

Letter to the vacuum cleaner for What Difference Does it Make roundtable discussion on 27th March 2010 at Stanley Picker Gallery, part of Louder than Bombs: Art, Action and Activism series of residencies and events

(READ OUT LOUD PLEASE – pausing between lines)

James,

Hello.

How are you?

Are there many people there,

Listening?

What we have to say is for you

Really

Not for anyone else.

But

If

People are there

then we don't really mind them listening...

We went to COP 15, slow travelled there and back in December – if train and boat can be included in the practice of slow travel. We used the money that we got from the Arnolfini to buy tickets and spend on food and other costs. It was a £2000 pound artist fee for our participation in PLATFORM's C Words: Carbon Climate Capital Culture. Since we promised that we'd spend the money on going to COP15 then we thought we'd better make sure we kept that promise.

The money came, like lots of 'art' money does, through the taxpayer, siphoned off through the treasury to the ministry for arts culture and sport to the arts council. Then the Arnolfini applied to the Arts Council in order to, amongst other things, secure fees for commissioned artists participating on C Words.

We're not trying to be clever by not appearing in person, but travelling down to the big shitty (that's what we like to call London) would not help us in our battles to defossilize our economies. We'd quite like to be there with you, the other speakers and the audience (if any turned up) but we felt that sending a package was more appropriate. And also, Sid has chickenpox and Gabriel's in Wales, on a school trip. In a way we feel that we are probably more 'present' in this form than if we had turned

up. It's funny how presence and absence mess each other up sometimes, but let's focus on the package. The package is what's left from our COP15 trip.

Please lift the package high above your head (but not directly over your head, arms a little bit in front). You may need someone to hold this piece of paper while you do this so you can read from it.

Ask someone from the audience (if there is anyone there) to hold the paper up in front of your face so you can continue to read as you hold the package high in the air.

Do that now. Go on ask someone. Maybe Olivia could do it,

but we'll leave that up to you.

We know how these artist events go, sometimes you fall out with the curator and feel awkward asking them for assistance after you've been swearing at them in the morning.

OK. So.

Please tip the contents of the package onto the floor in front of you.

Sorry we forgot to say that you should go and stand in an empty space.

If you have emptied all of the stuff over some chairs or on a table or something then that'll just have to do, but ideally we were thinking about an empty floor.

Nevermind.

Now you have an installation of rubbish. COP15 rubbish.

We hope this fits with the Stanley Picker Gallery aesthetic, not only that, we heard that outsourcing labour – that's you doing our work for us, James - was 'in'.

There is a used cup, a empty wrapper, a serviette.

James, please name a few more items.

There is a comprehensive list of our expenditure for COP15 somewhere in the pile of rubbish. This outlines how we spent our £2000 artist fee and what rubbish we accumulated as a result of it.

So, this is it, a collection of much of the rubbish that we accumulated on our trip to COP15.

The five of us, without brilliant pre-planning admittedly, found ourselves hungry and thirsty at exactly the wrong times in exactly the wrong places.

Train stations, sea ports, bus stops.

Packaging. Packaging. Packaging.

The smell of diesel in all of it.

There's just one more thing to do before we end.

James, we know you like to clean up after capitalism, we know where your name comes from, the vacuum cleaner, but this time you can clean up and earn a wage.

Out of the £2000 artist fee that we dedicated to the COP15 trip we have £198.11 left.

If you rummage around in the rubbish you will find it, in a small white envelope.

This envelope is lodged inside Little One's Eco Disposable Nappies plastic bag.

There should be about £190 there. Count it out.

We deducted from £198.11 postage and packaging for this rubbish to get to you at the Stanley Picker gallery. This is for you to use however you see fit. Primarily it is to pay for you to clean up our rubbish after us. But we have no criteria for how you use this money.

Pay your friend's rent with it or buy yourself a new cardigan or go the pub with the audience afterwards (if any turned up).

Whatever you decide to do we genuinely feel that the best last resting place of the taxpayer funded £2000 artist fee is up your sucker.

Love

The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home.