

## IN CONVERSATION WITH...

### Matthew Linde

by Emily McGuire on January 18, 2016

As a hybrid entity situated somewhere between a retail and gallery space, Centre for Style presents creative work from a dedicated group of practitioners who tinker with our understandings of taste, luxury and beauty. Matthew Linde established Centre for Style in 2013 in Melbourne, Australia to create a space for community and experimentation in an otherwise exclusory and standardised fashion world. Emily McGuire caught up with Matthew to discuss his creative practice and the slippery relationship between art and fashion.



Boulevard performance, day one (2015), Gertrude Contemporary window display

**Emily McGuire:** With a punk sensibility and a great sense of humour, Centre for Style critiques the dynamics between art and fashion through questioning ideas of taste, beauty, style and consumerism. A sense of discontent with the current fashion world seems to underpin its curatorial projects. What made you want to establish Centre for Style?

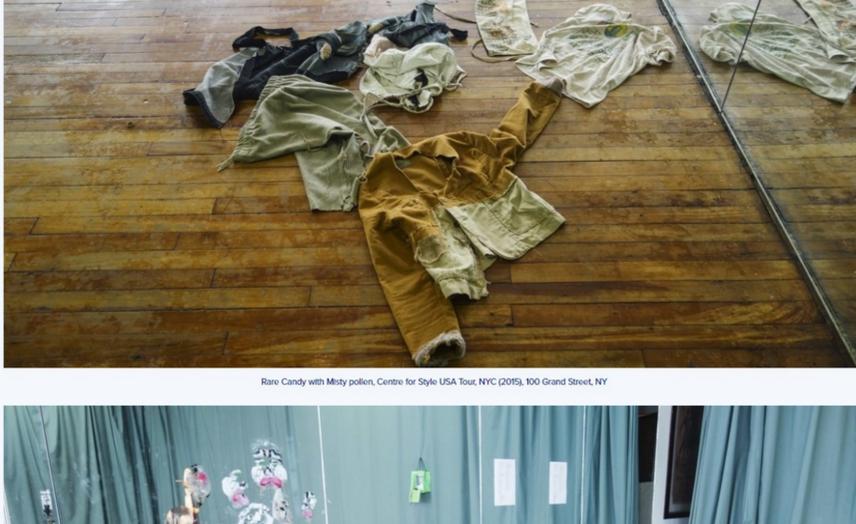
**Matthew Linde:** Centre for Style started as a project to open up conversation around fashion practice and how it is communicated, particularly as an exhibition form. This 'opening up' happens when questions arise (fashion fades, style is eternal), so naturally market-reflexive and marginal practices are encouraged.

**Centre for Style routinely works with a selection of local and international makers. What do you look for in a practitioner's body of work?**

I like hardcore fashion, when it puts you on edge. More often than not we have to look beyond fashion designers for that, though.

**Centre for Style adopts a critical and creative approach to displaying, discussing, and interacting with fashion. Why is critically engaging with fashion important to Centre for Style?**

I agree with Rancière when he describes spectators as participants. Are we all passive cockroaches? I'm frightened by fashion because it is a critical form – artist Helen Johnson says painting is. That Kantian disinterested aesthetic contemplation could be antithetical to fashion like 'Shoes'. To quote artist Antek Walczak paraphrasing the thoughts of Baudelaire – the moment the bourgeois calls himself a bourgeois with disdain, the bourgeois as an antagonistic term is exhausted. To swear to be against capitalism today is a static, useless stance. This is the dilemma of critique today.



Rare Candy with Misty pollen, Centre for Style USA Tour, NYC (2015), 100 Grand Street, NY



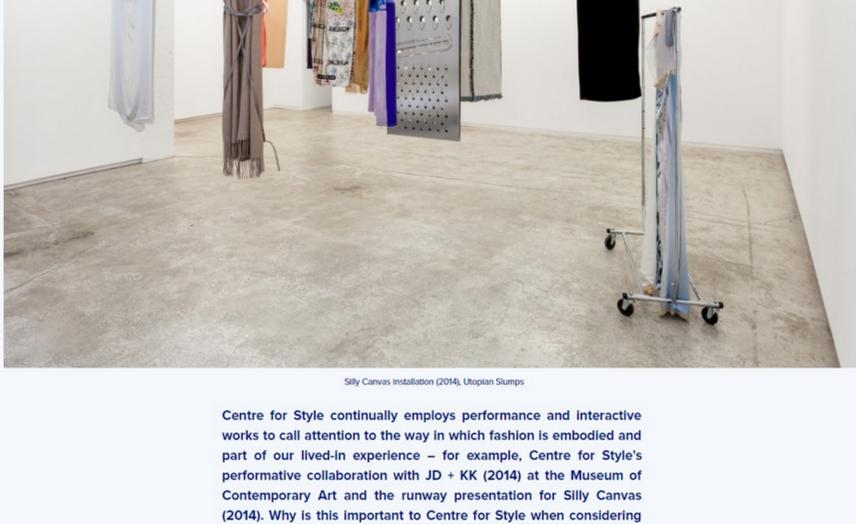
Rare Candy with Misty pollen, Centre for Style USA Tour, NYC (2015), 100 Grand Street, NY

**There's something kind of amusing about your curatorial practice, whether it be a witty exhibition title, a sense of willful amateurism, or the presence of gritty, decadent glamour. Is humour an important device in your work considering the fashion world takes itself so seriously and if so, why?**

Our name is a joke but it's not our food. Chloé Maratta describes things as "chic as hell" or particular garments as avant garde. Humour is our way to be retrograde.

**Your practice continually challenges ideas of taste and at times this can appear quite confronting. I think this is particularly interesting considering the display of fashion in the gallery or museum setting typically celebrates ideas of beauty and style dictated by traditional and historical elements of the fashion system. How does Centre for Style respond to this?**

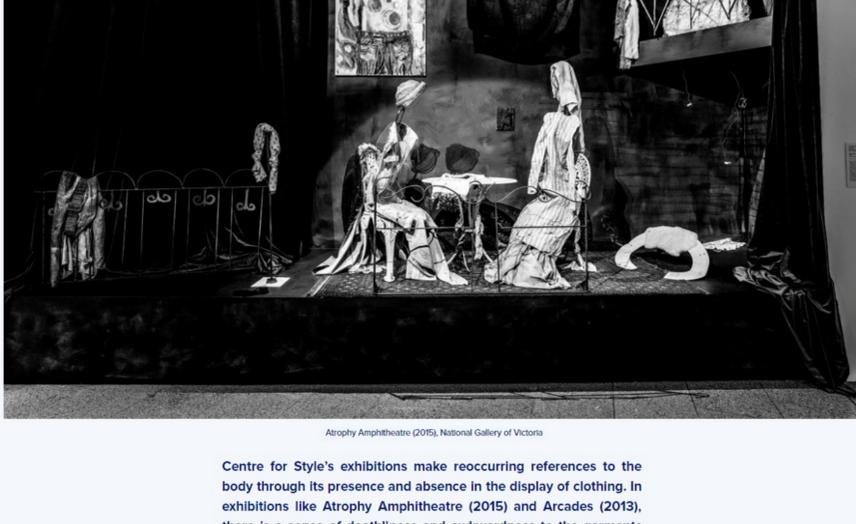
Maybe director or facilitator is the better term. I don't know if I like the term "curator" anymore. In a directorial way, Centre for Style uses fashion as a plaything to collage experiences and as a force for aestheticising subjectivities. A warped stringy handbag flung off a fence reminds you're late for the next bus. Fashion opens up a performative space. There is a liberty permitted to play with ideas of commodity and humour, styling and scenography, beauty and craft to generate a sort of messy scrapbook.



Silly Canvas installation (2014), Utopian Slumps

**Centre for Style continually employs performance and interactive works to call attention to the way in which fashion is embodied and part of our lived-in experience – for example, Centre for Style's performative collaboration with JD + KK (2014) at the Museum of Contemporary Art and the runway presentation for Silly Canvas (2014). Why is this important to Centre for Style when considering the curation of fashion outside the traditional confines of the museum?**

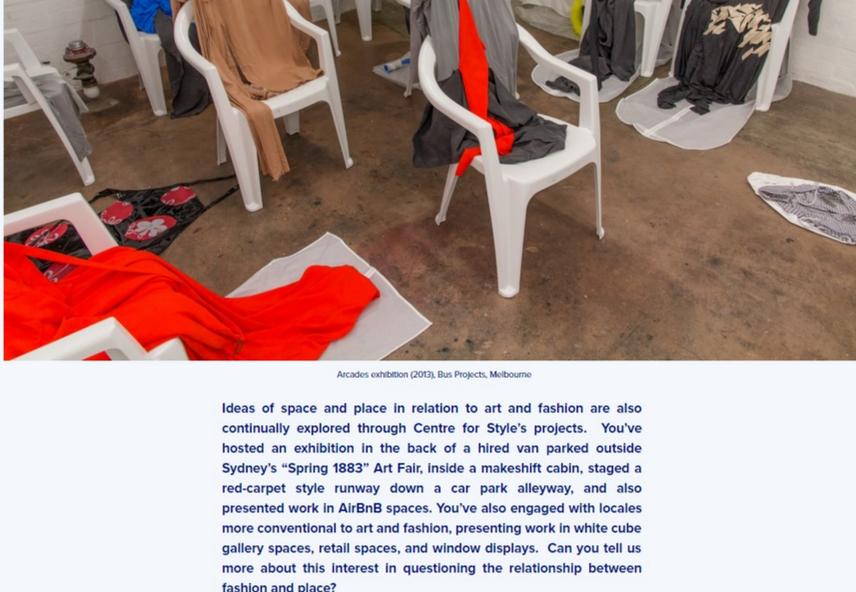
Think about practices such as Rare Candy, Women's History Museum, even Eckhaus Latta ... often garments recede to what's more important, which is the bodies performing them. The craft of casting makes an embodied experience that reflects more about the narrative than the collection.



Atrophy Amphitheatre (2015), National Gallery of Victoria

**Centre for Style's exhibitions make reoccurring references to the body through its presence and absence in the display of clothing. In exhibitions like Atrophy Amphitheatre (2015) and Arcades (2013), there is a sense of deathliness and awkwardness to the garments presented off the body though arranged as if to recall its form. Can you tell us about this interest in exploring the embodiment of clothing?**

To quote Elizabeth Wilson (1987), "We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves. For clothes are so much part of our living, moving selves that, frozen on display in the mausoleums of culture, they hint at something only half understood, sinister, threatening; the atrophy of the body, and the evanescence of life."



Arcades exhibition (2013), Bus Projects, Melbourne

**Ideas of space and place in relation to art and fashion are also continually explored through Centre for Style's projects. You've hosted an exhibition in the back of a hired van parked outside Sydney's "Spring 1883" Art Fair, inside a makeshift cabin, staged a red-carpet style runway down a car park alleyway, and also presented work in AirBnB spaces. You've also engaged with locales more conventional to art and fashion, presenting work in white cube gallery spaces, retail spaces, and window displays. Can you tell us more about this interest in questioning the relationship between fashion and place?**

Centre for Style runs parallel to this conventional system in the way we align to the art world but as we continue to stake out terrain for expanded fashion practices we'll necessarily generate our own set of rules and methods. One of these is to hold true to our engagement with the body, wear and identity. The gallery is just one framework through which to exercise this.

**Rag is a publication you're working on that brings together critical texts about contemporary fashion culture. What were the motivations behind establishing this publication?**

We always wanted to be Carrie Bradshaw at 84.

#### Related Post



artist duo Nutty Tarts



exhibition maker Judith Clark



pop-ethnographer Nina Manandhar



Uk fashion graduates, are you ready?



Posted in IN CONVERSATION WITH... | Comments Off on Matthew Linde