

best comedic people I know make laughter from what is difficult and dark and depressing and painful. It's an important part of resisting alienation. We try to reach each other and humour is a very good way ...

KB: A serious thing can be conveyed through humour.

MF: In the seventies art school was the place for many people who didn't have a clue what they wanted to do and were completely bums poets and revolutionaries, people who had never been able to write an essay, or may have become a criminal if they hadn't been there with a camera. It served a community of people who didn't fit in and now there are more hoops to jump through and you've got to write the essays. I can imagine the artist Gary Stevens, for example, being taken far more seriously and given significantly more critical acclaim were he not so generous and humorous.

HR: Being taken seriously is so appealing (and who wouldn't want that) but why are we hanging on for these other people or institutions to take us seriously?

If something is serious it can be a little bit difficult, and sometimes humour isn't convenient. Thank God, artists like Gary Stevens carry on – and that's about finding your mettle. We encourage students to be professional but really one of the most provocative things we must think about encouraging is how to take yourself seriously as an artist.

MF: To take yourself seriously you have to put your own oxygen mask on before giving it to the others. You have to consider what you're giving out. That always worries me, what are you trying to give? You will never know exactly what you give or what your work is, but you have to interrogate it seriously and understand what your intention is for it to go out. I do like to make people laugh but I don't want it to be just about laughter.

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Transmission *Provocation*

Guest: Marcia Farquhar

Host: Hester Reeve

Interviewer: Keith Barley

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KB: You spoke about discovering each other's practice, so how do you provoke each other?

HR: One of the great things about the *Transmission* series is that we invite artists whom we want to meet. So we don't know one another well enough yet to provoke one another's practice but Marcia said over lunch that the wonderful premise of this series on provocation is that it doesn't have to be an obvious or facile provocation; that the most constructive provocation is that between artists. I think this is an extremely important point that no one else in the series has raised so far.

MF: Loneliness and alienation can be unhelpful – for people to form small communities where their modus operandi can be challenged, encouraged, and supported is an important strategy. Sometimes it's easier to put a stamp on someone else's parcel and send it off than to do it on your own. I am the child of a Catholic mother and Marxist father. When you leave an ideology there is a big gap in terms of a community. I was thinking about this because I am interested in the cult of the individual. I am taken by strange one-offs – people like Oscar Wilde and Lord Byron. There are singular women showoffs that I particularly liked as a child, like Edith Piaf and Judy Garland. I loved Joyce Grenfell. I loved Ava Gardner. If these women showed off I wondered who told them to be quiet and go to bed. I love individuality but I like it in a collective form. I like the idea of rootedness. I am interested in communities. The boy who challenged me – 'How did I get Arts Council funding', he felt existentially lonely; that's why I tried to answer him in terms of loneliness.

KB: Did that provoke you? It was very challenging.

MF: I felt that his anger and uncertainty. I am empathetic to people who manifest a deep sense of alienation through angry speech, who want to be heard. There is no point being angry with them.

HR: I didn't know whether to step in. The student has a right to ask any question. I remember getting upset with someone giving a talk about Louise Bourgeois when I was a student. He was talking from a position of power because he knew her. We were party to intimate and interesting information, but I remember getting angry and asking something which I don't remember now, but he wiped the floor with me. I walked out crying. I didn't even know who I was at that point. Nietzsche speaks about the pain caused by sensing the gap between what you feel you can be and what you actually are. So it is about entitlement. At art school precisely such difficult and messy stuff should emerge and we shouldn't be surprised by it.

MF: That's the generosity that I would sign up for. But I am glad that I have taught alongside people who are not that generous. You find your own mettle ... I like people be challenging rather than polite. Politeness is misplaced in a discussion.

KB: I was watching a video about you in which you are very commanding. You were discussing cookies with a writer who wrote the mottos that go inside fortune cookies. You were insistent that he should change the language he used in the cookies.

MF: I did this in preparation for a performance called *Coming Round and Coming Round Again*.

KB: The point was how language can be implemented as being insistent and commanding. What I've written here is: 'being able to take command'. Are you aware of this?

MF: I am a control freak, obviously thwarted because stuff has to go out! I am insistent and commanding and controlling, and also I am the opposite. The

conflicted selves come out in the work, the victim, the abusive, violent aspect. I have spent ten years in analysis so I am not a stranger to the dark side. I don't want to privilege it but I don't want to deny it. It goes with the light.

KB: That was clear in the Punch and Judy piece, so I was surprised when someone said that he did not understand it. How did his remark affect you?

MF: Andrew Kötting made a film in response to my work and that was challenge to us both. I did explain the concept and context of *Twelve Shooters*. People don't have to understand everything immediately. I was not giving a talk on my work; rather, I was responding to the idea of provocation. There was things that I didn't use, notes I didn't refer to. Other things arose. My talk was like my performance work, which is prepared laboriously and then I see what happens in the moment. I would be worried if they did understand it!

KB: You made me laugh out

loud today. Do you consider yourself as comedian or artist – or both?

MF: The tragic-comic element is dear to me. When I am described as entertaining or hilarious I say please remove that, because I'm not sure I can deliver. I like to prepare, but also to see what happens. Sometimes when I am feeling tired, unwell, or unsure of myself, then I will use comedy. When I'm feeling stronger I can let it be more tense and uncertain. I love to laugh and I love people who laugh.

HR: It was lovely to hear the students laugh at things you said. However, I am deathly serious. I read philosophy. I like to be alone. You talked about the darkness and the light – it always stupefies me that people cannot get that paradox. Of course, someone who is serious is also funny. If someone makes you laugh, you should expect there to be the gravitas that comes with it.

MF: Pain may be endured through humour. Many of the