

how difficult it is make art now, how demanding it is on the psyche.

KB: I felt everything you had said up to that point started to come together in that change of pace.

CR: Then there was the abrupt shift to John Latham. The problem with Latham is that we still don't know enough. There is a Latham industry forming, an academic industry. I'm sure that some of his ideas have been lost. We will be talking about him more in the next decade or two when the next big books come out. We won't be talking about him in the same way as we talk about Duchamp but he is one of the really significant British artists of the twentieth century, in terms of his presence and the affect of his work.

AS: There's a recent article by Claire Bishop in *Art Forum*: she writes that the show at the Hayward was horrible, as well as the least attended exhibition there ever. It was not rich material, she says. That should have been an important exhibition.

CR: It is a really important exhibition!

AS: It's interesting to note that there are a lot of books about art schools now, as though our education system is in crisis. It could be exciting if you look at it positively.

CR: The National Student Survey is a force for evil! The questions are based on ridiculously limited parameters of creative achievement, to be satisfied, to be happy! These things don't have a place in art. Art isn't interested in people being satisfied or happy, so asking these questions is really stupid. It's got nothing to do with art and everything to do with another way of thinking about the world. How are we going to work in academia if it is to be paid for by students? How is art going to function then? This is a big question but I must catch my train.

Sheffield - 24/11/2010



Transmission

Provocation

Guest: Craig Richardson

Host: Andrew Sneddon

Interviewer: Keith Barley

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KB: Have you different views of the talk?

CR: It was one of those talks where because I was trying to think about the theme I tried to tailor my material – a useful exercise. Happily it's a theme that I have been thinking about recently. I've spent five years writing Scottish national art history that Andrew mentioned earlier. It was inhibiting at times because you've got to define the national boundaries and such boundaries are porous but still 'the national' remains a site of art. However, there are different, more concrete sites in which art appears: the global exhibition,

the modern art education curriculum, the commercial art gallery, the artist's studio. I am increasingly interested in the values of these spaces and used today's audience as an opportunity to try things out.

KB: It seemed that you were provoking the audience.

CR: I could not have said any of these things were we not in a specific time: student unrest at the introduction of even higher fee levels and a backdrop of economic uncertainty. It seems that the young are being made to pay. Political consequences are moving fast and the normal order is being upturned. That's what happens when readily available money 'disappears', people start to question values. It seemed right to address some of the ways we think of gallery spaces and other sites given as artists we invest so much in these. That's why I spoke of John Latham who stands outside normal values in the modern world, an isolated, beleaguered, difficult individual in an old fashioned sense. He had a deep faith in art that you don't see taught much anymore. These things revolve in

my head but in times of prosperity there's no point talking about them because seemingly no one's listening. I have a feeling now that some of these things will be worth hearing and reading. I've been working as well on another national history, on Irish art, transferring some of the Scottish art themes to Irish art. The Irish Republic is undergoing a period of profound change – economic, political. I'm attracted to the impending chaos and the question of where the creative centre will be in Ireland, how it will be accessed. And then secondary questions of what we should be doing as educators to push people towards affecting change.

KB: What connection did you make with provocation?

CR: The provocation theme is about the contingent factors in contemporary art outside discussing the merits of an art work. When you take that out of the discussion, you're left with the institutions, of course. They are open to all sorts of critique. When I showed the work of Gilbert and George, *Gilbert the Shit* and *George the Cunt*

(1969), magazine sculpture, it got a laugh from the audience but it was a work which implicitly acknowledged such a thing as art criticism, they described that work as a 'pre-emptive strike'. The link between art work and the expectation of art criticism could soon be lost – it is nearly lost now – people don't care about art criticism, and they (Gilbert and George) were doing a two-fingers gesture to art criticism. That's what's so funny about it, its expectation of criticism. Art is highly dependent upon a tightly defined institutional context of magazines, galleries, and so on. That was my starting point, then thinking about Boris Groys's commentary on what is happening in spaces of art as spaces of liberty, galleries where people are proposing a new curriculum for society. It's the values in such spaces that matter – the rest is plaster-board and emulsion paint. That is why Luca Vitoni's book is interesting, his line drawings of major commercial spaces level important spaces down to a set of features: skimmed walls and pillars and some basic drawings, turned into a kind of franchise space. Vitoni levels everything in

describing space ...

KB: There was a significant gap in the proceedings where somebody asked if the lights could be turned up. Did that disturb you?

AS: It was interesting how you handled it – it would have been much easier to put the lights back up. It was good that you said the complainant would have to suffer the darkness.

CR: I understand that people want to take notes, but it's like taking photographs as a tourist, not actually looking. If he was taking notes he wasn't getting the overall thing. It is important to look at the images and think rather than take notes. I don't take copious notes at lectures ... I like that people should look at the images. If they're not actively listening to me then they're thinking about something else ... and the image will be the bridge.

AS: That approach is good because sometime you don't get it there and then but later in a seminar, tutorial, or crit.

CR: Although in my experience

if I am in the audience of an engaging piece of theatre or music, the reverie produced means I am diverted from the act of listening. My mind wanders down its own avenues – that's what I want to happen, although I rarely give talks like that. Most of my talks are detailed and archival. I try to find the right way to use fragments to trigger associations, where some bits may be taken up – but also copious information, to give the audiences its money's worth!

KB: It came over that way. I noticed the chap who asked for the lights to be turned up didn't argue with you when you refused.

CR: When I spoke of the phantom on the side of the road, which is Bacon's statement about van Gogh – one of the best thing that's been written about van Gogh, this is one of the great ghost figures haunting art – that was included in the lecture not only to make the point about studios but to change the pace of the talk, to switch from art history and the academy to looking at something that students will recognise, which is