

others. The problem with the notion of art is that it suggests that there is a monopoly of creativity for a select few. I believe everyone has that capacity. We need to democratise creativity and get rid of the word art.

KB: You might want to substitute another word for art?

JJ: Words freeze concepts. Let's think of art as a verb not a noun. How can we create new forms of life via the process of art? How do you create new ways of organising activities or cultures without hierarchies? I'm influenced by anarchist philosophy that believes that people are happiest when working in small groups without being coerced. This means in politics we need to rethink concept of scale: the city, the nation state, mass society, etc. My work in the last fifteen years shows that you can do incredible things with horizontal forms of organising, making decisions through consensus. Of course it's difficult and long, but speed is the enemy of democracy.

KB: Would you change what you have done?

RB: I came from arts education, setting up small groups in Brixton. Disillusioned with funding, the structures, I questioned if I was doing enough. I undertook an MA in Fine Art. I realised there must be a place to work for the sake of it to be creative – without that, there isn't richness or quality of life.

JJ: I spend hours in front of a computer and not enough time using my hands. I apply creativity to protest but not enough to everyday life. That's about to change. We are leaving our jobs, selling our flat, and buying land in Brittany, to set up an alternative art school set within edible landscape. The Climate Camp movement helped to cancel a coal-fired power station and the third runway at Heathrow and the UK uncut movement was born from it. Now I'm interested in longer-term bases for resistance. I want to plant more, be less dependent on capitalism – and not live chained to a fucking computer!

Sheffield - 23/03/2011



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

Guest: John Jordan

Host: Rose Butler

Interviewer: Keith Barley

*

KB: Did you grow into being a radical, John?

JJ: An important lesson in radicality is to remember that nothing is fixed. In ecology and in radical politics everything is always changing. My work wasn't always this. I made sculpture and durational performances. Politics was always there; but my work was representational, about ecological devastation. The first time I took direct action was at Sheffield Hallam, then a polytechnic. We occupied the campus. Another key moment was getting involved in the anti-road movements in the 90s. That was a big leap. It's

like evolution; you move slowly and then something happens. I am about to take another leap into a new way of working.

KB: Rose, your work is in animation and photography, the real and the unreal. John, is activism about changing the unreal into the real?

RB: John spoke about non-space and no-man's land. My current work is about space, place, and belonging – who we are and how we locate ourselves. Between the two huge ideologies of communism and capitalism, the gap of no man's land in Berlin was 500-metres wide. I'm trying to get access to film within the preserved section of the Berlin wall, which is now a memorial site. You can view the area from a watchtower, half of it is replicated. It conveys a tense strangeness, oscillating between reality and non-reality. There is a series of satellite projects, also. I'm trying to get people in Egypt to send me a documentation of their account of the last couple of months. Watching the interviews of the revolution in Egypt is emotive but one sees a reawakening. The sad thing is

that the Berlin wall represents a time in which we have been apathetic.

JJ: I love edge between the real and unreal. I've made lots of fakes, from sex shops to newspapers, protests that don't look like protest but performance, it's an 'unreal' real. Sometimes it disguises the fact that the piece is art and makes it more accessible. In eco-systems there are edges between a forest and a meadow. Here lies creativity and productivity. As artists we have the privilege to work on the edge in a way that other disciplines cannot. I want to create edges between artists and activists where people perform new forms of disobedience.

KB: It means confrontation and dealing with the law. How do you do this and be an artist?

JJ. My traditions are Dada, Surrealism, Situationism, the twentieth-century avant-garde movements. They realised that capitalism was a suicide-machine, killing creativity and spontaneity. Everything we take for granted in our culture – the right to publish

an independent journal or the right for women to wear trousers or to use contraception or to be in a union or for women to come to university – was achieved because people disobeyed. I am interested in the capacity of human beings to transform society. This always has to begin outside the law and if law is unjust then you have to break it. Capitalism is brilliant at creating comfort zones of apathy and sadness. When you jump out of your comfort zone you can find other kinds of pleasure, friendships, adventure, playfulness, joy. You return to the sense of freedom and creativity that you had as a kid, with the capacity to be spontaneous. There is a mythology that when you break a law you will get banged up forever. That's not yet true in this country; there are many acts of disobedience that you can support without getting arrested. There are those you can support without being on the front line. You can be a cook, or involved in presswork, legal work, design or first aid. There are many places where activism can arise.

KB: Have you been arrested?

JJ: Many times. When you get arrested there is always incredible solidarity. There is a big difference from the art world, which is full of big egos, competition, and jealousy; it's very different in activism. The most radical act of politics is friendship. There is the capacity for collective action in the art world but it's been partly destroyed by the cult of the individual and the market. An art magazine is a list of people's names! Art schools tend to teach individual 'genius'. But none of us have uniquely individual ideas, creativity is building a new synthesis from the multitude of ideas in the world its by nature collective.

KB: What you do may seem an awful long way from the place of a first or a second-year art student.

JJ: One of the key things in education is to start where people are, not to impose ideas on others but create the potential to transform life. I think students can relate to the idea that working together with others can be powerful, it's like being in a gang a team, ideas get nour-

ished and explode. I just wish artists realised how powerful their creativity, their ability to think out of the box, can be for changing the world. But this creativity has to be taken out of the art world and applied to processes of social change, like protest movements or utopian communities.

RB: When I am trying to get filming access, I do not mention art because it has the potential to create problems. When I worked in arts education I emphasised the educational value of projects, but I did not mention art; creativity, yes, but not art. The way you present/frame yourself is important. It can look like posturing, but I am an artist.

JJ: Joseph Beuys said 'everyone is an artist'. In an insurrection everyone becomes an artist. That doesn't mean everyone paints or sculpts but that everyone has autonomy over their life and work – it might be cooking, hairdressing, designing furniture, running a train system. They choose where to engage their passions and creativity, rather than being forced to work for