

OF: You have a final thing to show in many different places. I rarely repeat my performances; they are usually one-off events.

CB: Do you document the performances?

OF: Yes, but I don't like the way the documentation looks. I want everything to be perfect. I cannot seem to achieve that with performance documentation. That's why I want to make video – I can control it. I like making art best when I have a flow going ... when I'm in the middle of it, entrenched in the process of making. I really enjoy making work.

KB: I liked that about your talk. You were honest and generous about your process. You mentioned that you had heroes – who are they?

OF: My theoretical heroes include Lauren Berlant, an American theorist who wrote a book called *The Female Complaint*, about sentimentality in American culture and how women's culture has an ambivalent function, not explicitly political. Another is Albert Ellis, the psychologist who invented

Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy. I don't like the way he writes, but the message he gets across is that people are fallible and you're bound to screw up now and again. The thing is not to berate oneself, accepting that one is human. He doesn't believe in self-esteem, just unconditional self-acceptance. It's a liberating concept. It sounds great, but in reality, if someone criticises my work I am usually gutted. I have to accept that I can't please everybody. There is no universe rule that says I have to make art everyone loves. Some people are going to dislike it but this doesn't detract from my value as a human being.

KB: You said that you didn't know who you were. Are you pleased with who you have become?

OF: Sometimes I don't know what I really want and can't distinguish my desires from what is expected of me. But lately I've had more clarity. On my bad days I don't know who I am... All you need to know is I am an FHB – a fallible human being.

Sheffield - 23/02/2011



## Transmission *P r o v o c a t i o n*

**Guest:** Oriana Fox

**Host:** Chloë Brown

**Interviewer:** Keith Barley

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KB: Did you enjoy the talk?

OF: At first I was nervous because my notes would not show on screen, but I don't normally use them so I just hoped for the best. I think it went well. I was worried that I put in too much video because I said I was going to talk about performance art. I wasn't sure exactly where the talk was going. I didn't plan the end whereas I had the beginning scripted. Then something happened and I thought a good way to finish was to talk about a solo performance that demonstrates how much confidence I've gained as a performer, coming full circle to the main premise of the talk.

KB: Chloë, some hosts have said they are nervous for their guest.

CB: When you said you couldn't see your notes I was going flap around on the machine in front of the audience. But I decided to hope for things to establish themselves. It's a weird role, being the host. It's about control. The talk was definitely outside of my control. You could have done anything – terrible things.

KB: You moved away from home in the States and came to London to study at Goldsmiths for your MA. How did you find it and how much did it change you?

OF: It was great for my work and really changed the path of my life, but the transition to living in London and going to Goldsmith's was difficult.

CB: Did you feel you were pulled apart? How did you put yourself together again?

OF: I went directly from undergrad and my tutors before were supportive and uncritical. At Goldsmiths it was a real shock to find they were saying

critical things about my work. In the end my art changed. I arrived as a painter, started making sculpture and installation. Then I made my first video and my work finally came together.

KB: Is that where performance started?

OF: Performance for camera started.

KB: I looked at a work on your site called *Multi-tasking* ...

OF: I should have talked about it today, but I realised too late how it would have fitted into the narrative arc of the talk had I shown *Multi-tasking* before my other live performances, where I am talking more confidently. In *Multi-tasking* I hardly say anything, I smile, I giggle. It would have been funny to use those videos as examples of my shyness. That's for another talk.

KB: In the video you were dressed in a leotard, jumping on a trampoline, by a cooker with a frying pan, with a male dancer ...

OF: That's the first in the series. I analysed the audience's dreams

while exercising, making pancakes, and painting a male burlesque dancer as he stripped.

CB: Multi-tasking is meant to be a feminine trait. I was thinking recently how rubbish I am at multi-tasking ... all I want to do is enjoy this drink, then think about the next thing I want to do and so on but each separately...

KB: Is your work feminist?

OF: Yes, it is feminist – it's a response to not seeing images that I felt I could identify with and wanting to find role models ...

CB: A woman student told me that she could not believe you when you said you had not experienced sexism.

OF: I did in receiving feedback at Goldsmiths. My tutor criticised my work because it struck him as derivative of seventies feminist art; the message was that work by certain women artists made then was bad. I hadn't intended to make that reference but in trying to make something that would destabilise binary oppositions, I did it in a way that was visually similar to some seventies

feminist art. I was interested in making images of female desire – that was my driving force from my BA through to my MA – and I discovered there a connection between my work and theirs that was worth pursuing. It was uncharacteristic for me as a people pleaser to go against what tutors had said to me by consciously deciding to refer to that work, rather than move away from it.

KB: One question was if feminism had a bad name – would that affect your work?

OF: If it was popular it might have affected my work, but it wasn't popular yet – that happened a few years later when suddenly major US museums started to focus on feminism. Another tutor told me many women artists didn't want to be in all women shows or to be pigeonholed as 'feminist artists'. Who knows what I've been excluded from because I talk openly about this stuff? I know that people make assumptions about my work. I made a video about body hair and it was assumed by one person to be a diatribe against how women have to conform to a certain ideal. Someone said to me after watching it they couldn't

believe a woman had made that work. It doesn't give an opinion about body hair, it shows you what it is and possibly puts a masculine spin on it through the male voice over. I am perceived in a way that sometimes stops some people from looking at my work.

KB: Is your work spontaneous?

OF: No, not the videos – I rigorously plan them, I story-board them, I write the scripts and I know exactly what I'm doing shot for shot. All the videos are like that. In performance I do more improvisational stuff. Though they appear elaborate sometimes, they can be thrown together. But in a video every shot has to be considered.

KB: Do you like working the way performance allows?

OF: Yes, but I miss video. I'm planning to make a new video but it's money and time and it's much easier to do another performance. I'm always getting invited to do them, unlike making a video.

KB: What can you achieve with a video that you can't with another form?