

Guest: Tim Etchells

Host: Penny McCarthy

14.10.2009

Tim Etchells approached his *Transmission* as an email exchange with his friend Penny McCarthy (his host). As a Renaissance man all-rounder coming from a performance background, his uniform monotone voice was a surprise, this contrasted with Penny's expressive tones. Did Tim's background enable him to be confident in his decision to withhold a performance?

Interestingly, I did not see my friend who videos the talks because Tim had requested that the event would not be videoed. Was this a gesture of preciousness, or shyness, or an acknowledgement that the camera halts or prevents experimentation? The dialogue was interesting but, in a sense, a dialogue seals itself in, becomes protected from intrusion by the uninvited. And that's how it felt. It took a while during the questions for the space for questioning to open up, for the audience to be allowed to enter. In fairness, Tim broke away from the dialogue at the end so that he could briefly sum up his career. What a career.

Guest: Roderick Buchanan

Host: Andrew Sneddon

21.10.2009

Roddy Buchanan maintained full control of the lecture, even when he left the stage during his video, and later to go have a word with Andrew Sneddon (his host). I think of lectures like horses: one must maintain firm control, hold onto the reins, find the alpha position, cling on tight and ride that beast until you get to the no-more-time-left point. Roddy laid right back in the saddle, fingers barely clasping the reins, and yet, he was in full control. He gave a history of how his dad saw the world; he addressed only a fraction of his work output, talking about only two projects. Yet he performed Roddy Buchanan. We got him, the mythologised artist. Fully entitled. The alpha male. The showman. The cowboy.

Guest: Kelly Large

Host: Becky Shaw

28.10.2009

Throughout Kelly Large's talk I had a sense of a highly intelligent, articulate, brave practitioner, able to challenge her collaborators, use stealth and cunning in her engagements with institutions, with a compulsion to put herself into the very situations that scare her most. In short, Large's work is ballsy and confident, even though I sense she has not even hit her stride yet.

So my question is, why the *terminal* talking herself down? Beyond charming self-deprecation, it felt as though Large had a hesitancy to own the work, to be the artist. As a result, I winced my way through Large's chatty talk. In spite of herself, she came across as immensely likeable, but she made me want to de-brief her in the pub and tell her not to put herself down in this context, for audiences have a temptation to believe what they hear. Of course, I am not suggesting that all I wish to sit through is male bravado and smarmy showing off each week, but Large's talk made me wonder if it is a female compulsion to talk ourselves down in this arena. Is it because Large is a woman that she feels unable to say: 'I have a PhD and years of practice behind me, damn it! I know what I am doing and I know who I am'? Instead, I heard her tell me she was nervous, she hates residencies, and she does not like people. She then started to list her skills, almost as though she had been challenged as a phoney, which she sees are administrative, social, analytical, and critical. The way she described the process of working through residencies she is

offered made it sound as though she was a gun for hire, never able to choose a direction. Oh Kelly! Can I hire you to be a confident artist?

Guest: David Bate

Host: Michelle Atherton

18.11.2009

The last time that David Bate presented at *Transmission* it was his birthday, and he managed to leave his carousel of slides on the train. I remember it quite clearly as I was the *Transmission* transcriber that week. At the previous talk, without his carousel, he showed a few slides that Michelle Atherton had managed to find in the slide library and a clip from Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. Today, he again showed a clip from *Stalker*, a different clip, I think, and this time from choice.

I was interested to hear that Victor Burgin taught David, and also to hear David refer to Allan Sekula. In my head I had connected the three of them: David seems to bridge Burgin and Sekula's work. During the talk I began to curate a three-person show of their work in my head, because that is something I would really love to see, their work operating next to one another (Somebody, remember I said that, please!).

I really enjoy listening to David speak, it is clear he has a very deep understanding of the photographic image and video images and his work teases and probes at the structures of representation. He has a soft yet audible voice, and a generous delivery style that marks him out as a teacher. His work, always shifting and evolving stylistically, reacts to the changing function of the photographic image. I'm sold. Definitely one of my favourite talks.

Guest: Amanda Beech

Host: Jaspar Joseph-Lester

25.11.2009

Amanda commenced her talk with a didactic introduction; a detailed, thorough walkthrough her ideas from BA to PhD. My scribbled notes contain the words: totalitarianism, anti-Modernism, Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, 24's Jack Bauer, freedom, liberty, fraternity. Relational Aesthetics, convivial and antagonistic.

It was with a sense of pleasure and aliveness I sat through Amanda's talk. I sat and thought and enjoyed her assured, controlled delivery. I enjoyed her loud, bright video with its thumping soundtrack, which gave me much to think about. My thoughts and entry points into the video differed entirely from the theoretical positioning that Amanda laid out for us. Should I blame myself, or Amanda, or the art, or the theory that I was not able to follow the logic? Should I expect to? Or should I rejoice in the diversity and challenge that art presents? I was happy, but just don't ask me to recount Amanda's position.

Guest: Juan Cruz

Host: Sharon Kivland

02.12.2009

Juan Cruz had a lovely manner and self-deprecating delivery underplaying his accomplishments. If the title of this series is 'friend', then Juan, I bet, is a good one. His talk moved between showing us work-in-progress, ideas he was thinking through, details of his family life and

hobbies (like learning to ride a motorbike last year), and documentation of his performance. His delivery was marked by a total lack of pretension and a willingness to share everything that had an effect on his practice.

In the selection of work he showed us, his work relates directly to his ability to translate; a skill that slips into his practice. The material of language and the position of being between the two languages seemed to be more important than the content; Cruz seemingly prefers an in-between place to an arrival at a fixed structure. He talked about his performances translating Don Quixote 'live', an oral translation at the Spanish Cultural Institute, a durational performance. He recreated it again, and this time there were not many visitors, so he did not translate when no one was around, a kind of cheating. Such details allowed us access to the flaws, the gaps, the questions in the work.

I enjoyed the way Cruz described how he recorded audio in an impromptu sound booth, in a corner with blankets over his head in 'a studio in a home I share with a family'. Realising this might sound misleading, rather like he is lodger or squatter, he added the clarification: 'my family!'

The talk was concluded with Cruz's assessment of himself: 'My work isn't like that, it's much more constipated than that. Some artists have a lightness of touch, I'm quite lumpen,' I am not sure if this statement *is* accurate, but self-deprecation can be so wonderfully refreshing that I will let him have that.

Guest: Taconis Stolk

Host: T C McCormack

03.02.2010

Taco, as Taconis was referred to, is Netherlands-based, and I see his work emerging from a European context. In short, it is foreign. It is well crafted. The talk was divided up into three sections and Taco had a sophisticated knowledge of Powerpoint and of structuring presentations in general. The talk was about work that is not my area of interest, but is that important? Do I expect everything to address me all the time? No. And so I am pleased about Taco's exciting and dynamic take on string theory. I am genuinely pleased I know about an artist who is creating an artificial flavour that does not relate to other flavours. I am now able to slip into conversation that I do know of someone who's practice intersects with science and geography in quite interesting ways. I need not mention the heaviness of my eyelids during the talk whatsoever.

Guest: Lindsay Seers

Host: Chloë Brown

10.02.2010

The myth of Lindsay Seers! The more I hear Lindsay speak, the more I wonder if anything she says in the lecture context is true. Why do I become attached to such details as truth, which are not necessities with regards one's personal story, or in the way in which one speaks about work. Is it because Lindsay's truth/lies hit at that point (as I am sure they are designed to) where the things she is claiming to have experienced are the things we want to know about, our desire becomes such that we structure what she is saying as bearing witness. But then they are too good to be true! Surely her work is the negotiation of representation and narrative and subjectivity. So truth, who needs truth, when you have such interesting tales to tell?

Guest: André Stitt
Host: Hester Reeve
17.02.2010

Thank you André, for stirring the room, for your emotional truth, for your honesty.

André Stitt delivered a talk that did not so much defy the convention of artist talks as to rip up the rule book and challenge us, the audience, on our own ethical, spiritual, and emotional positions with regard to art; that is to say, rather than challenging our critical position.

With his grey spiky hair and platform trainers, a lazy describer may liken him to a punk, with his rebellious attitude. But he is more than that. He doesn't give a fuck what you think of him, but his beliefs in art, what it does, what it can be, the testimony it gives, the force for change, the power of good, are all so antithetical to the rhetoric *de jour* that it is blissfully refreshing.

The details of his work, did not enter the discussion so much, but as performances their fabric is unstable, their location ephemeral, he preferred instead to describe the situations in which he performed, who he was working with, what his mental health was like at the time. Stitt gave us a performance; he gave of himself. Quite clearly it is impossible to draw the line in the talk between Andre the person and the artist, the two are enmeshed. I am not sure if I could tell you about his work, I don't know if I could tell you if I like his work or not, but I liked Stitt's energy, his ability to give of himself, the personal details, the sordid details; the history and the testimony.

Stitt bore witness to not fitting in, not talking the talk, not being the professional. He told us how he lived his ideas, how his art made him, and I'm grateful to him. In many ways his work is immaterial, and what he did for a room of students was give them permission. So, thank you.