

transformation. Those panels still had pigeon shit and graffiti on them! They carried a subjective quality into the gallery space. That's not what minimal art as I received it was supposed to be about. I only discovered later that Judd and similar artists started off in unused warehouses and it was never about clean, it was about the mucky and wasn't devoid of the subjective. That filters into the early work with Nick.

**KB: You raised God and religion and some of your works connect with religious notions, even ecstasy.**

IR: You're asking if I have a religious belief? No!

JW: You did say that you come from religious parents.

IR: My mum was Catholic and my father was from a Methodist background. I am not religious but we are interested in faith. We have exhibited in church buildings a couple of times but its not religious art because the work isn't an object through which one could worship Christ.

**KB: The title of the work is suggestive?**

IR: I've been asked this question. It was suggested we were doing God's work. I was glad someone might think that but I don't understand it in that way.

JW: I am shocked when talking to my students when religion is no longer part of their cultural references. Religion is part of what I understand to be the fabric of my life and students have no response at all.

IR: Many of our students have a secular view when religious fervor is around us all the time.

JW: For a whole generation language has been culturally re-structured in terms of references, morals, and proverbs.

IR: My son goes to a Catholic school and tells me about what he has learned. He comes home and says 'God made the toaster!' And I have to say, no, it's the corporation that made the toaster.

Sheffield - 09/02/2011



## Transmission *Provocation*

**Guest:** Ian Rawlinson

**Host:** Julie Westerman

**Interviewer:** Keith Barley

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**KB: The idea is to extend the notion of provocation.**

IR: When the theme is provocation you have to accept that's what artists do and that's quite hard. I selected works that were more understandable in those terms. I thought about provocation being a challenge, a calling forth ... that sounds like Heidegger!

JW: Like a call to be a provocateur?

IR: It's the function of the artist. I thought of the encounter with otherness that is present in provocation, crucial to the

calling of becoming into being. I'm not speaking only about the collaboration with Nick [Crowe]; it is in my work too. Nick is strange to me still, even though we share similar backgrounds. The strangeness between people is a provocation that we have to deal with, as otherness isn't going away. Recently Cameron said multiculturalism didn't work, as did Angela Merkel.

**KB. You said that as an artist you have to accept hard issues. This might interest students.**

IR: Playing around in the studio is part of the job of the artist. The problem is when that happens between 9 and 5. At five minutes to 5 something happens which conflicts with having to collect the kids from the nursery. You've been pissing about all day and it's always in those final moments. Often on our latest projects, it's that final five per cent of the project which takes the time. It stops being fun and it's tough. I am always telling students that they make it too easy for themselves.

**KB. The other side of this is money. I was intrigued by**

budget of £100,000 that you blew on fireworks.

IR: We made four films and if it was by the hour we would be working below the minimum wage. We don't pay ourselves anything like what we pay the directors of photography and fabricators. It was an unusual time for us in the years leading up to 2007 as we had a number of different projects come in at once.

JW: Was the fireworks project possible on less money? Did you make it that big because you had that much cash?

IR: Actually we didn't use nearly as much pyro as we had in stock. I don't know if we would have made it differently.

JW: You did the burning carrier bags thing – the carrier bags would have cost nothing.

IR: They didn't but everything else cost a bloody small fortune. Even then we were pushing budgets. It's frustrating that you end up having six hours to complete the work and then everyone you have hired is

going to clear off. You don't get the time on set for details as in the studio, where we afford ourselves more time, allowing ourselves to reshoot things. After the show at FACT we wanted to return to the studio and have the time to take command over what we were doing.

**KB: You gave a confident presentation. Were you as confident in your earlier career?**

IR. When I left art school I set myself up as self-employed. You could claim housing benefit and you could squat. I felt passionately close to the north of England, which is where I'm from. I didn't want to move to London. I don't have a big chip on my shoulder about it and yet one can feel not at the centre of things. Now my work is represented in London, half my family live there, and I love London. In 1988 when I moved to Manchester it was wonderful for a twenty-year old – clubbing all the time. When I couldn't afford a studio I squatted one. I supported myself in various ways, I got some work with 'evil' advertising companies, I

did so many drawings of cows for the Milk Marketing Board that I dreamt them. I did what I tell my students to do: keep the faith. You have to shift a gear into making art, to fulfil the ambition of making serious art.

JW: Do you and Nick still surprise each other?

IR: I am used to Nick but he can be an extreme character. I would return to 'otherness'. It's not simply in my collaboration with Nick. It's present in artists who work individually in our individual responses to the world. It's possible to be estranged from oneself although that can result in insanity. It can be a productive state of mind.

**KB: How would you describe arriving at ideas in your work?**

IR: They have taken many transformations, particularly when using found materials. I came to seeing a thing being an image of itself through using found material from a tradition of assembled sculpture, discovering that the materials that I was using were loaded, like the metal panels used to prevent people

from taking over properties. When I was removing panels to get into a squat I didn't use them for two years. I ran out of money, so I painted on one of the panels and this was a loaded material for my awful political painting. I was angry and the painting was angry back at me, we were angry together in my studio. I thought this was futile. That disabled me for some time. That's an unimaginative place, but many young people go through that.

JW: If you train as a gas fitter at least you know what a gas fitter does – it's different for an artist.

IR: You have to have a social context. I was hanging out in a squat in the middle of Manchester, not hanging out with the avant-garde. I felt my way forward, discovering something in the material. I ended up discovering the obvious. If I had only remembered my art history lessons I might have understood earlier about this representation of the thing being itself. As soon as a thing is taken from its normal context and placed in the context of art, you effect a