

people in revealing that apparatus. It may be flawed and it may be problematic but at the same time I think it is the basis for dialogue, post-productive. That's where its value is produced. I know it connects to provocation as the provocative act is often deeply flawed; it's problematic but it generates something new. You might not like how it's done, of course, but at its best it generates thought and the film does that.

KB: I wondered how much you felt the audience provoked you by the unexpected?

MZ: I didn't feel provoked, I do yoga, I breathe *[laughs]*. I felt fine; it's just that post-talk situations are sometimes weird because it's like when you throw stones into a lake, creating ripples. You throw so many stones in that you don't have time to see how far the circles go.

KB: I noticed occasionally you had to stop and think your way through the response. This was interesting in that the students were able to challenge you but you responded then in depth.

JJ-L: What did you think of the audience, Keith?

KB: They were completely intent; there was some coughing but no foot shuffling.

MZ: You know what I liked? It was when the guy in the back stopped to think. I love this when you have the mic, you're supposed to speak and you can't, then you produce the thought in the time that you are there. I love that there are some speakers who are silent for minutes, because it goes back to the capitalist idea of consumption. You consume, you get information thrown at you, but the process of making that information work has to be included in the moment. That's why I like those long silences.

KB: So for you the question should be spontaneous?

MZ: I cannot prepare for the question because I don't know what's coming.

Sheffield - 13/10/2010



Transmission

Provocation

Guest: Maxa Zoller

Host: Jaspar Joseph-Lester

Interviewer: Keith Barley

*

KB: I want to move away from the talk to what it's like afterwards here. For instance, I heard a ripple of laughter from the audience probably midway through and I wonder how that might have affected you.

MZ: Do you remember when?

KB: No, I was too busy listening to you.

JJ-L: You clearly didn't notice it!

MZ: No, I heard something!

KB: I was occupied by listening to you and so I didn't notice

your reaction but is it one of those things that you might have noticed?

MZ: Generally when I give a talk I am focused and I really try to be as much with the audience as possible. I do have to say when I hear laughter it makes me insecure for a moment. It might look like I didn't register it but I do remember some laughter. It's a bit of a blur in my memory but it does irritate me because one is already in a position of vulnerability, although it might look like one is in a position of power because one stands there with the microphone ... you see, that's the image *[laughs]*. From a personal perspective, I work towards what is not done yet. I don't look so much at what I've already done. So you are vulnerable in that exposure and the questions that you're trying to unfold and the answers that you cannot give based on important questions, right? So you are vulnerable when you speak and when you hear disturbances in the group there is a moment in which you feel insecure. But quickly I retrieve my concentration and I hope to include everyone in it.

JJ-L: That's interesting because whenever I've experienced that in the past the one thing that I feel about it is confusion because you don't know what is going on exactly. It's distracting and also strange in a sense of 'what's that about'. It puts you in a strange state of mind and it can be unsettling when you're really trying to think something through. It is deeply irritating to the point where if it continues you will say to those people 'Excuse me, do you want to leave? OK, you don't want to leave, well, could you please shut up because you're putting me off.' I've only had to do that once, but do you know what? They shut up straight away. Sometimes people don't even realise they're having a chat.

KB: In that instant do you feel you lose the audience?

MZ: Momentarily, only momentarily.

KB: I did some research about you on the Internet. These words are probably lost in time now but, when asked, 'Is film a subversive art?' you replied, 'It's not what you do, it's how

you do it.' Would you expand on that?

MZ: I said it is not about making art political, it's about making art politically, but this is the same thinking, as it's not what you do, it's how you do it, right? Do you remember what I said about the construction of the image? This is about how the image is produced, not necessarily what is produced but how. That's interesting and more difficult for us to think through because in the West it is so object-based. We are so in the positive rather than the negative space. That has political value; it's not only to focus on what is obvious – what we see – but on how we see it. That undoes the habit of relations and communications. I find it interesting that you ask these direct questions that go to the heart of the experience both of lecturing and knowledge production. I always tell my students it's about de-mystifying. You have to de-mystify the image that you have of an artist or a lecturer. The magic lies in an apparatus that you know is just an apparatus yet it produces an image. It can make

something appear or disappear. The magic is only in the attention of the obvious, with the mundane, the vulgar, and the illusion. As a lecturer, that is what I am trying to do – I am not trying to protect a construction that comes from nowhere.

KB: In the first film you showed, *Enjoy Poverty* by Renzo Martens, there were two images that will stay with me. The first was of the starving child but the camera was turned towards the photographers who were in turn capturing the child as digital image. The second image was at the end of that film, showing photographers who wanted to take images at any cost but didn't realise what they were asking. The consequences were occluded from them. As I understand it, there are vested interests established in working which transcend justice. People do not see these when they work; employees are not paid to see, they are paid to work. This is what prevents us challenging capitalism. The work place is designed to make us work irrespective of fairness, loyalty, whatever. If you don't work,

you are sacked, and you suffer.

JJ-L: There are a number of elements in what you've said that we can take up different ways. You say you were struck by a particular framing of the image that stays with you; I don't share that because I feel that type of framing I've already seen through media images. OK, it doesn't matter how many times you see those images, they are still disturbing, but at the same time what I thought was interesting about that image was the notion of reproducing a media image and what stayed with me was its relation to capital. So what you're looking at is not the content of the image but how the image is constructed and that is what stayed with me. Maxa spoke of the visibility of the apparatus and there was a moment in the film where I think Martens succeeds in revealing the apparatus.

MZ: But then he is also an apparatus.

JJ-L: He is, and I agree with your critique, but I think he goes further than a lot of