

**AF:** (laughs) Uh, what's the question?

**KK:** (laughs) Oh yes! The question! The title of your project, *I don't want to work, but I love the work place*, seems to encapsulate with some brevity the long, drawn-out story I just told. But there seems to be something more to this infiltration—what does it represent for you?

**AF:** Well, this particular work place, and the three places I've seen PICA "play out" in is a place that is different from most uninviting art institutions. You are all working artists who are here facilitating other people's projects. PICA became for me a place to sort of lurk around. It's not that I don't like working; I don't like my day job. But, in a workplace like this, I guess I am doing my preferred work. The phrase occurred to me while I was at my other hangout, Publication Studio, where they are always in the midst of something frenzied, fixing problems, making things look good. You all spend your time preventing the client/artist from ever knowing what you had to do to make things happen.

I don't know what's wrong with people that they don't want to know the business of facilitating art, like they can't handle knowing that someone had to scrape it together on their behalf. I've scraped together plenty of projects. I have realized that seventy percent of making art and consequently exhibiting is about getting the wall painted white, right? It becomes about preparing a space, about finding a space, and being in that space. Space, space, space!

What I get out of hanging around these workplaces is a stimulating environment where people are invested in similar pursuits. This lends import to whatever I'm picking away at. More so than trying to be anonymous at a cafe somewhere. Invariably, I become invested in your work as well as my own. Without official tasks, but in the proximity of tasks, I take on an advisory role. Before that, I was always wondering what my role was, wondering if I was wanted in the art world.

**KK:** (laughing) I think that some art organizations can be fearful of acknowledging the very humans who make the objects they display. And...

**AF:** (interrupts) that makes you afraid of them.

**KK:** Afraid?

**AF:** Hmm, you know, that sort of "church of art" kind of thing. The design is so slick, the building so imposing—it erects a wall and you are afraid to email them and say, "Hey, I am this guy..."

**KK:** You're not supposed to find them, they're supposed to find you.

**AF:** Right. And never mind getting a window into how they work... I am reminded of that Andrea Fraser article that Patrick [Leonard] forwarded to me, about how an institution "facilitates" as a practice. I am also reminded of that time *Believer Magazine* printed the budget of an independent film. There you have a 20 million dollar budget and you see where every dime goes. It was astounding to relate to that amount of cash, to understand that all of that invisible work comes at a cost, that twenty million dollars is a "small" budget.

**KK:** It is always shocking to me how much production costs for even the simplest exhibitions or installations. Every little nail and every tank of gas and every human hour comes at a cost. There is all of this garbage surrounding a seemingly simple act of letting something exist somewhere for the public to see.

**AF:** Is that how art is "of the world"? There is geo-politics at play: the price of a barrel of oil affects how a painting gets from one place to another. I just spent thirty dollars on magnets for this project and the experiment did not work. How do we figure in all of the work that never gets seen. The work that does not WORK.

**KK:** Well, more than any other trade, artists are in the business of trying things out with no certain end. Anyone else involved in the production of things would never get something off the drawing board unless it had a defined purpose and value and an assurance that there was desire or need for it.

**AF:** They run all of this math before they even develop a prototype.

**KK:** What has been interesting about the residency is that in a way the tables have turned; sure, you are observing us and reacting to this space and our habits, but we also get to observe you. The Resource Room is now part studio, with an accumulation of paint cans, packages, and sketches of ideas butting up against the library shelves. Here the trial and error of your current project is laid bare. I can see you trying to execute something that seems resolved as an idea, but in actuality is a struggle with materials and time.

**AF:** Sometimes I wish I had someone to do that for me, to just pay for this, figure this out, call whomever, but in other cases I don't want any help. I want to find out on my own that it doesn't work. I mean it's related to this idea of professionalism/anti-professionalism, work-place/no work, and play-acting mixed in with reclaiming something that came natural to me as a kid. There was a lot of junk in my house when I was growing up: baskets with saved toys that were filled with knots and strings and I would sort of busy myself with figuring out where each lace looped back in on itself.

My actions here and in the studio are play-acting. I imbue some object with a purpose other than what was intended and I spend so much time in an imaginary space where my actions have no real-world consequence. I remember running a paintbrush over objects at my home pretending I just created it in some other painted world or thumbing through all the books telling myself I just absorbed all its information, the whole story.

**KK:** What about this concept of making things? As I read your essay and Anthony Hubermans' piece from *Afterall* that you reference, I kept thinking about the idea of resisting definition or understanding and how that applies to how artists reveal their practice. I detest the word "create," and a lot of artists that I know won't use it to explain away what they are doing. It might be easier to say "we create" because there is a mystery around that, a mysticism... When we say we are "working" or "making work" it almost begs for an explanation: how many hours, to what end, what is the value, the use... And then here we are, backed against the wall, trying to define a working practice that does not necessarily subscribe to that blue collar ethic, but is rather masquerading as such. How do you describe the labor of the mind as work?

**AF:** While I was looking for a day job to make money so I could still make art, it occurred to me that maybe I'm only good at being me and that I just need to be paid for that. But that does not exactly fly with people, like the archetypal Midwestern dad who is skeptical of art. "It does not have a practical use." So perhaps that is why we call it work, it defines it for other people.

**KK:** Yeah, if you say that you are playing or just being you, the act is selfish and it doesn't put something out into the world of value other than your own enjoyment. There is no way of gauging what that is worth.

**AF:** Right, but we do live in a world where information is accepted as capital and we have "knowledge workers." I may want to look that up in Wikipedia again. Um, yeah, Wikipedia says that knowledge working is, "non-routine problem solving that requires a combination of convergent and divergent creative thinking." They "think for a living"—some sociologists say they "direct manipulation of symbols to create an original knowledge product or to add obvious value to an existing one." So they are creative thinkers, their product is knowl-

edge, innovation, whatever. This definition includes so many people whose job it is to move information around and so everyone is a knowledge worker. Maybe this definition includes what artists do as well.

**KK:** Well, I think that what's interesting about thinking about information and how we process it as a culture— not just as artists or curators—is that it's almost universal now. We've reached a place where as a society there is less interest in really knowing a thing or a text or a concept through direct experience or learning and more of an instinctual and associative practice of pulling information to form a ...

**AF:** Synthesis.

**KK:** YES! A synthesis.

**AF:** A "WORKING" synthesis.

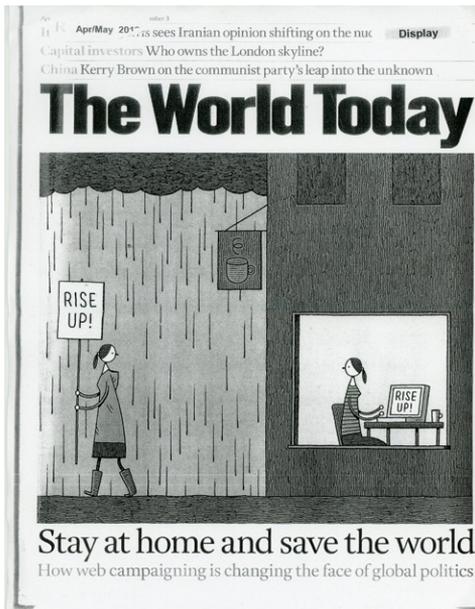
**KK:** Knowledge workers add "obvious value, or known value" to things through their research. We have the ability to effortlessly pull from seventy-five different sources almost instantaneously to justify every thought, idea, and image need we have. We don't have to know about any of it, we just have to have it at our fingertips to be able to access it. If we get proven right or wrong...

**AF:** By an iPhone...

**KK:** It almost doesn't matter. That correction just becomes a part of the story, another footnote in a series of footnotes and anecdotal evidence. We don't need to have been on the Great Wall to understand the Great Wall; we can take a virtual tour of it, look at photographs of it, and read about it in five seconds. There is no longer a need for encyclopedic knowledge since you can find your own path to the information or images that help you understand something. We have cut out experience in that equation. I wonder what your thoughts are about that, about the associative gathering of information and how it relates to what you make.

**AF:** Well, I always used films as I was growing up as a way to see outside of Nebraska, so I've been at it since before the Internet could offer so much more of a bricolage experience.... Associative thinking is available to everybody, but I wonder if it's as much of a mania for everyone. It makes me crazy making these comparisons, these leaps to find the common link between all things.

I imagine doctors and lawyers and knowledge workers are making fewer intuitive leaps (you know Malcolm Gladwell probably wrote a book about it). The associative process they are going through is more based in fact than the imaginative process of an artist. I wanna cram 'pataphysics and Alfred Jarry in here. This sort of pseudo-science of imaginary solutions, that's the realm that we are working in. Another reference could be this Rob Giampietro article in *The Serving Library Bulletin* called "I Am a Handle." He explains a 'pataphor with this example: lightning as a weather event is a fact and the notion that Zeus is up in the clouds throwing out those lightning bolts is metaphor, the whole pantheon of mythic Gods and their interrelationships is a 'pataphor. So, it suggests, to me anyway, like, a level above metaphor, or



beyond metaphor. The network of metaphors that make up an artwork or a series of works are like the characters of a personal mythology. As an artistic statement they are providing some kind of imaginary solution that seems woefully off-topic in the harsh light of practical reality. In that Huberman thing he mentions Glenn O'Brien writing in *Parkett* that an artwork can serve to detract from a previous understanding.

**KK:** Yes!

**AF:** Right?!? Art sort of resists interpretation. An artwork can produce confusion, but that may be because it's also made within a state of confusion and that this associative drive kind of works so deep that the combinations are even confusing to the maker. You know when I make something that I am excited about I say to myself, "What the fuck? How did that come out of it?" I know that I am onto something, but it is less important to me to define what that something is.

**KK:** Trying to attribute meaning to certain art works does seem like an impossible task, but one that we constantly pursue. Artists give us clues, but once the thing is in front of us, it is our responsibility to "work" to get it, to understand it.

**AF:** Right.

**KK:** This relies on some serious participation by the viewer or, as Huberman calls it, curiosity. It's like it has to pique curiosity and if it doesn't, then it isn't worth knowing and if it does, then that is the action, that's all it really needs to deliver. We need to get closer to believing that a work explaining itself is not paramount to the work being good...

**AF:** Right, it's really just some promise that it might make sense...someday.

**KK:** It sets the viewer on the path to information seeking. It encourages a cyclical investigation of the unknowable.

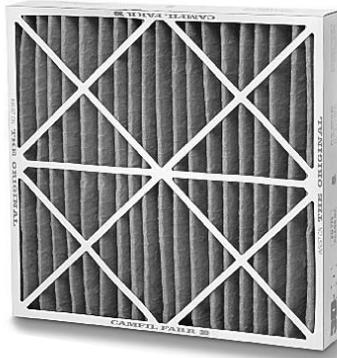
**AF:** Yeah, but it's pretty clearly a fool's errand, trying to know the unknowable—you know it's unknowable, but you're going to try to know it anyway? Like, why continue that? I don't know. I don't want to get too deep about things I don't even know about. I watched a movie about it—Derek Jarman's *Wittgenstein*—and what I gather (cause I can't understand Wittgenstein), is that he says something like, "Mathematically, I proved it. Mathematically, language is insufficient to talk about life or philosophize." So, boom, philosophy is dead! And yet we don't give up, we keep talking around things because the exercise is enough.

**KK:** We also keep creating non-verbal experiences or objects that try to encapsulate or illuminate philosophical concepts. HA! That is my wonky math. So lets pull out of the deep dark caverns of the mind right now. I just wanted to ask you some really simple things like what have you been doing in the Resource Room and why are you doing it?

**AF:** What have I been doing here? Well, I mean, I did my taxes the first day, I watched a staff meeting... The thing that piqued

my interest was the discussion about how to work the thermostat and what it should be set at for everyone's optimal comfort, which still has not been achieved.

**KK:** I won't ever be happy or satisfied with that discussion. It's like a hothouse in here! We should be growing orchids. Why was it so interesting to you?



**AF:** There was a pause in TurboTax and I just suddenly realized what was being said, and I guess that it linked up to a conversation that happened at the Multnomah County Library, where I also work. The tiny bureaucracy that is PICA was linked to the bigger bureaucracy of the bigger workplace. I realized it was equally important, equally quotidian in either setting, but you know here at PICA whatever the thermostat lands on is the optimal temperature for the facilitation of "art work."

**KK:** Somehow that makes the conversation sound more exciting.

**AF:** I am here blithely working in the Resource Room in the face of all of the PICA staff's work. I have been piecing together a bibliography inspired in part by Tim Young, who is the librarian at Bienecke at Yale who did an annotated bibliography of comic books starting in the 1800s that was published in *Weekday II*. I'm making my own annotated bibliography as a way to represent my particular, circuitous route through information, specifically the information available and not available at PICA in your collection of books and in the archive. I procured an Inter-Library Loan from the library in Forest Grove since they had a Roland Barthes book that I needed. In it he writes about journaling and the advantages/disadvantages of recording one's experience in this way. I have included a piece from Walter Benjamin about playing around with his books, and that linked into Michael Taussig's work from the first of the Documenta pamphlets where he is talking about the complications in keeping a journal as an anthropologist. That is just one section of a strange stream of thought that starts with that kind of confusion/delivered curiosity found within an artwork or within this Resource Room.

**KK:** So you have been pulling this material from all different sources and keeping a running bibliography in order to define or illuminate what exactly?

**AF:** I want to practice a kind of deliberation and put forward a consideration of the thinking process. It is a kind of journaling of idleness. Maybe for now it is a kind of political stance, just to occupy somewhere, occupy something. Now I'm just thinking about Zucotti Park, but that's not what I was trying to say... I want idleness to gain respect.

**KK:** But is it really idleness?

**AF:** It appears as idleness.

**KK:** Yeah, it is like a front for something else. You have described the residency to me as lurking around the workplace, but that is contradictory to what's actually happening here. Your presence is a riddle, you are playing in a sandbox of

your own making, but that “playing” is a cover-up for the “hard work” of an artist.

**AF:** You got it!

**KK:** Yeah, (laughing) I got it. You keep leaving bits of evidence of your presence here. Even a shift in a book’s placement on a shelf is a signal of activity, learning, inquiry, choice. But where do those clues lead? Is it to incite the practice of investigation in others or is it to justify your own lurking as an art form within the institution?

**AF:** I mean, it has to be some sort of self justification. It is kind of packing everything within those riddles and some of my pathological self deprecation, right? Sure, it’s for others, too—it is sort of an encouragement. Because I am trying to keep it working like a library, there is the idea that all of this is here to just be shared. The books and other items that I am deciding to lay out on the tables are less directed than what a true librarian would do, and it is a little more like saying, “Hey, this is some of what I am thinking about.” You may not arrive at the same end point as I did, but you’ll see the symbols and you will have your own kind of entry.

**KK:** Lets talk about some of the things that you are putting on display. You have a selection of books from the collection and they range from artists’ monographs to exhibition documents—some of which you have annotated with Post-it notes—and you have a book that you got out of Inter-Library Loan from another library that is now temporarily placed in our collection and there is some signage of your own making that features xeroxed images off the internet..

**AF:** My signage is riffing on the kinds of things I see at my job at the Central Library, although I am eliminating any of the “useful” or contextual information they might include. The Library recently made an entire display of the books that reside on the bottom shelves. It was meant to increase the circulation of these forgotten books, to keep them from being weeded out just because the alphabet had worked them to the bottom. My images are a similar device, but what they are pointing to is not known, it may not even be important. There is an image of this logo I have made up for the Resource Room—a little guy scratching his head with a floating question mark hovering above him—and I have included an image of a japanese girl in a bikini posing in the library stacks, and another one of an illustration of a robot. They are the kind of random clip art that might accompany one of the didactics I am referencing. Here the clip art stands alone, it becomes the information.

**KK:** That’s funny that you mention that thing about the bot-tom shelf, we are in the process of trying to figure out what it means to have a library within an art organization. What is the use, how do people find what they are looking for, what kind of books should we collect? As a contemporary art organization, should we cast off books that are over twenty years old? Do we want to keep it perpetually new, because we are not an organization that is particularly interested in collecting, but rather reflecting the “now”? Part of inviting residents to

mine from the collection is to see how they might subvert the library. How you and others might adapt its use to make it more or less useful for a public case. When I look at the images you selected like the hot chick in a bikini, it operates as a sly statement about what makes a library compelling, it pokes at the whole persona of the sexy librarian.

**AF:** It’s trying to promote teen reading or something base like “reading is hot”

**KK:** Having a real live bikini model in here might drive at-tendance... The image also points to the whole ridiculousness that an image of this even exists in the world and that it is yours for the taking.

**AF:** It also is from Japan...



**KK:** Right, there is a love of the absurd there, I mean have you read about pillow girlfriends! Fascinat-ing. What is this collaged image all about?

**KK:** It is from the *Documenta 11* book that led me to reference Sarat Maharaj’s writing in my bibliography project, the image is of a Ken Lum piece, a mirror with images stuck within the edges of the frame. Lying in front of this sign is a good pairing of books—one of the Walker Art Center collection and the other of the Rubell collection. It reminded me of a pile of riches. I also have a copy of *Mike’s World* out on the counter. I did not know much about his work, but it reminded me of the guy that Experimental 1/2 Hour had on a recent episode, the one who runs on treadmills, makes blended juices, and paints...

**KK:** John Kilduff, from *Let’s Paint, Exercise & Blend Drinks!*

**AF:** Yes, him! It was funny to see him on the show because my little brother in Nebraska had found that guy’s YouTube videos and passed them onto me years ago and I was just like, “This is strange,” but it reminds me of the work in this *Mike’s World* and the cover of the book is the same color as this Nils Norman book and I find him interesting.

**KK:** So it’s about making a display of books that is just as associative as the kinds of things you put together to make your own work or writing or thinking happen? Some of it is formal—color, shape, size—and some of it is conceptual, like stacking like ideas together and some of it is about...

**AF:** Being younger than Jesus, older than God.

**KK:** Yeah, talk about that...

**AF:** Well some of that it’s meant to throw you off the scent. This *Younger than Jesus* catalogue and the *Museums by Artists* book were originally paired for those same formal reasons: their covers are very similar in design and they are both bright yellow. Then I realized the artists in either one were of different generations—the implication being that in identifying artists younger than 33, everyone else just got old as fuck. You know, maybe that’s just because there is a certain acknowledgement in trying to present an idea in this way that you are most likely not going to end up at my same conclusion.

**KK:** Which is why it's not explained. We had that conversation about how to document your residency and we came to realize pretty quickly that you had no desire to write down a list of every book that you pulled. But I did, because I had this idea that someday that knowledge would be useful. What if in the future we need to understand your work and this very arrangement of books is the thing that marks an entire trajectory.

**AF:** (laughing) Right. It's at least as important as an *ArtForum* top ten list.

**KK:** It's how your tastes figure in to what you make as sculpture or video or installation, and how to value your taste—a legitimate part—of your art practice. It will probably be the last thing recognized, because it's easy to say, "Your sculpture is good," and for someone to want to buy it. It's harder to say, "Look at the totality of Alex's thinking," and try to sell that. That's what I feel that this residency is about: revealing the intelligence of your sculpture and trying to attribute value to the choices that you have decided to make that may seem inconsequential to some but seem absolutely connected and essential to you as an artist to me. Like, when I came in today and I walked from the back of the space to my desk and out of the corner of my eye I saw two magnets on our coffee table, one of them being a question mark, which linked back in my head to the logo/drawing you developed of the little man. Suddenly, you are interjecting all of these question marks into the corners of our office. You are asking us to consider the mundane. The other magnet is of that famous Portland promotional poster that says "Expose Yourself to Art" where I think it's Bud Clark flashing a public sculpture of a naked lady downtown in an effort to add this sense of humor to the idea that it's a civic responsibility to invest in culture. Now that I am sitting here closer to the table, I can see the magnet with the question mark is actually a magnet from the Multnomah County Library, which is also where you work, but now it's also inexplicably linked to our own Resource Room, to our meager Library that doesn't participate in the Dewey Decimal system. But we are associated now with it because of your inhabiting the space. You have left the mark, their mark, and now we are all together in the same place. That forms this pictorial sentence in my brain about the relationship of all of the things at play here.

**AF:** Mmmmm, that is good.

**KK:** It also brings up magnets as this curious material that I have seen you struggling with for a few weeks.

**AF:** I should have never gotten science involved.

**KK:** HA! Are you trying to make a bulletin board? What's happening with the magnets?

**AF:** It is sort of a bulletin board, I think. I've continued on with it just because every time I have failed, I'm reinvested because I simultaneously figure out more about what it is supposed to mean if it ever succeeds. And that is supposed to serve as this mutable work, an open work. Umberto Eco actually talks about that never-finished state. How do you collect something when the artist's hand is so important? That the cock-eyed placement of a xerox won't be maintained if you ever remove it from the wall. So I start to see it as a way to plan out the exhibition that will happen here in a couple weeks. I

also realized that it is a replica of your programming calendar in Angela's office. I was unconsciously mimicking the work I associate with your festival.

**KK:** Oh, our janky handmade calendar was a reaction to not having a traditional office whiteboard, so we tacked up a piece of paper to the wall with Post-it notes that we could move around. It is a visual of all of the performances and as soon as we put it up it "becomes real". We can't live without it and it has become a way for the rest of the staff to see that we are "working" too, that these artists and projects that exist in our minds have substance and will soon be in our midst. It is interesting that you picked up on that particular adaptation; it is the same as your desire to just be in the presence of information with unclear goals in mind.

**AF:** Yeah. I have been reacting to the stuff of PICA and adapting the space where I can see a certain need.

**KK:** What are the ways that you are doing that now?

**AF:** It has been about reacting to this triad of performativity that I mentioned the other night over burgers. When I am working in my studio alone I imagine this invisible audience. Within the office/library/gallery here I can see what it is like to have an actual audience. I don't know if people are taking notice exactly, but there is the performativity of the petulant artist, like leaving my supplies around—a paint roller, a pile of papers, my calling card. The second part of the triad is the idle patron, who gets to come in and be a voyeur to my activities, and to the collection of books. And then there is the role of the dutiful librarian that maintains access to it all.

**KK:** In this case are you performing all three? Or two out of the three?

**AF:** In doing the bulletin board thing?

**KK:** All of it..

**AF:** Oh, all of it? Here? It's all three. Always. To the point where I should probably focus more on one thing at a time. A typical day here is fifteen minutes of emailing and talking about acquisitions and fifteen minutes on tumblr, an hour reading and trying to remind myself what I have been thinking about the past week, and then some more time re-organizing or making things. I am always in a state of losing track, but it's because I am so susceptible to interruption, so suggestible I guess, that anything that I pick up falls under that purview.

But yeah, making the library kind of work also.. I lost my train of thought again. Footstools? Chairs? Oh yeah! Yeah, doing that work of the librarian, realizing that the shelving, the main shelving, ends at a point and picks up with these movable lower shelves, but not in a reasonable way so you didn't know where the call numbers started up again. I reorganized the shelves and put them in a particular order and in doing that I was stuck with this leftover furniture that was in the way. So I stacked them and made them into a sort of sculpture. Also in sitting around all day I kept wanting to put my feet up and that is how I came to inserting footstools. I plan on making this hanging file folder structure of bent metal, sort of a take off on those Mies van der Rohe chairs over there at the communal table. All of this stuff I am bringing in—the magnets, the books, the footstools—became an excuse to do some internet

shopping, I guess. A byproduct of that activity is that I like getting stuff delivered here. "Alexander Felton C/O PICA."

**KK:** (laughs) Yeah, that makes it all feel very important.

**AF:** So, yeah, it is about making the space work for me. I was smoking a cigarette out on the porch (don't tell Mom) and had nowhere to put it and just an hour before, Morgan Ritter had visited and said, "I just made this big ass ashtray." So I commissioned her to make one for the PICA deck. It all just came together. It is about aestheticizing use.

**KK:** But it is only through your process as an artist that those things become artful and not just practical. I stack and rearrange the chairs all the time out of frustration, but it is hardly sculpture.

**AF:** And then there was the time that Erin [Doughton's] daughter Lucy came to the office for an event. I was on the floor with all of these supplies laid out, the fragments of this failure of a bulletin board thing/installation. I was attempting to hang it on the wall and it kept falling all over the place. And Lucy asked what I was doing. I told her I was making art. She asked, "Why is it art?" and I just replied, "Cuz I said so." I was trying to just get out of explaining it in this frustrating moment, but she accepted that as a legitimate answer. It was enough for her.

When I first learned about this residency, I immediately began thinking about what I could do and I came up with something that I don't know if anyone would have time for. Even our interns could not handle it in a timely fashion.

**KK:** What is it?

**AF:** It was to make a catalog of everything in here, but organized in a vernacular way or in a way that renders it useless really, not so searchable, and encourages instead this sort of stumble. You know, for all of the talk about sharing and the ethos of the library that I grew up with, I have that impulse to make anti-information as well, something that stands in the way of knowing. So I told my Dad (who is a librarian) this and he was like, "You know that that makes me crazy to think that you would try to confuse a patron." And I had to tell him that is the work of the artist, or that it is my interpretation of the work of the artist. In a way, it was the same thing I tried to justify with my answer to Lucy.

**KK:** Yes, you can tell him that is what I hired you to do, then he will understand.

**AF:** I think that I will hang stuff on the shelves, too. All of it will come together in a one day show called *As the World Churns*.

**KK:** Sounds good.

**AF:** I have also been making a really strange papier-mâché-on-canvas rendering of that cartoon I used for the PICA website announcing the residency. It said, "You wanted me on my day off, You got me on my day off," and it is of this cranky lady in her slippers and robe.

**KK:** I think I might be that lady! Bizarrel!

**AF:** Haha, yeah, fucking weird. But everyone who comes in and sees it is like, "Awesome." [Alex] Dolan was crazy for it.

Like the pink now continues and defines her head and I've been working on painting in, kind of like a similar yellow, similar green, whatever the colors are that define her arm, whatever the field of color that it is in. I keep imagining it hung in front of the video archive shelves, because I want to highlight that corner of the Resource Room where all of the cords and shit is piled up. So much shit that has no other place!

**KK:** Can we get back to magnets for a second? I want to get a legit answer in this interview somehow. (laughter) You talked about wanting to make this system, to make this thing to mimic our programing calendar, but the other part of it (even though you could make that in five seconds by hanging up a piece of paper and doing whatever you want to), it seems ...

**AF:** (Interrupts) Overly complicated?

**KK:** No, it seems that there is no other solution. You are resolute that it must be hung with magnets. Not only that it must be affixed to the wall with magnets, but that all the material must be able to be moved around with magnets. But my question is why magnets? Why this suspension?

**AF:** I don't even know anymore how I got to that. I mean, I think it...well, no I do! Well, it's this material, that Cinefoil stuff, it's a heavy aluminium foil that has something kind of artificial about it. I guess maybe just because I am always using paper which feels more corporeal.

I once spray glued these photocopies onto this material; it was just a recipe for chicken and dumplings that was floating around my house-studio and I had to just get it out of the way. I started looking at it and now that I have hung it up on the wall it is "Art". So that was the first time those materials met and I wanted to do it again. It's metal, so I thought it must be magnetic and it's not. I've been trying to force it to be magnetic with this magnetic paint, which has made it so heavy. The magnets are because it is impermanent. It has to be hung with magnets because it's kind of just, I don't know what the word is, it's kind of just operating under the same principle—the whole, the display mechanism itself, is impermanent.

What does that mean? You know, maybe I will know in a couple years. I started to touch on this earlier and it relates to the way that the artist makes something in a state of confusion and synthesizes these things and makes this product that is not elucidating for anybody, but, in the end, it at least tells the artist something about themselves. Those things that I made even five years ago, or older student work, those animations I used to make... I have realized I'm still talking about the same thing: that information overload or just the way that information flows that I've been talking about that since I was eighteen, since I was twenty. Here I am, back at it, or maybe I've always been at it and I didn't see it until now. As a young artist, I can't help but keep attacking that problem and that, as I'm finding out, is my bread and butter, the thing that may carry me on for years. So I don't know what it means. I just know that it needs to happen. The end!

**KK:** Yes! The end!

**Alex Felton** is an artist and publisher who lives and works in Portland, Oregon. His work has been exhibited widely throughout the Pacific Northwest including: Small A Projects, Fourteen30 Contemporary, Ditch Projects, Carhole, Half/ Dozen, and the Lee Cason Doss Center for Garden Arts. Along with his collaborator Kevin Abell, Felton founded the periodical poster *Nudity in Groups*. In addition Felton is the editor of the annual literary journal *Weekday*, published by Publication Studio, which also published Felton's book *Touched by an Email* (2010). The artist's second book *Funny or Die* (2011) was published by Container Corps. Felton received his BFA from the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Felton sells his sculptural editions through Stand Up Comedy, and his work is regularly featured on Collectionof.net.

PICA's **Resource Room Residency (RRR)** program was initiated in 2012 in order to provide time, space, and resources for artists whose practices live at the intersection of research and art. The program encourages a consideration of libraries, archives, collections, and collecting, but can find outlets in many forms and disciplines. RRRs are provided with a modest stipend and unlimited access to our archive of books, media, and ephemera for three month engagements. They intersect with PICA's members and the community at large through salon discussions, screenings, public performances, and printed materials. The 2012 RRRs are Alex Felton, Claudia Meza, and Lisa Radon.

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