

Lesley Guy

Guests: Bevis Martin and Charlie Youle

Hosts: Jaspar Jospheh-Lester and Sharon Kivland

07.10.2009

Starting from inadequate approaches and failed attempts Martin and Youle described their creative and critical journey after leaving art school. Like the work they presented the artists were slightly awkward and deceptively refreshing. It's clear they don't underrate pleasure: 'golden, spunky enthusiasm' is how they described one piece. They described their methods for making work, which include acting on silly impulse, following ideas that are embarrassing or 'not very good'. With almost complete disregard for scientific method they seek to describe and understand the physical world and in doing so they have exposed the uncertainties and complications concerning truth, knowledge, and ideas. It seems as if they want to resolve the learning they began at school, undo the mistakes, go back and do it their own way. They have created their own museum made up of objects formed from their unique and personal epistemology; still, they retain an element that is childish, inadequate and seeking approval. Viewers are taken on a pedagogical journey, but in doing so we learn more about the personal act of discovery than facts about the real world. Art has a function, and sometimes this fails or breaks down, or the intention is not realised. They spoke of the function or purpose being weak, which they play up to or turn into subject matter, and ultimately it becomes strength. For them failure is in some part what drives the work forward.

Guest: Tim Etchells

Host: Penny McCarthy

14.10.2009

Tim and Penny sat together but addressed each other as if they were on the other side of the world. This was an attempt to expand the form of the artist talk as makers; the result was a conversation in public, an exchange of texts between them. Here was an incomplete artefact, played out through unfinished conversations, using the pull-anti-pull of coherence. E.M. Forster said 'only connect', but it would seem there is value in not connecting, the separation between materials, separate narratives side by side which remain unresolved. When the viewer makes the connections the work may become stagnant, dumb, and without tension. I disagree this is when it comes to life. Understanding, observation or interaction do not kill work, rather they animates it with new life each time. Fragments create compulsion and invite interpretation.

Etchells is so bright, so eloquent and prepared. A true performer and yet I cannot hear his voice. Where is he? He asks Penny: 'Where are you with time?' Penny is dispossessed and longing for a home. It is gone. All she has left is the drawing. The texture of time on paper, things that pierce time such as ancient shopping lists, or the

notes made on the day one was born. Erased, restored or retrieved, none of us are blank slates; a little bit of the old always shows through.

As an actor Tim addresses an imaginary audience, those that are not necessarily present. Is not being there like being dead? Being dead means not being anywhere, and yet omnipresent. They spoke about death and the invasion of the mourner's mind by thoughts, images, sensations. The place they used to be shrinks and leaves a little shrivelled scab. In time the performance comes to an end but the conversation between them remains irresistibly unfinished.

Guest: Kelly Large

Host: Becky Shaw

28.10.2009

Kelly Large talked about the relation between process and product in her work, about the process of critical thinking, the possibilities of over-thinking and the anxiety of not producing. Her host Becky Shaw described the difficulties they had had, as friends, working together collaboratively, which made sense considering how close they are in ideas and practice. The public requirements of their work, their integrity and anxiety are bound together. This nobility borders on the romantic, which is also impossible; how could it be anything other than caring? As artists, particularly those who work with other people, they may find themselves speaking on someone else's behalf, 'articulating them through you', and of course, this is impossible too. I was reminded of Roland Barthes' description of the impossibility of knowing the other in *A Lover's Discourse*. It was evident in the questions later that the younger members of the audience did not understand this anxiety; sometimes there are huge distances between us. By knowing the artist's anxieties might we understand her desires and then know her a little better? Or at least know the work? I wanted to ask why she deliberately chose these residencies that made her feel uncomfortable. The answer lies, perhaps, in the idea of choice, because it is not the residency that causes her pain, it was what she decides to do with it. Kelly Large appears driven by the need to get under the skin of it, beneath the meniscus, not to retrieve definite answers but to explore what that thing is, that anxiety of not knowing.

Guest: David Bate

Host: Michelle Atherton

18.11.2009

Although David Bate discussed the history of his photographic practice and his experiments with media and technology, the most fascinating aspect of the talk was the underlying theme of friendship and the stranger. This relationship was described as something strange and baroque, a thing to be manipulated endlessly, like a material or technical process, a social glue that binds the intangible. Strangely, Bates made it clear that his role as an artist is to describe rather than criticise his subject matter; I was expecting him to confess to something more complicated or canny. He described using

Tarkovsky's film *Stalker* on a residency in Estonia, with people with whom he was struggling to connect. In the film there is a place the characters journey through called the Zone. Nobody knows how this space works; there are rules for operating in it, but it is not clear what they are. The characters in the film struggle to connect with each other as each is on a private journey. The magical room in the Zone towards which they are journeying may grant desires that lie buried deep in them. They are strangers to their own desires and so to themselves. On another residency in Australia, Bates was, again, a stranger navigating strange terrain. As a guest he seemed overwhelmed by the obligations that went with the role. He was curious, perhaps quirky, entertaining and polite but the work he made was descriptive, not oppositional. Was this a missed opportunity? In *Stalker*, the men get to their destination, but, initially due to fear, are ultimately unwilling to go in. For them it was a wise choice.

Guest: Amanda Beech

Host: Jaspar Joseph-Lester

25.11.2009

How do you know if something is radical? Giorgio Morandi painted the same small set of bourgeois objects, over and over, while war raged and fascism took hold of his country, and I find this incredibly radical by its sheer perversity. I suspect I have an idealistic vision of the artist here; I do not really know too much about him or his motivations, but those pictures speak for themselves. It felt as though Amanda Beech was articulating something similar to this perverse criticality. The idea that art ought to be doing something is challenged and yet her work induces a sensation lying somewhere on the borderline between joy and terror, which is associated with bombast and doctrine. She explored the affect of text-image; the objective of it is to be a persuasive force, but what does it *do*? How can language be material? Does it manifest somehow, like ectoplasm? The contingency is in the fact that we might not be persuaded.

A position can change at any time.

Guest: Juan Cruz

Host: Sharon Kivland

02.12.2009

You have to listen to Juan Cruz to hear his work. His work is in his voice, of which there are two; the other is internal. We hear it in the slightly broken pauses, the gaps for breath, we hear him thinking, translating. Cruz activates the words, and his verbal performance is almost priestly or liturgical in the way it transforms language. It is confessional, too, when he shares his methods and skills as well as his incapability and guilt about falling back onto the muse. His voice is soft, his style is gentle and easy. He sits in lamplight, casting a long strange shadow behind him; the effect is soporific, like being read a bedtime story.

Guest: Kate Davis
Host: Julie Westerman
25.01.2010

The bridge. A bridge. Any bridge.

Julie Westerman worked with her guest, Kate Davis, to produce a video gift to the transmission audience. Combining footage of Sheffield's Lady's bridge with a live reading of a text piece made on a previous residency, host and guest drew upon years of chance meetings near water to create another form of presentation. What was interesting was the way voice was being used as a medium and how it functioned between reading and performance. The video was unedited, and so was the spoken piece. It was a text originally conceived to be read rather than listened to and so it had a rhythm that felt a little at odds with ordinary speech. The piece was unfinished, a fact the artists acknowledged, which often generates effort on the part of the audience to imagine what the work might become, inspiring ideas and suggestions, which were, of course, not articulated.

Guest: Lindsay Seers
Host: Chloë Brown
10.02.2010

It was intended as an event, not a talk, and was not recorded so there would be no opportunity to look back. In a way this illustrated Seer's method of using photography to create an encounter rather than to record. Her work shows the distortion of lived experience. With photographic paper in the mouth and lips as aperture the world falls into her body. She inserted vampire teeth; the photo is like a vampire, present but absent, fixed in time. On the screen is a negative image like a blood-veined retina, looking out, looking in? She talked about memory loss and her search for lost stories: 'the world is full of places where things used to be.' Intuition is an important tool; it relates to structure and creativity, it is a deep form of insight. Total interconnectivity. Mourning, death, and loss are a part of photography but so are fun, pleasure and desire; it has a history of 'thrill', a sideshow quality. The description she gave of the making of the photos, her drives and desires felt so honest that this is where I wished she'd started.

Guest: André Stitt
Host: Hester Reeve
17.02.2010

On friendship he says that people drift apart, people die. This is said in seriousness, yet he has a twinkle in his eye. It sets the tone of the presentation. It was a restrained performance, for this reason, and in light of his reputation as 'trickster', it can be

considered generous. The presentation could only be a selective overview of a life in performance art; we can only judge him on the parts he chose to talk about, so it felt unfamiliar to some who thought they knew him. Stitt's presence in the auditorium was magnetic and commanding, yet he came across as vulnerable, a man who needs to show his pain and perform his healing in public. Because of this we trusted him completely and welcomed him with open arms. He embodied the transformative act. The talk about his early development as an artist was much appreciated; he talks and teaches, and he wants to share, a most human and humane guest. I wanted to put my arms around him and talk for a while but was glad that he did not stay too long or get drunk.

Guest: James Pyman

Host: Lesley Sanderson

24.02.2010

What kind of artist is he? Fine artist, contemporary artist, or comic book illustrator? All of the above? Narrative and coherence would be the themes, also nostalgia, sentiment(ality). *1979* is this about the distance of love (loving a band), something unobtainable, or is it about a large detailed drawing? Pop teenage fantasy; you are back in your bedroom working away at images of desire and longing. He transcribes the tiny magazine photo into a giant drawing. Does the scale of the drawing express the scale of his desire, or is it an attempt to dilute it? There is something about the smudgy pencil marks, soft focus, so dreamy. The work is beautiful and that is valid; it is also valid to say you do it because you 'like it'.

Guest: Neville Gabie

Host: David Cotterrell

03.03.2010

He was in a remote town in Western Australia, flying kites, looking down on the marks on the landscapes, thinking about aboriginal maps and drawings. His playful transgressions allowed him to see more, the danger and the beauty. The kite dances like Jackson Pollock moving around the canvas. The blank landscape is like a mirror onto which you project yourself. He is not loyal to any particular medium; what is central is a response to a location, particularly those in a state of flux or transition. 'How can I make sense of these things, what do they mean to others?' How can you understand a place as complex as a building site? Hidden behind hoardings is an international community; following granite from its source, a spider web of materials, all the people involved, their cultures and traditions. People bring food and songs, a temporary gathering where lives are enriched. The beauty is that when the work is done, the workers disperse to other jobs, and what is left behind? This is the special power of the residency. The drawings on the window of the moving ship are more personal. They are about a loss, trying not to go away. These may have affected me as much as the singing, perhaps because they seem so futile, almost desperate, whereas the singing is a declaration and at least sounds strong.

Guests: Simon Hollington and Kypros Kyprianou

Host: Rose Butler

10.03.2010

The main focus was on residential work and they gave an interesting insight into their methods for dealing with creative production in these situations. They showed how the influences of cinema, and in particular early British sci-fi, had shaped the landscape of their thinking. Playing make-believe with lab coats and beards and setting up important looking equipment; the gravitational anomaly reminds me of *The Stone Tapes* by Nigel Neale. There is an eerie presence in the abandoned laboratory; perhaps they unleashed a supernatural force? Much is made of technology and the uncanny sensations it inspires. It was obvious that the work had been made under the conditions of friendship and play; they enjoyed making the work and ultimately the work is pleasurable to experience. As a result the work is wry, subtle, and ironic. This is the pleasure of anxiety redeemed through childhood fantasy and an (optimistic) exploration of those fears. They invite us to imagine that it might turn out OK, well, it might! In doing so they demonstrate that humour and the ridiculous are not used or appreciated enough. Art and artifice go hand in hand. There is, ultimately, nothing stupid or dishonest about what they do. This work is sensitive and dark; do not be deceived by a lightness of touch, or by the fact they enjoyed making it, or that you enjoyed looking at it.

Guests: Sound Threshold (Daniella Cascella and Lucia Farinati)

Host: Jaspas Joseph-Lester

17.03.2010

Waiting for us on the big screen is a large sweeping alpine image accompanied by soaring sounds. 'Threshold' is used as an extended metaphor; they are interested in the boundaries, those areas at the threshold of another space. The work is cross discipline, off-site and outside of the gallery space. They talk about their project with Carmichael and Lief Elgrin, who are concerned with border territories, dream state borders. A collection based upon a kingdom, stamps, flags, and a ministry of shadows. The imagination has not been banished and if it has, artists are travelling to find it, reintegrate it back into society. Physical territories give way to the mental, hypnagogic and transient. New states are annexed like cemeteries. Letting private and personal thoughts wander is a way of freeing ourselves. Sound is a state of transmission, transition, it conveys flows of energies and helps us to pass over. Part of the project was a sound walk, a pilgrimage to an archaeological site in a chestnut wood. Material was collected and re-worked on and around the site. The project is an outcome of writing, which began as a correspondence between them. Collecting stories about that landscape of Lake Garda and the mountains, they passed it all on to the artists. Using text opened up possibilities, combining different things; poetry, fact, history, anecdote, interpretation, quotes from letters, descriptions of landscapes and colours, descriptions of dreams. They write and pass it on to the artist, work is made, they write

again, this leads to new work. Curating, writing, and making art is overlapping; it is an act of hospitality, it is an act of exchange. One defines the other like the lake and the mountain. This was not a walk towards salvation; it was more a mapping, getting darker. They are playing out these ideas, image-text-sound here in the cinema. They bring the material to us and it will move on having been here.