

# PROPOSAL

Anna Leonowens Proposal - Ada Denil 2023

## **A Room of One's Own // Rent Free**

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A process show / open studio

*A Room of One's Own // Rent Free* is a week-long open-studio performance focusing on process, production and space. I will set up in Gallery 3 and use it as my studio space for the entirety of the exhibition, during regular gallery hours. During the week I will produce a series of small paper cubes, 1-2 inches cubed, reminiscent of the size of children's building-blocks. I am conceptualizing the performance and the artwork produced as existing both as one work, and two separate works: The performance portion: *A Room of One's Own*, with clear reference to Virginia Woolf's essay of the same name, and the work produced: *Rent Free*, with reference to the saying "living rent free in my mind."

### **The Performance Concept**

The basic premise for the action/performance is to provoke and facilitate reflection on the limited resource that space is today, as well as point to why having one's own space is so crucial to the creative process, offering both security and opportunity.

We are in the midst of a housing crisis, and finding an affordable space to live in is hard enough, let alone finding an *additional* space to create art in. NSCAD is also at a pivotal moment in consideration of space, facilities and accessibility with the upcoming move/consolidation to/at the Port Campus property. In addition to this, artist spaces within the city have become increasingly scarce, or itinerant. There have been recent gains on this last front, with respect to the funding recently acquired by the Khyber, which indicates positive movement in this regard; At the very least there has been an increase in awareness of the need for communal art spaces.

I have been a student at NSCAD for almost 6 years, and despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic I've generally had access to spaces, both shared and private, within the school. In fact, perhaps in large part due to the pandemic and the subsequent challenges of reentering the studios; Space has been one of the pivotal and prescient themes in my mind during my time at the art college. Soon, by the time this show is underway, I will have graduated and will no longer have access to these studios.

### **The Content/Artwork and process on display**

A work space (table, chair, supplies) will be set up. A selection of my sculptures, inspirations, books and artworks will also populate the room, arranged as they would be in an active studio (on display, but less formal). Like a studio, things might shift in the space during the week as requirements of working dictate, or if conversations develop with viewers/visitors. The walls on the North and South side of the room will be the only traditionally/formally curated aspect of the show. They will display a series of small (4x5 inches) printed photographs of my process-shots and works in progress taken over the past several years. The photos will be arranged in a uniform grid, in chronological order (much like a contact sheet).

The contents of the room (what is actually in the gallery while this action is occurring) is focused on process, production, and behind the scenes work. These images, objects, artworks, as well as the general work-purposed furniture in the space, all speak to a central theme of artistic activity, and an active demonstration of how personal space can facilitate artistic production. *Examples of artworks and photographs to be included in the space are provided in this proposal.*

### **What Will Happen: The Performance and Work Produced**

During the exhibition I will arrive when the gallery opens at 11am and work in the space until the gallery closes at 5pm. As I will be present in the space, I will happily chat with any visitor who would like to engage. This is not a performance with any division from the context of reality – I am quite literally staging an open-studio environment and intend on treating it as such.

I will produce a series of small folded paper cubes. These cubes will be folded from scanned/printed pages of my sketchbooks, beginning with the most recent pages and working in reverse chronological order (an excavation of sorts). I will meticulously cut, and fold these small cubes. The working area will slowly become more and more populated by these small units, bits and pieces, their visual content fragmented somewhat through the process of folding/cutting. A wide waist-high plinth, or display table, will slowly become populated by the cubes as the show continues.

The pages (containing my ideas, thoughts, notes, sketches etc. all held in a private, two dimensional space) will be lifted from my books, elevated to objecthood, and placed in a public space. With their newfound presence as objects, each of these blocks can be viewed, arranged or rearranged, stacked, turned over, held and contemplated by visitors.

The making of this work is my attempt to work through and question the issues surrounding space, while reflecting on my own desires and dreams of continuing to freely manifest my creative ideas and queries. Imagine doing so in a secure space (one that no one can kick you out of) and without the looming and existential threat (one particularly extreme for sculptors making large works) that if I *make* this I need to *put* it somewhere! By creating these cubes, indiscriminately making all of my ideas into tangible, three dimensional objects that take up space in this way, I am intentionally constructing a conundrum. Previously, with the exception of the physical volume of a sketchbook, these ideas lived “rent free” in my mind. Now they need to be housed too...

For this reason, for the duration of the exhibition, and after, I will offer the objects produced to gallery visitors as well as folks online who wish to house each object produced. Viewers (both in person and virtually) will be able to register to acquire a single block, an idea, a page from my books. These will be given, free of charge. The recipient is inherently doing me a solid favour by offering to shelter, care for and appreciate my work, which would otherwise need to be put (somewhere) in storage.