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‘WORKING IN PUBLIC SEMINARS’ PROJECT

SEMINAR TWO

-

Representation and Power

Introduction

Guest lecture in two parts

Guest lecture questions and answers

The Oakland Dialogue

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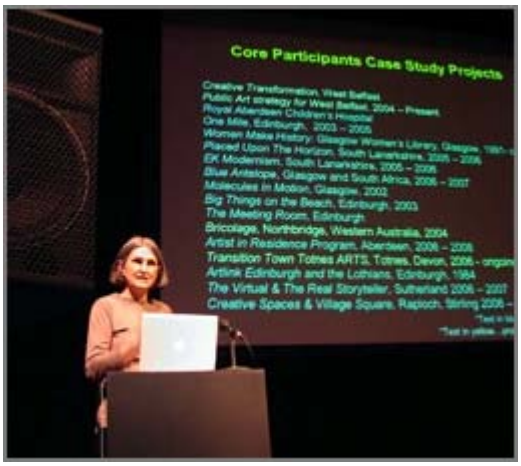
Proceedings extracted from the project website – https://www.workinginpublicseminars.org

Introduction

Part one – Working in public as a process (Anne Douglas)



Anne Douglas: Good evening. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to this, the second seminar in the 'Working in Public' series. I would particularly like to welcome back Suzanne Lacy. Tom Trevor, Director of Arnolfini in Bristol, will deliver the guest lecture tonight. I would also like to thank Francis McKee and the CCA for hosting this event.

Working in Public is developed by the On the Edge Research at Gray's School of Art in partnership with the emergent Public Art Resource+Research, Scotland (PAR+RS). The series and the resource are funded by the Scottish Arts Council. The goal is to evolve a piece of new thinking in relationship to how artists are currently working in the public sphere and, in particular, to grapple with the issue of what quality means when artists work in relationship to other sectors of society. PAR+RS is a new initiative by the Scottish Arts Council to support this area of work.

A third dimension of this work takes advantage of Suzanne Lacy's presence at Gray's School of Art developing her own research in terms of mining a very important period of work: ten years of working in the area of Oakland between 1990 and 2000.

In response to these complex agendas, we have attempted to develop a new kind of learning space. Individuals who are currently working in the field in public art come together with ourselves in academic research and with Suzanne's very important work in Oakland to begin to develop the new thinking.

At the core of the whole series is a group of artists, educators and arts administrators who have gone through a formal selection process. They have offered their own experience of the field of practice to the programme. They are Kerstin Mey, Sally Thomson, Kate Gray, Adele Patrick, Ruth Barker, Keith Donnelly, Kate Foster, Jean Cameron, Damian Killeen, Janice Parker, Sarah Munro, Monika Vykoukal, Janey Hunt, Jan-Bert van den Berg (who is going to be here tomorrow), Roxana Meechan, Venda Louise Pollock, and Taina Erävaara (who is actually in Finland and we are working with her remotely).

They are a very interesting and important group of people that offer a wealth and diversity of experience to the space. The projects they bring with them are predominantly Scotland based, but also from further afield. If you want to know more, their profiles are on the Working in Public website.

In our first seminar we followed a similar pattern to these next two days: we had a guest lecture in the evening delivered by Grant Kester and Tom will deliver that lecture tonight. This was preceded by a very short introduction by Suzanne of the Oakland Projects, and that is followed by a question and answer session that, tonight, Francis (McKee) is going to lead. The next morning we held a seminar in which Suzanne gave us an outline of one of the projects within the Oakland series. That was followed by a dialogue between Grant Kester and Suzanne. We are aiming to do that again tomorrow between Tom Trevor and Suzanne. Again this will be followed by a question and answer session. The final session tomorrow afternoon is the studio session where the core group come together and the dynamic is reversed. They bring their experience of practice and they mine that practice through their own projects, obviously taking into account the earlier discussions.

The whole programme consists of four themes. These themes were originally identified as being very important to the Oakland experience, but they also resonate with our own experience of working in public. The first one was Aesthetics and Ethics in which Grant gave us a way of thinking about aesthetics in art that is closely connected with ethics. Today we are dealing with Representation and Power and, in three weeks' time in Inverness, we will be dealing with Quality

and Imperfection. The final event, which is a public dissemination event, will be dealing with Cultural Rights and Entitlement. That is likely to be, probably, the 24th of September.

I would like to hand over to Francis now and, thank you, Francis, for hosting Seminar 2.

Part two – How do we define public/private? (Francis McKee)

Francis McKee: Hallo. I feel a kind of impostor because so many more people here know much more about public art that I do. I thought, ok, I'll agree to this because I don't know much about it, so I can find out. Then I thought this morning, this was really dumb because it is a very public way to find out! I should have just bought a book or something – so I apologise in advance.

I'm only going to talk for a few minutes now because there are two presentations, one by Suzanne Lacy on her work. This will ground the rest of the conversations for today and tomorrow and is very important for the whole process. Tom is then going to talk about his experience. I am fascinated by this because it is about him as an independent artist and his journey from independent artist to director of Arnolfini and living in the belly of the beast! We were talking earlier about what happens when you get to be in a very large institution like Arnolfini, the almost natural entropy of an institution and how you deal with that, how you remain creative, what works against you, against creativity in that kind of position.

I am interested in that for our own reasons. The more local members will know the position that we have been going through at the CCA for the last year. From a position of zero, we have been reconsidering everything very much with the support of both the City and the Arts Council. It was incredible to be allowed to reconsider everything very vigorously - why we were here in the first place, what was the actual point of somewhere like the CCA. Tom and I were talking about this a lot today and maybe it is an issue coming out and about. There is a very wide changing landscape at the moment in terms of the art world and particularly in Scotland where art is proliferating, where there is a whole new economy of the art world; different kinds of galleries, different private galleries and public places like Arnolfini, CCA, and ICA. These kinds of institutions are from another age. They deal with cross-art forms, a different public representation of art that is becoming increasingly quaint and strange in various ways. Reconsidering everything leads us to reinvent ourselves in some way because I think there is a niche that we have in the new world, but it is a different niche, and we need to think it through.

Something that seemed very important to us and I think what will come up again in the next few days is the relationship of public funding and art. In Glasgow I am very interested in the relationship of public and private in all sorts of aspects. There is a perception – a very basic perception sometimes – that public art happens outside. You put something outside, it is in public, and therefore it is public art. That can be a very basic notion that I have seen presented to me as proposals. Is it art just because it is outside? Is it public art just because it is outside? Why give money to a body like CCA that is meant to be a public institution if it is not considered public?

Are public institutions truly public? Where is the 'public' and what is the 'public' you are dealing with? Is 'outside' really public space? There is very little public space outside in the city. It is a vanishing commodity in a large way. Where exactly is 'private' and where exactly is 'public'? Someone said there were camcorder cameras in the toilets of CCA, but they're fake. I think we have removed them since, but they were there because of people shooting up. If you're in the toilet and there are cameras there, how private is that? In the same way, if you are on the mobile phone in a CCA toilet, just where are you public and where are you private?

It is no longer an easy situation to say, 'Well, this is public and that is private'. Those things are very, very mixed and very confused. They are in constant flux. You can see it reflected in galleries in Glasgow. We have The Modern

Institute, Mary, Mary and Sorcha Dallas Contemporary Art for instance, which are private, essentially commercial galleries – but always with a kind of strange, almost schizophrenic public conscience that you don't necessarily find in a gallery in London. A gallery in London is about making money, for the artist and for the dealer. Here there is a kind of recognition that there is something valuable in the public space and in the public arena in Scotland that is beyond the market and maybe should be protected, if possible, from the market even by galleries that are there to make money as private, commercial organisations. In this sense these private spaces actually have a public face as well. The Modern Institute is splitting into The Modern Institute and Common Guild. This move was very publicly articulated and also fascinating. It was not necessarily changing the landscape.

There is a question - Where exactly is this realm of public and private? What is the function of public art? and a very deep question - Is there still a contract with the public to fund art? I'm not really convinced that is discussed enough. I think the public are unsure of why public art is sometimes funded and why art is funded by public money. I think, for instance, Karl André's bricks (Lever 1966), was a very obvious sort of tabloid experience. On a deeper level both governments and the public in general aren't sure why public money should be funding art.

It is very seldom discussed because there is a great fear that if you bring it up, everyone might just take the money away and say, 'No, we don't believe it'. I think it is a taboo subject in some form, but a fascinating subject. It has not been properly addressed since the Second World War and needs to be readdressed to see how you would justify art in the public realm funded by public money. I think there are very good arguments for why it should be so, but the art world needs to have the courage to make those arguments, to carry out quite a rigorous self-reflection in order to figure out what those arguments are, today, in this divergent landscape.

We were talking earlier today about the different issues connected to these presentations. One of the issues was about selection. The one question that keeps coming up in institutions such as CCA or Arnolfini is the curated show in a gallery with the authority to include some and to cut others out. It is interesting to say, 'What is wrong with selection? Why can't we select?' I think everybody selects to a certain extent, but selection is perceived in different ways. There is an authority within a gallery that can make selection overwhelming and actually distorts the reasons why there was a selection in the first place, or distorts the fact that the selection process happens right across the art world, whether in a gallery or beyond the institution. There is also not enough rigour beyond the institution in terms of selection and also in terms of quality. We were talking about quality in public art in relation to aesthetics. How do you say, 'This is good, and this is bad' – or Do you say that?; or Is it about engagement? How do you measure quality in engagement, rather than in an object? If it is all about the nature of the engagement, and the nature of the experience, and the process, is it right to have some kind of measurement 'This is good' or 'This is bad'? Can you go as far as to say, 'Well, it does not matter whether it is good or bad as long as there is engagement.' There are a whole series of arguments from Claire Bishop to Grant Kester about that. It is an interesting thread that maybe could come up in the next few days.

Suzanne mentioned that for artists working in the community, institutions and their authority is not really the issue. The relationship that most exercises people is the relationship between the artist and the community. What is the relationship between the artist and the people in the community, the real world, the real people that they are working with and what happens in the aftermath of that when the artist walks away? Does the credit for the project go with the artist? What is the lingering experience for the people who worked in that project? There seems to be a large spectrum of doubt about that relationship, how valid it was or how you actually examine that relationship. What were the long-term benefits for everyone involved?

I think I should stop there and let people present – so – I'll do that. Can I have a photograph first? [Laughter and clapping.]

Part three – The Oakland projects (Suzanne Lacy)

Suzanne Lacy: I appreciate the opportunity to participate with you in a very unique learning experience. I wanted a chance to stretch my own thinking and I simultaneously wanted a chance to explore a set of projects. In my mind these projects that were pretty much about as far as I could go on this edge that Allan Kaprow had set me out on in 1972. That is - When is it art and when is it life? Where do you go to the edge of that boundary? When does your work become a social process that is not art?

Now, I don't mean to say that art can't be a social process because, obviously, it can. I have seen lots of artists over the years who get so engaged with a particular kind of issue that, before you know it, they've transformed it into some form of organisation or bureaucracy or they've become a member of the bureaucracy. In fact, in Oakland, I could have easily run for office. I was invited to continue working on police training and I certainly could have had a job in education running the art programme for the Alameda County Office of Education. Instead, I decided to stop and reflect for the next period of time on what it was, precisely, that the Oakland projects were.

Indeed, because this work is dialogic – when Anne and I got together, we began to think about ways to learn that were also dialogic. She constructed a learning plan that would bring people like Tom and Grant, who are people who have a lot to offer to my thinking, together with all of you. Many of you are practitioners in the field and have a lot of questions. When I was going over the transcript of the last session, I found that some of the most critical questions came from the core participants. Basically, what I am humbled by, and excited by simultaneously, is this very unique learning opportunity for me to write, coming out of the dialogic process where my own thinking is stretched – certainly beyond what it has been for the past several years.

Tonight is Tom's forum. I'm only here to set the context for those of you who might not know of the Oakland projects (1990-2000). We will discuss one example tomorrow. These were created, curated and produced by involving a set of maybe a hundred, two hundred people, over the course of ten years through nine performances or installations, and a lot of manifestations in every other capacity from City Council events to youth development programmes. Over the course of these ten years, this work became so engaged and situated within this particular community of three hundred and fifty thousand people that is Oakland, that it began to be hard to separate what was the art and what was getting up in the morning and going and having coffee with some of the people that you had worked on a performance with the night before.

Most of these projects are documented and some of them are documented actually by youth. There are probably 10 to 15 youth-presented, youth created documentaries and then there are documentaries on the major projects.

The work grew out of an analysis of the way in which young people are represented and the political uses of that representation in the public sphere in California. It deeply engaged with intersecting issues such as criminal justice, health, education and public policy issues. Throughout the projects we worked with well over a thousand young people. We were honour-bound to deliver training, education and one-on-one mentorship programmes under the guise of youth development.

For me, it was also an enquiry in its own right into issues of Power and Representation and the limits of art.

Concerning power, Francis mentioned the relationship of power between the artist and the community. You all have also brought forward the relationship between the funder and the artist, whether it is the government or the

philanthropist. That is very fundamental.There is also the relationship of the artist and the art professional to the market. I know many artists are frustrated with the inability to penetrate the professional museum and gallery art world. Finally, these pieces are about the conflict of power between youth and adult authority in its various manifestations.

Representation is at the heart of these projects. How are youth represented, and how do they participate in their own representation? How is the work represented in the community, and their understanding of it as art? How is this art represented in the art-world? Tomorrow we will start moving in to how is it represented politically in the public sphere to politicians.

Now I would like to introduce Tom Trevor. We have prefaced this conversation tonight and tomorrow with a very interesting conversation where it was apparent that our personal journeys through art curation and so on, were something that we identified with each other and maybe would form a basis for a conversation between us.

In 1986 Tom graduated from Goldsmiths and was an artist working in London for eight years in public-sited work and then, through that kind of manoeuvring which I think happens more often than one necessarily talks about, an artist begins curating. He curates his friends and what they are interested in. He curates the kind of projects that continue to represent his own interest as an artist. Tom curated a series of projects for the Institute of International Visual Arts, Camden Arts Centre, the Freud Museum and at the Wellcome Trust. That is when it goes from art-making into no longer art-making – perhaps. He became the curator at Spacex for six years creating a series of innovative projects we will hear about. He is now, as we've mentioned, in the belly of the beast as the Director of Arnolfini.

The Institution and My Body

Tom Trevor

Keynote at *Working in Public* Seminar 2

Arnolfini is referred to as a national 'flagship' centre for the contemporary arts, based in Bristol. Like CCA, it is one of those arts organisations that have recently received a big Lottery grant to re-furbish its premises. It has been around for a long time. Arnolfini was established in 1961. In a sense, it could be thought of as one of those 'shiny palaces' set up to deliver the artist's monologue. It comes out of a tradition of 'display', rather than production. Technically the public art gallery is supposed to 'educate the public' in contemporary art. Obviously, that sets up one sort of dynamic relationship that might be characterised as a monologue delivered to an audience. But our challenge now is to see if we can shift this kind of institution to something that is more about dialogue and making meaning as a social activity. What I would describe as a 'project-minded' approach.

Anne asked me to talk about power and representation. That is a massive subject. I am here partly because of projects I have curated; socially engaged, context-led projects. I am also here because I have found myself in a position of power, apparently, as Director of Arnolfini. I am in the process of trying to shift that institution, so I suppose I embody a set of contradictions and difficulties.

I do not think that the issue for art institutions is about exclusively representing the monologue or exclusively a dialogic approach. Quite often discussions in the arts about this are defensive and polarised. At Arnolfini, I think we can still deliver mono-logic exhibitions, such as painting shows, and we can still interpret the work for the public as a kind of building-based activity. However, my main concern is with engaging people in what is meaningful for them. Often that might be 'off-site' and in relation to different contexts. I don't tend to think about the public realm so much but rather as a kind of 'social space', as Henri Lefebvre describes it; a kind of cultural geography with overlapping maps of meaning that people inhabit. The main thing is that we are on that map, that people feel that they can engage with us, that it is meaningful for them.

But there is a contradiction here as well. I have travelled this journey that Suzanne was talking about, from being an artist to running a large centre for contemporary art. Is there a sense that being drawn into the institution is actually a process of disempowerment? Is it a way of stopping those kind of socially engaged practices from having an effect? Is it a way of the system absorbing my effectiveness, if you like?

There are two positions that I would like to look at. That is to look at a straight-forward analysis of cultural politics in a public context, and also to reflect on my own position within that hierarchy of power and what it means to go from being an artist through to developing a small organisation, Spacex, to directing a much larger organisation, Arnolfini, and how those trajectories overlap.

When we were talking prior to this evening, as Suzanne says, we found a lot of commonality, albeit my work is less visible and less eminent that Suzanne's! We seemed to identify three distinct stages in this process of development.

Initially, we were both concerned with issues of the body, and representation – embodied experience, if you like. In Suzanne's case it came out in the form of actionism. I think she

was, well not necessarily the Nitsch[i] of Los Angeles, but maybe the Valie Export[ii] In that process of exploration, we found ourselves shifting towards something that was much more around dialogue and participation – the idea that meaning is a social process. It is something that we make together.

At Spacex I found I could develop projects around participation with relatively little money, but total freedom in a way that is much harder now that I am in a bigger establishment.

The third stage, if you like, is this question about visibility and the institution and how to actually effect change without being absorbed.

You will have to excuse me for being autobiographical, but I suppose what we decided is that I should be the test case. We should look at a process of change and test it out along the way. I hope you will bear with me because we are going back into pre-history to start off with. There are things that I would do differently now. Hopefully we can use this as material to discuss how things have changed.

Paul Valéry and 'The Three Body Problem'

I decided to call this talk *The Institution and My Body* since we started from that point. I am using the term My Body borrowed from Paul Valéry who was a French existentialist poet back in the early 20th century. Valéry talked about the 'Three Body Problem' and he differentiated three positions: the Visible Body – the surface that everyone sees, the surface that is photographed, that is in films, the visible surface that you see in the mirror. The second is the machine – the Mechanical Body that doctors would take apart, a bit like a car, the body that you can see in diagrams. However, for Valéry, the most important body was My Body. Really naming it at all is a contradiction because My Body – the very substance of my presence in the world, My Being, Valéry suggests, is actually unnameable. It is before any kind of re-presentation.

That was one of the issues in my practice as an artist. I was looking at the body and representation. I was also working in context-based, artist-led projects. When I shifted over as a natural progression out of my practice into curating, the first projects I looked at were concerned with My Body in relation to different public institutions.

Just before I get on to that, I promised Suzanne to include illustrations of the Three Body Problem using Antonin Artaud's body, as he was a contemporary of Paul Valéry. This first is of course the surface picture – the visible Artaud, as we knew him in films and then later as the real theoretician of the Theatre of Cruelty when he was famously a drug addict and a madman as well as a brilliant theoretician, an actor, playwright, a poet, an artist. Then there is also the Mechanical Body. In a recent exhibition in Düsseldorf they showed the x-rays of Artaud's back when he had been in shock therapy and his back had actually been broken. But it was a terrible, disgusting thing to see in that context. Apparently, he always used to press his back with a pencil because it had been broken. He produced this series of incredible drawings when he was in the Rodez Psychiatric hospital. He referred to them as 'subjectile' – a sort of combination of the subjective and the projectile, if you like.

I put these forward as the idea of My Body. Artaud used to talk about the Theatre of Cruelty as the birth of anti-representational theatre – perhaps the beginning of performance. He talks about wanting to smash language to touch life, to remake theatre. It certainly led on to Cage and then Kaprow's Happenings.

***The Visible and the Invisible* (1996) co curated with Zoë Shearman**

That was early modernism. It was the time of looking at subjectivities and not questioning a wider cultural context that these were framed within. When I co-curated with Zoë Shearman the project, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1996)[iii], we wanted to take My Body and test that idea in lots of different non-art contexts. This was the project that we started with as independent curators. We did the usual thing of making lots of applications and were turned down. Then the Institute of International Visual Arts (inIVA) luckily agreed to taking on the proposal.

Here is a map of the Euston area. These are all different non-art sites that have different traditions for representing the body. At the starting point of the walk there is a church, further along the Quakers with its peace-campaigning tradition, the Wellcome Trust with the medical charity and then finally University College London (UCL). Within each of these different contexts, we set up a number of artists' projects, mostly new commissions with some re-contextualised works. (fig. 1)

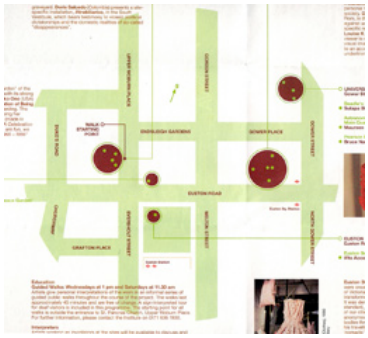


fig. 1

In St Pancras Church we think of births, marriages, deaths; presence and absence. Up in the ringing chamber, in the spire underneath the bells, Louise Bourgeois made a site-specific installation of headless bodies apparently hanging in space, made from her old ski-pants. It was an incredibly theatrical space with the ticking of the metronome and the bells striking every quarter of an hour overhead. (fig. 2 – 3)

fig. 2

fig. 3

Doris Salcedo made this piece underneath. It was the first time she had shown in the UK. It is a space off the main body of the church where bits and pieces are stored and vestments are changed. She made these niches underneath the stairway and inside them were shoes donated by families in Columbia of *The Disappeared* - victims of state

terrorism whose tortured bodies are subsequently hidden. Doris sewed velum over the niches. (fig. 4- 5)

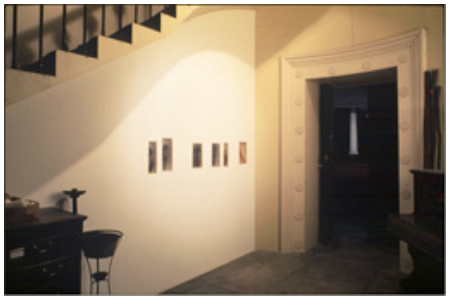


fig.4

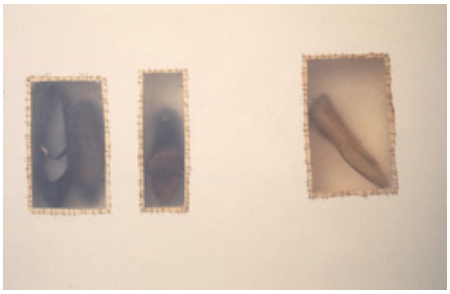


fig.5

Outside in the south garden a Cuban artist, Tania Bruguera, made a homage to Ana Mendieta. You may be aware of Ana Mendieta's incredible work around the silhouette and making connection to the earth. As a performance, Tania actually burned her silhouette into the earth. (fig. 6 – 7)

fig. 6

fig. 7

Finally, underneath these rather amazing caryatids (who apparently had a section chopped out which is why they are rather stout because they did not fit when they arrived), looking down into the crypt below the church through these ventilation holes, Jayne Parker made a video installation. What you saw was swimmers coming in and out of green water. She continued further along in another chamber underneath the body of the church where she presented a light box with an image of the tomb of Mary Wollstonecraft from the old St Pancras church where she was buried with this incredible moss growing over it. Mary Wollstonecraft was an early feminist, known for *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* 1792 in which she argues for equality between men and women based on equal access to education within a social order based on reason. (fig. 8 – 9)

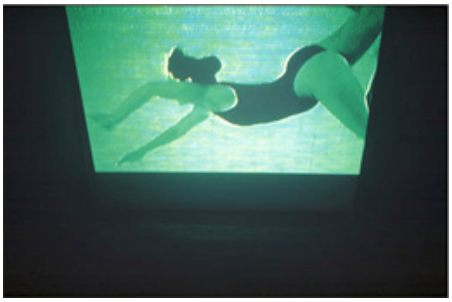


fig.8 fig. 9

Further along the Euston Road, as I mentioned, was The Friends Society, Headquarters of the Quakers. It is quite interesting working with these different institutions, because they all had their different ways of organising, their different hierarchies if you like. The Quakers don't believe in hierarchy at all. It was actually very difficult to get a decision out of them as a result! So we ended up making a piece outside their building with Yoko Ono. It is a billboard sited in front of the Peace Garden, on an Ultravision hoarding. It had advertisements for Whiskas, and Benson and Hedges coming up in-between. The text actually says, 'We are beautiful. We are fun. We are mammals without tails'. *A Celebration of Being Human*, London 1966-96. It was the 30th anniversary of Yoko Ono's *Bottoms* film. We were told that, actually, nearly a million people would have seen this as they drove past on the Euston Road. How deep their engagement with it was, is another matter. It was a very visible piece, that's for sure. (fig. 10)

fig. 10

Then there is the Wellcome Trust, a medical charity - the richest charity in the world, apparently. Francis will corroborate this: it is a very hierarchical organisation! Remember, this is in 1996. I think it was the first Science / Art project that they had been involved with. As such it was a pilot for future things, such as their Sci-Art prize. Then they were very prescriptive. We were invited to make interventions within their 'Science for Life' exhibition. Within the context of the Mechanical Body that I talked about earlier, the artists introduced the presence of My Body.

For example, Brian Jenkins, who is a wheelchair user, often undertakes very heroic activities like mountain-climbing. For the Wellcme Trust, he made a piece next to this skeleton that you could interact with based around the Madonna of Lourdes. (fig. 11)

fig. 11

Louise K. Wilson made a piece using her own brain scans. She had been a guinea pig for various medical laboratories. She added a narrative. The voice-over was a hypnotist who could have actually hypnotised you – apparently – but she asked him not to go that

far. The hypnotist is trying to persuade you (rather successfully) that you had a physical relationship to what was on-screen. (fig 12)

fig. 12

Nancy Burson developed the *Age Machine*, which scanned your face and then aged you by up to 20 years. It was quite a simple piece, but in fact the FBI took it up. It crossed over from the art world. (fig. 13)

fig.13

Virginia Nimarkoh persuaded part of the staff structure of the Wellcome Trust to donate their baby photos to go into the hierarchy. This was an interesting one because, at one point, there was some controversy over whether we were the 'enemy in through the back door'. I don't know how she managed to do this. (fig. 14 – 15)

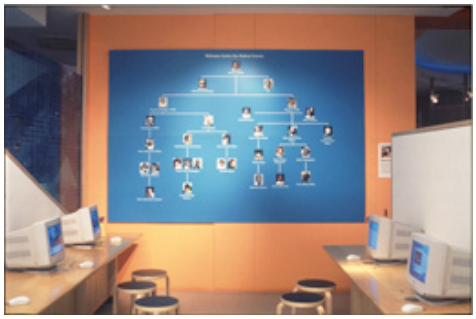


fig. 14

fig. 15

Donald Rodney had sickle cell anaemia and, sadly, he has since died from that. He had a series of operations and that image that we showed as our brand for the projects was the scar from his thigh. He made this piece to go alongside a teaching CD about malaria. Sickle cell is related to malaria. In this piece you press on points along the digital image of the scar that opens up and plays his favourite songs. (fig. 16 – 17)

fig. 16

fig. 17

The final sites were in UCL, representing the academy, the site of, I suppose, the tradition of the mind/body divide; that kind of Platonic idealist tradition. Three artists showed in this context and all making work around sound rather than the visual (although there were visual aspects to it), but really challenging the mind/body academic process.

In Maureen Connor's work we see the casts of a tongue and larynx made of lipstick. The sound piece was a recording of a baby, a younger and an older woman laughing and crying. They became quite animalistic sounds in this context of the observatory outside the Slade. (fig. 18 – 19)

fig. 18

fig. 19

Bruce Nauman's piece, *Get out of my head, get out of this room* repeats this phrase until it becomes almost a meaningless noise. It was sited in the concourse going into the computer department. (fig. 20)

fig. 20

Finally, Sutapa Biswas made a projection piece for the Beadle's box. The Beadle is the kind of guardian of the vice-chancellor. The projection is a woman just crying. Sutapa sited this opposite the body of Jeremy Bentham. It is actually his body preserved, left in his will to the university. Apparently, it did not include his head, because that had been used for a football match at some point in the '30s, so that is now in the University's safe. (fig. 21 – 22)

fig. 21

fig. 22

I have raced through this and haven't given enough attention to the individual pieces. It is the first project that I was involved with eleven years ago. It was site-based. It was context-led. It wasn't focused particularly around participation. It wasn't really about engaging different audiences. It was about unpacking histories and traditions of representation in non-art places.

Spacex, Exeter and the *Home* series

Now I am going to talk about my move to Spacex in Exeter. Exeter is a small city. It is a very comfortable place. It is one of those capitals of Middle England. Middle England is a strange concept referred to in the press and by politicians. It is not really a physical place. It is a set of attitudes. Politicians seek to influence the opinions of Middle England. I am being terribly cruel to Exeter in saying that, but the way it seemed to project itself, was as a kind of uniform, homogenous culture.

In fact, this homogeneity is entirely constructed. Exeter is full of all sorts of overlapping histories. I found it an incredibly rich context to make projects there because we could begin to unpack ideas that Middle England seemed to deny. We began to see that, rather than uniformity, there were histories and different communities that were somehow excluded by this hierarchical idea of the Middle England lifestyle. Some of you will have had this preparatory information that Anne has sent out. I wrote an essay about Middle England as an example of cultural hegemony (to use a Gramscian term) - Trevor, T. (2006) *Homeland: Making Meaning in Middle England*. In a sense, what you had was a set of moral values that seemed to be naturalised as if it were common sense – in the context of Exeter.

So Exeter's High Street is at the top of one survey of 'clone towns' and has a lot of chain stores now. Exeter is always at the top of surveys. It was the top of 'the best quality of life' because it has got the seaside and the moors close by. It was also, at one point, the top place for homeless people to go because it was a comfortable place to be.

As part of this series of projects looking at Middle England, we started off with the *Home* series, particularly looking at homelessness. The first project was quite a wide-ranging project, but I will just focus on a few issues within it. We invited Christine and Irene Hohenbuchler[iv], Austrian artists, to come and make work. At the time, it was the end of the Kosovo war and they had designed a Mother/Children House for the victims of the war.

Out of that initial idea, we invited several different groups to participate. In particular I want to show you some architectural projects.

There was an international project called 'Architecture for Humanity'[v] which was looking at designing transitional housing in war or disaster zones. We wanted to bring that project to a local situation. One of the finalists in this competition, Mike Lawless, actually came to Exeter. At that time we had established a relationship with a hostel for homeless young men at the top of the road. It was very close to Spacex and we had an ongoing relationship based on projects. The hostel was located near a gap site: buildings had been knocked down and cleared. Within about a year and a half it had been built on, but at this time it was a really useful platform for projects. We worked with a group, some of whom were homeless guys and we made an incredible shelter. (fig. 23)

fig. 23

Continuing this process of participation is the artist Lois Weinberger[vi]. He is possibly best-known for his intervention at Documenta X into the Kassel railway station, Kassel Bahnhof, where he grew weeds that he had collected from all across eastern Europe amongst the tracks of the transit lines of old Europe. Lois Weinberger actually made a garden as part of the *Home* series, working with the young men from the hostel. The plants came from a stately home just outside Exeter called Poltimore House that had become completely derelict. Lois described this as the Royal Garden of Poltimore House. We transplanted part of the (completely overgrown) gardens back to the centre of the city. One of the main concerns of Lois's practice is to challenge the idea of a nature/culture divide: 'everything is cultural'. This project was really looking at the edge of the city in Exeter. Although it is close to the countryside, the real edge of the city, or the edge of nature, if you like, was this gap site. (fig. 24)

fig. 24

The six metre plaque on the side of the hostel wall is a kind of map of the city. Lois included words: names of plants, weeds, and whatever he found on the gap site as well as words contributed by the participants- 'key worker', 'cider'. We held a barbecue with the participants and actually, subsequently, this garden seemed to gather sculptures around it. We also gave the Shilhay community, as it was called, a wall in the gallery, back at Spacex, and they had a relaunch of their new premises there. This image shows Mark, one of the participants, who is still volunteering at Spacex now, seven years later. (fig. 25 – 26)

fig. 25

fig. 26

Another artist, interestingly, dealing with narrative, fairy tales and popular folk stories, is Sigalit Landau[vii]. She made a work around the *Little Matchstick Girl* who was supposed to have frozen to death on Christmas Eve. The project was at the height of the summer (the real tourist season) and Sigalit wanted to make lollies that she could give out to people. She also wanted to make what she called a *Somnambulin* to distribute the lollies. This was a kind of music box, but it was also a concrete mixer so, obviously, there were different associations at play in the piece. She is an Israeli artist. She was very much involved with the peace movement. The *Somnambulin* played an incredible folk tune as it drove around through Exeter and out towards the beach, creating an amazing feeding frenzy of lollies going out to the public– very nice fruit flavours! Then we drove off through a housing estate, Burnt House Lane, and then Topsham which is a rather chi-chi village and then, finally, out to Exmouth, the beach. (fig. 27 – 29)

fig.27

fig.28

fig. 29

The final project in the *Home* series was the artist, Gavin Renwick[viii] who, as some of you will know, is now based at Dundee. He had been engaged in a long-term dialogue with the elders of the Dogrib or Dene people in the Canadian sub-arctic. As part of their claim for independence to obtain status as a traditional knowledge project, they employed Gavin as a translator or facilitator of parallel understandings. These are images that Gavin found showing the first, if you like, Western houses being built on the territories near Rae-Edzo. There is a manual that Gavin discovered in the library in Yellow Knife. It is partly in Inuit, because it is actually for teaching people to live in their new houses in the late '60s. (fig, 30 – 31)

fig. 30

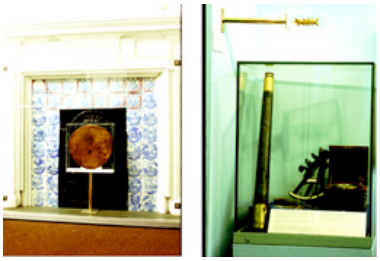


fig. 31

How this manifested itself in Exeter was as a residency in the museum within the Ethnography Department. Gavin was there for four months, researching their reserve collection. His topic, as he outlined it, was to really look at it as a sense of home, but of northerliness in the home. Within the reserve collection there were an incredible number of objects that had not been identified. In fact, the whole museum was really a very interesting kind of microcosm of different sorts of histories. The World Cultures Gallery, for example, in Exeter is a really incredible ethnographic collection. It was mostly donated by Victorians – local people – so it is really trophies of Empire. There must have been a lot of thought put into how to present the collection. Nevertheless, these works were more about Exeter and its relations to the world than perhaps about the world.

Gavin placed the works he identified within the collection. For example within the silverware of the first governor of Vancouver, these are sealskin cups. In front of a fireplace there is a drum from Nunavik. The drum is the traditional form of establishing the hearth as the home, placed in this exhibition in juxtaposition to a Georgian hearth. Similarly, in the collection of navigational tools Gavin has found an Inuit map that is actually a carved bone to hang around the neck. There is a snow knife for cutting snow and to build an igloo. Some of these items were unidentified previously but via the internet and his regular trips and in dialogue with the Dogrib, we were able to find out what they were.

Another project within this context of 'Middle England' is *Patterns* 2001. It looks at Islamic traditions within Exeter. Two Algerian artists, Zineb Sedira and Samta Benyahia made site-specific installations around the city including in the cathedral, the local mosque and also in shops. Samta made a window-stick film that covered all of Spacex's windows and this extended across the city, including the cathedral. (fig. 32 – 33)

fig. 32

fig. 33

Zineb Sedira's photographs associated the haik, which is the traditional Algerian white veil, with the Virgin Mary. She actually placed an image of a woman wearing the haik outside the Lady Chapel within the Cathedral. (fig. 34 – 36)

fig. 34

fig. 35

fig. 36

There was a whole series of further projects - one large-scale project, entitled *Homeland* 2004, in 2004 took on issues around shopping and unpacking all sorts of different sub-cultures within Exeter, as well as environmental projects. (fig.37)

fig. 37

I am stopping here.

Directorship of Arnolfini 2005

Now I am at Arnolfini. As I mentioned, this is the space of the monologue in a sense. For me personally, it is just another context. It is a great privilege to have this space to work with that belongs to the art world and its tradition. I also want it to be accessible to as many people as possible and for us to reach out and engage people so that our activities are meaningful. (fig. 38)

fig, 38

I have been trying to develop an emphasis through a programme called *Social Space*. It is around participation including digital work and the archive. If you want people to have ownership of what you do, the best way is by them making the work, co-producing it, being involved with it. It does not mean we are not still going to also foreground the artist's monologue. I don't think that there is a problem with doing both.

We've been through lottery refurbishments. Arnolfini is an impressive space. It is a great space to use. We were talking earlier about how this is the last great burst of public funding to keep these buildings going for a 100 years, but it does look like a state-funded building. Now the challenge is obviously to personalise it.

Personalisation is a loaded term. It is a term that the Arts Council in England have adopted lately and it has been borrowed from the National Health Service where it has become a massive agenda. I think it is great that this new debate has opened up. It sometimes seems to be without recognising the forty or fifty years of socially engaged arts practice that many people have already been involved with.

I guess the challenge is to shift from this idea of the gallery as a visitor attraction to something that is a series of platforms for different ways of making meaning.

I'm just going to show you one project by the artist, Jyll Bradley, whom I had worked with in Spacex a couple of times previously. She was in *Homeland*. She had a particular interest in flower arranging. Flower arranging might not seem like a particularly glamorous sub-culture to focus on, but actually, once you get into it, it becomes an incredibly interesting context for all sorts of different power relations. It was actually after the war when Julia Clements formed the first Flower Arranging Society. It actually became a way for women to self organise across the country. Flowers are traditionally incredibly meaningful, marking the most important occasions in life. (fig. 39 – 40)

fig, 39

fig. 40

In Exeter, perhaps the way that the projects were presented did not make use of the status of the gallery. In Arnolfini, Jyll worked with a whole series of different groups within the City to look at the significance of the cut flower, including prisoners from Leyhill, Portishead Horticultural Society, and the Malcolm X Elders amongst other different communities. It was a fantastic opportunity to work with very beautiful flowers that were paid for. I'm not sure how it translated into the display mode (if you like) of the gallery. One of the challenges that perhaps we might talk about and that Francis has identified is how to move towards a kind of project-minded approach within these organisations that are set up really for display.

Jyll had pursued that project within a global context. For example, in Columbia the cut flower has now become the biggest export (larger than cocaine) to the States and similarly, obviously, in China there is an incredible economy of cut flowers. I suppose going back to the context of Middle England: the English garden that we value so highly

is, in fact, almost entirely borrowed from other geographical contexts. The rhododendron and the azalia both come from China, from the Chang Jiang valley.

So my challenge, if you like; my contradiction is that I have to change or allow this organisation to also engage people in a dialogue beyond its walls.

When Arnolfini moved to the docks in '75 it was completely derelict. It is a classic story of arts-led regeneration and now it has become a kind of cultural hub for the west of England with the Watershed and all sorts of different organisations around the Harbourside. It was, of course, the quay where the slave ships embarked from and this year (as you all know) is the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. This is just one example of the kind of cultural geography that Arnolfini is located in i.e. within a set of meanings and values, as well as particular histories. It is something that we need to unpack as a local context.

Our forthcoming project in September, Port City, is conceived in relation to themes of mobility and exchange as it occurs today. So it is really looking at contemporary issues of trade and exchange chiming in with that abolition. A project like that, I don't think, would be successful unless it engaged the different migrant communities within Bristol as participants. I have to say that it is quite slow progress to get this machine to go outside of its walls.

I'll just finish by saying that I am interested in working in different social contexts, as well as within the art context. It is meaningful for me. I think there is a tendency for the art world to merely illustrate engagement beyond its own discourse rather than genuinely engage in dialogue. It is a matter of where your centre of gravity is, I think. Socially engaged practice has to have its centre of gravity in the dialogue, and that is the quality of the work.

So, thank you very much.

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[i] http://www.nitsch.org/
[ii] www.valieexport.org/?english
[iii] http://www.iniva.org/exhibitions_projects/1996/the_visible_and_the_invisible
[iv] http://www.cca-kitakyushu.org/english/project/hohenbuchler_project.shtml
[v] http://www.architectureforhumanity.org/
[vi] http://www.loisweinberger.net/html/indexen.htm
[vii] http://artnews.info/artist.php?i=156
[viii] www.dundee.ac.uk/fineart/ research/g**renwick**/g**renwick**.html

Homeland
making meaning in Middle England

Tom Trevor

Within any social space there is a plurality of overlapping histories and traditions, or 'maps of meaning', which relate, in very different ways, to the dominant attitudes of everyday life, and thus to the distribution of power in society. This multi-layered cultural terrain is constantly contested according to particular (ultimately economic) interests within the social hierarchy. With the recognition of a plurality of cultures ('high' and 'low', black and white, masculine and feminine, gay and straight, urban and rural, etc) it is clear that different meanings and values will conflict and compete for ascendancy in accordance with the underlying power mechanisms of society.

Antonio Gramsci's re-working of the concept of 'hegemony' theorizes the ways in which one set of moral, political and cultural values is seemingly 'naturalized' as everyday 'common sense' so as to support the interests of a dominant social group. As part of this normative process, the main cultural institutions work to reproduce and affirm these privileged meanings and values as the 'natural order'. As Raymond Williams puts it:

"[Hegemony] is a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture' [a whole way of life], but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes." [1]

Of course hegemony is always contested by those it implicitly subordinates, through resistant cultural traditions and practices, as well as more direct oppositional means. Resistance may not always be conscious, active or open (often it will be latent and largely symbolic, as in the counter-hegemonic attitudes of popular culture) but, as Stuart Hall says, "it is through the medium of culture that people transform the mundane phenomena of the material world into a world of significant symbols to which they give meaning and attach value." [2] Within this "socially-produced space", as Henri Lefebvre describes it, "state-imposed normality makes permanent transgression inevitable." [3] Thus 'culture' is a domain, no less than the political and the economic, in which social relations of dominance and subordination are negotiated and resisted, where meanings are not imposed but contested, and where there is a constant process of appropriation and re-absorption as part of an on-going power struggle.

The term 'Middle England' refers to a particular cultural terrain, in a national context, upon which many of these hegemonic struggles currently take place. Increasingly politicians, advertising and the media refer to 'Middle England' as if it is an accepted everyday definition, and yet its underlying criteria remain unclear. The question of who is able to consider themselves a part of Middle England, for example, is ambiguous. Although it is 'placeless' in physical terms, Middle England is apparently situated somewhere outside the main metropolitan centres, and beyond the reach of industrial influences, and yet it is employed by the media to represent the supposed mainstream attitudes and desires of the country.

The ‘culture’ of Middle England appears to reproduce the sense of a singular homogeneous community, constructed around closely defined models of the home, the family and the individual subject. Whilst in reality no-one can fit in to such narrow definitions, competition for the 'ideal' Middle England lifestyle remains a powerful motor of social aspiration. Inevitably this competitive hierarchy is permeated with hidden prejudices lurking just below the surface of everyday life that can quickly be re-activated to exclude individuals who do not fit the model, whether through class, race, gender, sexuality or more specific ‘differences’ from the norm.

From 1999 to 2005, whilst Director of Spacex, a contemporary art space based in Exeter, I curated a series of ‘off-site’ projects and exhibitions, in collaboration with Zoë Shearman, entitled the Middle England Series.[4] There is not enough space in the context of this essay to discuss the details of these projects, but the overall aim of the series was to commission artists to produce context-based work in relation to different aspects of Middle England. In other words, the series set out to examine the construction of a cultural hegemony around this peculiarly English, class-bound model of community, with its strong sense of belonging and ownership and thus its equivalent sense of exclusivity and resistance to difference.

While many of these projects were ’site-specific’ in the conventional sense that they developed in response to a particular ‘place’ and its histories and traditions, the primary location of the work was the abstract cultural or social space of Middle England. In other words, the main context of the work existed in the shared meanings and values of the different audiences or participants in the projects. Thus many of the projects were participatory, with the artist functioning as a facilitator for a collective exploration of different aspects of Middle England as reproduced in the city of Exeter.

Exeter has a reputation for having a high ‘quality of life’, with the seaside and moors close-by, and is regularly placed highly in national surveys of such matters. At the heart of the city is the High Street shopping centre, a thriving consumer hub for the surrounding Devon area, which is increasingly being taken over by chain-stores and global brands (indeed, in another recent survey Exeter was judged top of the ‘Clone Towns’). It is a relatively small provincial city and, despite a diversity of communities, appears to promote a ‘mono-cultural’ sense of its own identity. In fact there are many different histories and cultural traditions within the city, as well as the whole range of contemporary social issues, in contrast to this uniform self-image.

The Middle England Series began with a focus on homelessness. As a city with a reputation for a high ‘quality of life’ inevitably Exeter also attracts a large number of rough-sleepers (indeed in yet another city survey, Exeter had the second highest number of rough-sleepers relative to the city population in the UK, until a recent ‘zero tolerance’ crackdown that is). Close to Spacex there is a hostel for homeless young men, called Gabriel House, and over a number of years an on-going series of participatory projects developed with the clients and staff (facilitated by Caroline Mawdsley, Education & Outreach Co-ordinator at Spacex).

In 2000, an area of wasteland awaiting development, next to Gabriel House, became the site for a number of participation projects. Christine & Irene Hohenbuchler’s exhibition at Spacex focused upon the (then current) war in Kosovo and issues of housing displaced people. Out of this initiative developed a project with Gabriel House and the architect Mike Lawless (a finalist in the international Architecture for Humanity project) to construct a temporary building, as a model for ‘transitional housing’ in war zones, using simple gabions and rubble from the wasteland.

Another participatory project led by Austrian artist Lois Weinberger set out to explore ideas around the division of nature and culture, and the 'edges' of the city. Working with groups of homeless and 'excluded' young people from Gabriel House, St Petrocks Day Centre and Exeter College, the waste ground was partly transformed into a garden, including ‘outsider’ plants transplanted from the overgrown estate of Poltimore House, as well as the creation of a large-scale mural mapping the edge of the city, incorporating phrases relating to the boundaries between nature and society, which was erected on the outside of the hostel. The words on the map were a combination of the names of plants Weinberger found growing on the waste ground and phrases contributed by the participants which had particular meaning for them; for example 'Blue Moon' and 'Black Oak', which are brands of super-cider, 'Beware of the flowers' and other lyrics from songs, etc.

Another focus of the series was to unpack aspects of the colonial histories implicit within the city. A key site for this strand of projects was the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), the local city museum, which has a quite remarkable ethnographic collection, most of which was donated by local residents in the mid-19th century, and which now forms the basis of the displays in the newly renovated World Cultures Galleries. A great deal of critical reflection and curatorial effort has gone into the ethics of presenting this non-Western material, e.g. RAMM was one of the first museums in the UK to repatriate artefacts to their country of origin, yet at heart this remains a collection of ‘trophies of empire’, and thus perhaps more a portrait of Exeter than of ‘the world’.

In 2000 Scottish artist Gavin Renwick undertook a four-month residency within RAMM’s ethnography department. Renwick had worked in the Canadian Sub-Arctic for a number of years, most recently with the Dogrib Treaty 11 Traditional Knowledge Project, in Rae-Edzo, Northwest Territories. The Dogrib were in the process of negotiating self-government from Canada (now achieved). However, as a traditionally nomadic, hunter-gathering culture, they were reluctant to base their land claim solely upon Western conceptions of territory, which are sedentary and agrarian, in contrast to their own. The Traditional Knowledge Project had therefore involved Renwick as a kind of 'cultural intermediary', under the direction of the Dogrib elders, to help qualify parallel understandings and so facilitate a more equitable dialogue.

As a result of research undertaken during his residency in Exeter, Renwick identified a number of objects from the museum’s reserve collection that embodied a “Northern, non-Western idea of home”. Many of these artefacts had been difficult for RAMM to classify but, via the internet, Renwick was able to ask the Dogrib elders to identify them. Subsequently, in a project entitled *Home: the Outpost of Progress*, he placed selected objects in specific locations throughout the museum, as a way of making a comparative study of underlying assumptions about the home. For example, next to the silver tea service of the first Governor of Vancouver (a native of Exeter) he placed seal-skin cups from Nunavut, in the Baffin Zone, while the display case containing cartographic and navigational items was supplemented by an Inuit ‘map’, a carved bone worn around the neck. An accompanying internet project also facilitated exchanges between school groups in Exeter and Yellowknife, in the Northwest Territories, on the theme of ‘home’.

Other strands within the series explored issues such as sexuality in Middle England, consumerism and environmental issues, music sub-cultures, religious difference (e.g. Islamic traditions within the city), the urban and rural divide, farming after Foot and Mouth Disease, horticulture and imperialism, the heritage industry and other key themes which resonated within the context of the local cultural hegemony.

This broad agenda could be divided into three areas, corresponding to what the philosopher Felix Guattari described as the "three ecologies": social, psychological and environmental. [5]

In Henri Lefebvre's conception of 'social space' he also differentiates three areas, contrasting a context of social relations from the physical space of material activity and the mental space of mathematics and geometry. As opposed to a mathematically determined space, in which sites are conceived as stable, unchanging and devoid of external forces, social space is contingent and constantly in a process of negotiation, produced by the interactions and inter-relationships of different subjectivities and social forces. Whereas the idea of mathematical space gives the "illusion of transparency", as if it were a clear even terrain within which human agency is given free reign, social space defies this sense of 'luminous' intelligibility. In the murky web of social space we are all "situated", which Lefebvre argues undermines the illusion of transparency that naturalizes knowledge and power relations between subjects.

As in the notion of the ethnographer as 'participant observer', the ultimate site of interrogation must therefore be one's own relation to the cultural hegemony. Making meaning is a social activity, and what is meaningful to us personally is still culturally defined, in a historical and social context.

As Lefebvre puts it, "(social) space is a (social) product". [6]

[1] *Keywords*, Raymond Williams, 1983

[2] *Resistance through Rituals*, Stuart Hall et al, 1976

[3] *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre, 1974

[4] ***The Middle England Series*** (more details at www.spacex.co.uk):

- 29 January – 4 March 2000 ***Homing: projects for Kosovo*** - Christine & Irene Hohenbuchler, Martin Feiersinger, Gunther Steiner, Architecture for Humanity projects, including Mike Lawless, LDA Architects, Art Therapy Initiative
- 22 June – 5 August 2000 ***Edge of the City*** - Lois Weinberger, Franziska Lettner, Peter Nesweda
- 17 August – 30 September 2000 ***Somnambulin*** - Sigalit Landau
- 17 August – 30 September 2000 ***Garden of Love*** - James Ursell
- 1 Feb – 31 March 2001 ***Home: the outpost of progress*** - Gavin Renwick
- 15 Sept – 28 Oct 2001 ***Sea Change*** – Ocean Earth Development Corporation, including Peter Fend, George Chaikin, Dennis Oppenheim, Steve Hughes, Samantha Lavender
- 24 Nov 2001 – 2 Feb 2002 ***Patterns*** - Samta Benyahia, Zineb Sedira, Geoffrey Preston, Ismail Fajer
- 5 Oct – 30 Nov 2002 ***Fieldwork / Sounding Dartmoor*** - Marcus Vergette, John Drever
- 14 Dec 2002 – 15 Feb 2003 ***Buster Keaton*** - Steven Tynan
- 1 Oct – 22 Nov 2003 ***Introspect*** - Oladele Ajiboye Bamgboye
- 17 April – 15 May 2004 ***Homeland*** - Ansuman Biswas, Jyll Bradley, Lisa Cheung, Guillermo Gomez Pena, Jenny Mellings, Misha Myers, Rosalind Nashashibi, Quack-project, Grayson Perry, Wrights & Sites + *I can see my home* including Tariq Alvi and Michael Curran with guests, Jeremy Akerman, Gail Burton, Michele Dendy, Ana Fonseca, Marc Hulson, Serena Korda, Roma

Pas, Geoffrey Preston, Alex Schady, Show & Tell, + *When in Rome II* including Daniel Baker, Suki Chan, Nooshin Farhid, Amanda Francis, Raimi Gbadamosi, Takafumi Homma, Ronee Hui, Paul Jones, Silia KaTung, Margareta Kern, Maria Meade, Agnes Poitevin-Navarre, Harold Offeh, Paul O'Kane, Yewande Okuleye, Raymond Yap

- 25 Sept – 30 Nov 2004 ***Hortus*** - Maria Thereza Alves, Caroline Bergvall & Ciaran Maher, Susan Boafo, Jyll Bradley, Stuart Brisley, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Global Feed, Helena Goldwater, Michael Landy, Andrew Lawson, Vong Phaophanit, Lois & Franziska Weinberger

[5] *The Three Ecologies*, Felix Guattari, 2000. Guattari extended the definition of ecology to encompass social relations and human subjectivity as well as environmental concerns. He argues that just as nature is threatened by the forces of globalisation, so is society and our own mental health.

[6] *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre, 1974

Guest lecture questions and answers

1. "Change and the Institution of the Gallery"
- Francis McKee

Francis McKee: Tom, you were very consciously saying that Exeter was an official history of what is meant to be middle class. You then went on to say that you are looking at what was excluded. You were beginning to unpack the excluded communities of Bristol. That was very clear – again – as something to work against, as something to reveal, including the machinations of power and how power works. Exeter was a very clear context in which to do that. Now you have found yourself in a position where you are the power!

I also know about the frustration with getting the institution to change fast enough. We were both saying how CCA and Arnolfini were living on their reputations, how long reputations could last when actually, we as the directors are looking at the institution thinking, 'This needs to change, this needs to change'.

How do you create change? From the outside these kinds of institutions look ok. They just keep going and they also keep sitting down. We have frustrations about them and about making them more agile, perhaps. But also (to get to the questions) they have their own position in power and authority to represent something. As you said with the flowers, there was perhaps too much power in the gallery when you put the flowers into it. The place is too posh, just like CCA, and that was why I was interested in idea of personalisation.

Suzanne Lacy: I thought the flowers were beautiful in their own way. They must draw in people that are very different from the normal Arnolfini audience who would appreciate the beauty of the space and the flowers in the space.

Tom Trevor: Yes, it did definitely. It is interesting. Working in a big institution like Arnolfini, people have very different motivations for being a part of that establishment. Possibly most of us here share a common intention in our practice that is about social change. Perhaps (and it sounds over-blown), it is about social justice. Social justice is a great driver. At the same time lots of people within the arts institution are driven by prestige, status and security. The shiny palace does a lot for them. That is why they want to be a part of it, and it is a very different driving force.

Francis McKee: It is also outside of social change. The social change aspect is more seen in public art or outside institutions. You are bringing social change as an issue into the institution. You have to change and create a sort of mobility in and out of the institution to make that work because institutions aren't always built for social change, in a sense. I almost think that a lot of these institutions don't care about social change. It is not on their agenda.

Tom Trevor: No, they become almost like a fortress to protect modernist values.

Francis McKee: Yes, and they're built like that. They're built to self protect. That's why I like the personalisation coming from the Health Service because the Health Service works within little clinics that are quite austere and quite antiseptic. So are galleries. In a way, that is what we would mean by 'too posh, too quaint'. This place (CCA) can be too antiseptic at times. This room is too antiseptic. Even the acoustic is too antiseptic. A lot of people don't like to play in it, because it is too clean. That can work against this kind of project.

Speaker: Sometimes institutions are resistant to research methodologies by artists and propel the work into a process of display rather than opening up and mimicking that dialogical model. They push us into that moment of display at the expense of a dialogical process.

Tom Trevor: Absolutely. It is very easy for that to happen. That's what I meant by the fact that if you haven't got a centre of gravity in the right place, then working in the institution of the gallery becomes about disempowering that dialogue. I want to open longer term research processes and residencies. We are not really set up for production and we're not set up for conversation either. There have been talks about it. We are set up for delivering products.

Roxana Meechan (Core Group): I just think that Arnolfini is the perfect building to be 'taken over' to allow the different members of the community the chance to occupy it for a day, or for a month. [laughter]

Tom Trevor: Except that Bristol is quite a segregated city – it is a multi-cultural city and it is also a commuting city. The centre of the city where Arnolfini is situated, is quite homogenous. There are people in an area called Hartcliffe that have never been to the city centre of Bristol. I think it is incumbent on us to also create dialogue outside the building but not just for the sake of dialogue. I think it still has to be project-led. It has to be a qualitative discussion, a co-production.

We are working with Helen and Newton Harrison, the environmental artists, at the moment on a project. I felt the best way to really locate their project would be to work with a community-based group called Knowle West Media Centre. This is really exciting - we had a very sparky meeting just recently. I'm looking at Chris (Fremantle), because he was there. It was actually the local community in Knowle West who made films about the implications of sea level rise. The Harrisons project is called Greenhouse Britain , with the same focus. With their international profile as artists the Harrisons realise that the real politics happen when people are doing the work themselves. That is the biting point, for me. It is the combination of an art context and that local context.

So, yes, 'storm the building'.

2. "The Institution as a resource"
- David Butler

David Butler: I'm interested in this space that you are describing as being too posh, as being quite formal and quite rigid, and therefore there is a certain imperviousness that comes through that. Actually, you are also a large, well-established space, very rich in resources. I think that is a powerful place to be if you are then interested in an interplay between the inside of the space and the outside. You can work with an awful lot of people and give them access to those kinds of resources. I can think of examples. They are just within the arts community, though I think you could extend it outside of that. There are emerging groups of artists working in various ways who have been able to do things because they have been able to partner up with large institutions that otherwise they would not have been able to do. I think there is a mechanism there that is really valuable to get hold of.

Coming as I do from a university I am in many ways in a similar situation to you. It is a university that has shifted over the past ten years in its view of the role it can play within the wider sphere of the city that it is located in. There is now the belief that some really interesting things that can go on there.

I am also very aware from a conversation that I had the other day that, of course, from the outside there are certain perceptions of the organisation. You think that you are working in a particularly open way, but actually there are perceptions from the outside where people think there is an agenda that is very peculiarly one's own. My experience of that is that you, personally, break that down through this dialogic process that you are talking about and what you are looking at is longer term relationships there. They take time to develop. But in developing new work in this way, one would generate exemplars for other people who then are going to think, 'That's interesting, I can work in that way'.

The problem for large institutions is that they have been working in one way for a time and suddenly you draw back because, actually, it becomes difficult for various reasons to continue. It usually comes from a financial pressure. You snap those bonds. I can think of plenty of examples of this happening. But I think that there is a really powerful potential when we think of 'power' as a way of generating something rather than about a notion of power hierarchies.

3. "The institution as an experimental project space"
- Francis McKee

Francis McKee: I would agree with that and I think that is what we are trying to do at CCA. We are aware of the resources. There are four or five or six different organisations using our cinema at present. They are beginning to programme what they want and create spaces and a calendar and a computer program. We are doing that with all of the spaces, to an extent, right across the building. We have actually converted some of the office spaces into new art spaces as well. The new model of the CCA is to create a small organisation that is co-ordinated with the curators of the groups, working with them. I think there are maybe up to about twenty organisations, at the moment, across the board that we are now working with on different kinds of projects.

We run the facility with support from people in it and keep it running for other people's uses as well. The point of having a public space is that we are not just there for the public, we are there for other organisations. Not all organisations would want to present work to the public so we are extending the gallery of art to other forms including activists and makers of documentaries. More often than not we will do it for free.

Tom Trevor: In a sense, you are lucky in your starting from blank space!

Francis McKee: We had to change because CCA as it was just not working. The Arts Council gave us the space and freedom to change what wasn't working, and to start from scratch.

Suzanne Lacy: Francis, let's extend this conversation from just this organisation as a complex cultural experiment to what you talked about today in terms of public art in Glasgow and The Glasgow International. How does this work with respective practices here, in this region?

4. "Duration"
- Chris Fremantle

Chris Fremantle: Sorry, I'm not trying to get him off the hook!

Going back to the flower project that you showed us, there is a fundamental problem to me. It was an absolutely archetypal example of the way the institution behaves. It does a project that lasts one, two or three months. All sorts of people get drawn in. They feel a sense of ownership. Their right to participate becomes part of the institution. Then the project is over and the institution moves on to the next project such as climate change working with a different community. Actually, the reality of people's engagement with flower arranging is not three months. Some of the people who were founder members of the Flower Arranging Society may be still alive and arranging flowers! So, there is a question of duration, in relation to the institution's need to continually make new offerings.

Suzanne Lacy: I'm not sure Arnolfini is a place where the manifestation of flower-arranging or climate-change research will take place. I think as an institution it is a little bit more ambiguous in my mind as to what that research is. And to me, that's the interesting question.

Chris Fremantle: But the issue isn't about the flower arranging or the climate change. It is about Arnolfini's temporary relationship with communities for its convenience.

Tom Trevor: It is very easy to answer that, because …

Suzanne Lacy: That's loaded.

Tom Trevor: …because we have long-term sustained relationships, in particular, that's the way education is practised in those monologic organisations. However, if the meaning of the project is in the dialogue, then, it is important to build on that. It is not about illustrating a process of participation. It is affecting.

5. "Sustaining open-ended social space: 'Transition Town Totnes'"
- Janey Hunt

Janey Hunt (Core Group): I am involved in a project down in Totnes in Devon called, 'Transition Town Totnes'. There is actually a 'Transition Town Bristol' that is set up now.

I reluctantly, in a way, stuck my head above the parapet and became the self-appointed arts facilitator because nobody else seemed to be willing to even consider the idea of taking it on. Kicking it off, I raised questions in order to open up the space.

Just to give you a little bit of outline: 'Transition Town Totnes' aims to provide a community plan to enable our community, Totnes and the district, to work out how it is going to maintain its community in a post-oil future. This is all about the environment. It crosses from economic, social, into environmental issues. It is actually a complete re-think about how we do our town, our business, our social engagement, our work practices, our travel, our housing– the whole gamut. It is a very big and ambitious project.

I felt very strongly that the arts had a place to play in engaging people in the ideas, in the approaches that we could take because of our ability as artists to be creative agents. The arts group is a broad spectrum of musicians, visual artists, writers. In order to launch this arts group, I opened the space by setting out a range of questions. How could we engage? How could we explore the issues? What could we produce?

What I found is that–at least, what I am feeling–is that that was almost too open a space for people to actually operate in. Despite continued interest individuals didn't quite know what to do with this space.

I felt that people needed something to kick against. They kept asking, "What's your vision?" It wasn't because they wanted to know. It was to have something to butt up against. I have reluctantly (because I am an artist myself, first and foremost), come to the conclusion that I do need to curate an event that will re-stimulate this whole agenda.

I'm concerned about how to really keep that open space because open space is non-hierarchical. We can actually dream something completely different in terms of this post-oil future for Totnes.

Tom Trevor: But do you think that curating is a hierarchical position?

Janey Hunt: I don't know, because I haven't ever done it before! I have to really think about how I can do it and how I can make it completely non-hierarchical. Hopefully, I can recruit some help! How could you conceive of doing that in relation to CCA and Arnolfini?

Tom Trevor: Right. I think David was saying earlier that you have to enact a sense of relationships in the way you organise every aspect of the project. Perhaps starting from a relatively brand new place is more enabling. At Arnolfini I have inherited an entire hierarchy. I think of my job as demonstrator. I am concerned with facilitating a whole set of relationships. I think it is actually the market that is really working against a dynamic in which art is concerned with unpacking ideas in relation to different contexts.

I would say, enact the relationships as you have been, and curate the projects.

6. "Qualities and tensions of engaged practice"
- Heather Lynch

Heather Lynch: I have a number of issues with your presentation. Firstly, Francis has introduced this idea of 'relational work' and most of what you presented seemed to me very much from a substantialist model of thinking. You presented artists through objects and artefacts that embodied something of the artist's ideas. You also presented us with

projects which you named as being participatory, but where the participants looked to me more like recipients and instruments of the artist's ideas than genuine co-producers of the artworks.

I have worked alongside Jyll Bradley. Certainly many of the people working alongside her were instrumental to her ideas in the sense of producing her idea and her aesthetic vision. In no way were they co-producers nor was their creative expression part of her creative process.

Why do you want to engage with communities in the first place, and what do you think you are doing by engaging with communities? Social policy over the last ten, fifteen years since New Labour has defined agendas of widening access and social inclusion. Everybody wants to communicate and commune with various communities. There are lots of social critics of that who would say that this was an attempt by government to 'govern by their soul' - to use Nikolas Rose's' words or in the words of Frank Furedi government by emotion.

I suppose if I want to look at uncensored creative expression by communities, I would go on YouTube or MySpace, and not to a gallery.

How instrumental do you feel in terms of government and what do you think you are doing with these communities?

Tom Trevor: I think there is a danger. The issue is linked to 'personalisation' as an agenda where YouTube and MySpace are referred to a great deal. Personally, I am excited about participation.

Heather Lynch: But when you say 'meaningful': for what, for whom?

Tom Trevor: Well, hopefully, meaningful for the people involved, the participants, but firstly for me. The trouble with pigeon-holing personalisation as purely something to do with My Space etc, as located in the digital realm, is that the really political part is not actually being engaged with it.

Heather Lynch: But engaged in what? Are people coming along to arrange flowers in your gallery? Is that engagement? If that is the case, let's turn to the homeless people working Louis Weinberger, Spacex project. I did not gather anything about these people, the benefits of the project to them, and the point of them being involved. I only know that an important artist came and made a work. That is what you told me. That is why I am trying to get to who are participating, who is benefiting and who is the audience. I think that is a real question. If the audience is continually the art world (which is an incredibly microscopic community of people in comparison to the wider community), then who are you speaking to?

Suzanne Lacy: I think these questions you are asking are really key questions and I am glad you brought that up. But I would love it if there is a way that we can ask them that did not sound like an attack. I have participated in many of these discussions. I find that the way in which I bring judgement to those questions, or somebody else brings judgment, keeps us from really exploring the territory.

There is a kind of apology that I saw inherent in what Janey said, which is, that the space of Arnolfini or CCA, will somehow allow us to have this conversation – the space of art. On the other hand, there is a mythology that I think you are bringing up that there is the artist, the power, the institution and people are pawns within it. I think that there is much more complexity to these issues, but that these are the right questions – if we can say it in a way …

Heather Lynch: I think the presentation really defines the boundaries between artists and community. The artists all have names.

Suzanne Lacy: I have worked in these kinds of territories for thirty years. That has not been my experience. We go up to the people, we talk to them – that is not their experience!

Tom Trevor: No, she was talking about my presentation.

Suzanne Lacy: I know, but even so! I can read into that process, having heard these issues raised so many times. I think somewhere in the questions of - What is the museum doing? What is the artist doing? What is that process they all participate in? lie a set of important issues. These are not as simple as, 'Now we are all being creative'. You do that when you are teaching people. You do that when you are participating in some very different kind of activity, but when you are making art, you are doing something with the people that have a range of opportunities, expression for instance, and a range of impact. Sometimes it can be incredibly exploitative and people are instrumentalised, and sometimes they can come and feel happy that they got to work on arranging flowers in this (by the way) beautiful white space. People that I have worked with appreciate a quality space time and time again. I have said, 'Wouldn't you rather have this furniture show room down the neighbourhood?' And they say: 'No. I want the best. I want that one up in Beverley Hills.'

I have a lot of criticisms of museums with respect to this kind of work and perhaps even more of artists. I think we need to untangle the relationship between the artist and the art market, the museum and its relationship with the economy and then artists and their relationship on a very minute level with people and the community.

It is not simple. That is what I am trying to say.

7. "Defining 'institution'"
- Victoria Durr

Victoria Durr: There is a lot of confusion and ambiguity going on and I see a lot of what Heather is saying. The idea of social inclusion, I find, has not just come from government or New Labour. I think it is government latching on to an artistic practice that has been going on for decades – since the '60s, later in Suzanne's work and then Tom's work.

This idea of separating the artist and the museum - you are all talking about the idea of an institution and I would just like it clarified what you mean by institution, because it seems there is an underlying argument of structure and agency going on here. Institutions, as far as I see them, are made up of people. Tom now is attached to a big institution. Do you mean institution in Bourdieu's sense of the art (cultural) field? Institutions are people engaging with these terms like 'social inclusion' and 'socially engaged artistic practice'. What do you mean by 'institution'? That is very ambiguous to me.

Suzanne Lacy: I have seen people very excited to raise issues. Do you mind if we take three or four questions?

8. "Collaboration and Power"
- Anonymous

Speaker: There is the question of power that was brought up at the very beginning. The idea of being here was to talk about power and re-presentation, if you like. I suppose a question that came into my head straight away was, who asks whom to become the collaborator? Is it the institution, the artist, or the community? Who approaches whom? That first approach is where the power lies. That struck me quite a lot in the Exeter work.

Suzanne Lacy: I have seen it every single way, and I do not think that there is a single way. In the United States I have seen people who, as facilitating public agencies, would go into a community and will show them the sub-artist. In Oakland, we will have a whole process where the host community makes the selection and they are empowered to work with the artist. And then I have seen where the curator gets a bright idea and finds the artist that will implement that idea, in some way, in that community. In between, there is what you call artist-led practice. I do not think any of those resolves some of the really fundamental sorts of problematic power issues.

I think they are interesting strategies. What Tom is doing is an interesting strategy; but not the solution for the artist.

9. "Developing Democracy through Art"
- Jean Cameron

Jean Cameron: An interesting area to discuss is a definition of democracy in this question. As the Director of Arnolfini, you have a defined space, a defined time, and a defined amount of money. You are dealing with marginalised communities who need a lot of time, a lot of money, and a different understanding of their space. There is a dichotomy that, at the moment in the big cities, we are having to deal with because the split is becoming clearer, but the vocabulary is becoming increasingly burred.

Sally Thomson: I noticed in Spacex, that the outcome was longer-lived because your relationship was much more with the participants and the support network. In a larger institution you haven't got access to that support network that you can have in some community projects. It is the level of engagement and the level of participation that actually sees whether a project can be supported into a future ten or twenty-year programme. It certainly depends on your networks, rather than your role within the project.

Tom Trevor: Yes, you talked about a 'common methodology'. In terms of sustainable relationships, you have to engage expertise in schools or in the city repeatedly so that you can address the perception that you are not just parachuting in.

There are obviously methodologies that have been explored over many years for sustaining longer-term relationships.

10. "Power as responsibility"
- Ed Carroll

Ed Carroll: I have a few questions. I hope they come out as questions rather than statements.

I enjoyed all the presentations, first of all, so thanks for that.

I liked the acknowledgement of being in spaces and of not having to resolve lots of things, but maybe allowing things to just dissolve, in some way to allow the space for that to happen.

The theme was power, and I think it is a very interesting theme. I do have the impression that the question of power is an obsession that we have in contemporary society. I often wonder whether it bears some relationship to a trainer that over-played or over-trained certain muscles and underplayed the other muscles. I think that the discourse of both power or dialogue is in some ways often not given enough space to open up because we over-use the notion of power and are over-obsessed with it.

One thing that does come out, I think (particularly in Tom's presentation), was a sense of power, not as a sense of, 'I have the power to …', but the sense of, 'I have responsibility; I have ambitions; I have intentions'. I think that, in some ways, when you look at institutions in the arts, very often what you find is a poverty in terms of Me, Myself, as the one that is going to do certain things. Instead it might be interesting to think of a sense of being able to develop an ecology where the institution as relationships can really click into new forms and new ways of working.

I was particularly interested in terms of the patience that you speak about. I am thinking of Francis's comments around the Arts Council's patience with your sense of trying to re-vision, trying to re-ground. I do not know the English context so well (I am over from the Republic of Ireland). It does strike me that the other muscle that we have over-trained today, is that muscle that is about interpreting; being able to very quickly come to register that adds something up and makes a judgement. We are less able to stay off, or hold back from, making the sum of the judgement.

I wonder whether there is something to be done around holding back from this obsession of power, and holding back from this obsession that we have to summarise so that I can cut you up or cut you down, or place you up or place you down very quickly; and to be able to roll back to try and stay with some things.

Finally, I was particularly interested that you were hosting the Harrisons project. It struck me that if you were looking for that major arts practice/history to bring in that suits your trustees and suits your Board, I don't know that I would choose a practice like the Harrisons. Their work seems to me is all about opening up questions and holding back from just producing end statements.

11. "Power and infrastructural development"
- Tim Collins

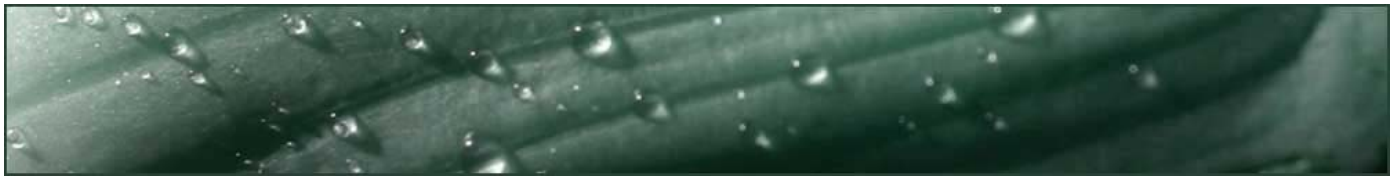
Tim Collins: One of the key points of power is when a social system has enough power to actually develop infrastructure. Your institutions can be seen as infrastructure, from Suzanne's academic relationships to your municipal galleries, to state museums – these are the infrastructure of culture. What you are all talking about is a nodal change.

Thinking about futures, do you see any shift in the physical infrastructure of arts production that will get us more towards some of the ideals that are being discussed in the room and presented by you today? Even in the method of presentation, we are looking at really complex projects presented by you, Tom, but we are seeing images that do not really reveal the complexity.

I am just wondering: do you have any thoughts about these systems, these institutions as infrastructure that may be failing?

Suzanne Lacy: I think I want to add to - What is going on in the museums with respect to this practice? What is going on with the market?

The second thing is, we need to drop below the surface. Listening deeply to the problems and the complaints (and I have them as well), we need to drop below to a conversation that is a lot more philosophical. As Grant mentioned last time: What is the meaning of museum space? We have not even begun to touch art school. Let's talk about power in this position we are right now! What is the meaning of the artist's practice in the community? Where are those working together or not working together? I think that is what we should be starting with.



Working in public seminar series: Art, Practice and Policy
Seminar 2: Representation and Power

23 May 2007, Morning Lecture

Anne Douglas Good morning, everybody and welcome back. This morning's session is going to take a slightly different form from last night. Tom gave us a great deal to think about. Suzanne is now going to talk about one of the projects within the Oakland series. This project particularly speaks to the issues of power and representation. A dialogue between Tom and Suzanne will follow to explore some of the issues that are raised by the project and that you raised last night. Then we will have a question and answer session.

We would like to change the dynamic of the room and make a semi-circle to encourage more discussion.

Before I hand over to Suzanne, I just want to point to the team that is behind *Working in Public*. An initiative like this is dependent upon some very special and important people. Professor Carole Gray is the Research Professor at Gray's School of Art. Reiko Goto-Collins is an environmental artist and also the project manager for *Working in Public.* Jonathan Claxton, Sarah Males and Lois Carson are also part of the Gray's team. Fiona Dean is here representing the Public Art Resource+Research, Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Arts Council. We also have a steering group that includes Chris Fremantle and Tim Collins. I would just like to thank all of those people.

The Oakland Projects: Teen pregnancy

Suzanne Lacy I am really excited to be here. I am a recent convert to Anne Douglas' thinking on the seminar series. She (I thought at the time rather tediously) presented me with a transcript of our last conversation and, on reading it, I discovered some incredibly interesting questions raised by the core group. I began to get a sense of how this dialogic practice will work for me. I was very interested and excited about chewing on some of those questions. I am still very much in the process and look forward to our conversation today.

I am going to show you one of the Oakland Projects today, and then Tom and I will entertain questions for each other. I have some issues I am really interested in asking him about. We will also address your questions. Last night these questions begun to bubble to the surface in an exciting moment. I feel we are going to have a really great conversation and I am looking forward to the chance to learn from it.

For those of you who do not know, the Oakland Projects took place over the course of ten years, 1990-2000. They involved some nine major performance installations and a series of other kinds of activities from public policy decisions to education programmes. I am going to talk about the one that is the least visible – probably for reasons of representation, although, paradoxically, it is the one that did end up in an art gallery. This project is called *Expectations* 1997 .

Teen pregnancy is an obvious issue that impacts the young people in Oakland. I could see when I was working in the school system that when a young woman got pregnant, she very often dropped out of public school. Even though there were no overt laws or rules at that time against pregnant teenagers being in school, they nevertheless ended up dropping out. Pregnant teenagers in Oakland in California were centralised in several public policy debates – some overt and some covert. I will talk a little bit about those.

The real reason that I began to explore teen pregnancy was because, in *Roof is on Fire* 1993-4, several young people (particularly the women) began to talk about it as one of the key issues for them. It revolved around, among other things, coercion and the kind of environment they found themselves in – but also education. After pregnancy and after they had a child, they began to bring forward lots of issues about the school system.

I am going to start by showing two film clips from *Roof is on Fire.* These are very short, about three minutes each. These clips will demonstrate the issue as it began to come up with the young women. It will show one of the young women planners from that group of youth leaders, Randy Thomas, who will talk about her experience as a young mother. I will use these clips as a preface for talking about *Expectations.*

Teens Talking

Brandy

Suzanne Lacy You see some of the level of the discourse that goes on among young people and the competing forces that exist within Oakland. Cultural values are part of it. The role of motherhood is held differently in different cultures: in a Latino culture, in African-American culture and in White culture, and across different social classes. It is a very contested area. Added to that, there is no substantial sex education in public schools, certainly nothing that goes above the mechanical. Now with right-wing forces (right-wing religion), even those kinds of conversations are being short-cut in schools.

Despite that the young people are extremely sophisticated. In Oakland there are a lot of studies and speculation that, because of hormones and foods, young people – particularly in lower income groups – mature quicker, menstruate earlier. So there is that territory of the biological. There is, in addition, the cultural surround with rap music and entertainment that brings the issue of sexuality to the foreground - the male position on sexuality and the female as a counter position. Culture effectively becomes more sexualised.

A couple of facts that are relevant: in teenage life, there is a higher incidence of sexual abuse now than when I was growing up. They say that, in America, one out of eight teenage girls will have been beaten by her boyfriend before she gets out of high school. Mike Males, the sociologist, suggests that sexuality as it relates to race and reproduction as it relates to culture are extremely loaded. The image of pregnant teenagers operates politically in a variety of ways that are worth analysing.

The other statistic is that the teen pregnancy rate was higher in 1950 than it is today (in America) but the unwed pregnancy rate is higher today than it was in 1970. What are the influential factors? In the 70s feminism made it more acceptable for women to have babies outside of wedlock, on their own. In 1950 soldiers came home from the war. Teen mothers were having more babies at that time within marriage. The incidence of unwed pregnancy, I think, was higher in the age group 35 to 45. There are strange statistics that give lie to the mythology.

My favourite statistic from this whole field of enquiry is that most teenage girls who are pregnant in the environment of Oakland had their first sexual experience with an adult male. By 'adult' I mean over 18. That does not necessarily mean that she got pregnant. As Mike Males said, you could look at teen pregnancy as an issue of female promiscuity or you could look at it as an issue of adult predation on non-adult girls. It depends on how you play the statistics.
This is one field of operation for this project, and the second field of operation is schools.

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The issue of authority
Throughout the Oakland Projects, my feet were held at the fire repeatedly by the young people I worked with. What I mean by that is that I had to incorporate the very weighty responsibility of youth development within every project. There was no way the young people I worked with were going to allow me to develop a project where I came in, worked with the top, worked with the issues and re-represented it *if* they did not get something out of it. The question was always, 'What are we getting out of it?'. This was not an easy situation, nor was it a capitulation to either youth development or art production. It is a continuing negotiation and a constantly evolving set of questions that could always come up around the issue of power.

While representation is an issue, I think at bottom, one of the things that we are getting excited about in this conversation, is power. So, let me start with the project.

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***Expectations*: the educational programme**

In 1997, I was still working with Sheila Jordan, an educator who had become a City politician in Alameda County Office of Education, which is the county-wide umbrella for education. They had a small programme called Comprehensive Team Pregnancy and Parenting Program. It was not working very well in many of the schools. The high drop-out rate was significant. I suggested to Sheila, 'Why don't we have an education programme that is also a work of art? It will be a performance, and we will design a curriculum based on art that will work with these young women.'

There was a whole team of us. Leuckessia Hirsh from *Roof is on Fire* became a teacher in this project along with Amana Harris. Unique Holland (who I might have pointed out in one of these projects) was with me in all the projects and became a co-author of the final project. Unique was a teacher. She developed video diaries of these young women.
We found a site at the YWCA. We raised money and created a two-course summer programme that was accredited within the High School system. We had meals brought in so the young women had food. We raised transportation money so they did not have that expense. We created our very own day-care centre downstairs (which was probably a mistake in terms of my own energy). Everyday, 36 teenagers, either pregnant or parenting, all below the age of 18 (the youngest 13), came for six weeks straight to a summer art program or class. They brought their babies and we housed them downstairs. The class was a very enriched curriculum (fig1 and fig 2).

There were artists, architects and poets involved including a woman from England and a woman from Chicago apart from the others I have already mentioned. There were about six in the team teaching. Now, you may wonder why you need six teachers for 36 women – but if you have got some sense of the quality of conversation going on in those cars in *Roof is on Fire*, you will begin to understand why we needed six teachers for 36 women. Of the 36 who enrolled, 32 completed. This was a remarkably high rate for this endeavour.

Each week we started with the body because we found that young women did not talk about their bodies and the changes that were happening to their bodies. They talked about sexuality, the baby and the social condition that young women lived in. From the time she got pregnant the young woman became the bearer of the baby and in a sense her life was dramatically transformed. Imagine that you are 13 or 15 and a young woman going through puberty. Imagine on top of that, your body is expanding because you are pregnant. The hormonal fluctuations, obviously, are fairly profound.
We had them writing. We had them reading texts on teen pregnancy, on literature and so on. We had them doing

exercises. Physical exercise was very important to them. Throughout this course of six weeks we got them to do large life-size drawings of their body and of their relationships. The very big, drawings were reduced to a smaller scale and ended up in the installation. Two or three of them worked with a poet who selected writing from their journals. Working with a graphic designer, we made a document that at the end of the project was sent to legislators and politicians across the State.

Every girl got to develop a video diary of her experience of her body, which they completed each week supported by Unique.
Each week there was a different theme, starting with them and their bodies. The next week was about relationships with the baby's father, all of the issues within that relationship and their feelings about it. Throughout this process they developed a series of drawings about the chaos in their lives, their desire to eat food and so on. These drawings are pretty incredible.
The next week was about their relationships with their family systems. The following week was about the various social services they intersected with - primarily, obviously, the health system. The final week was about their relationships with the public sector and they looked at things like policies (to the degree that we could get them to).
Policies were being formulated around welfare with teen pregnancy at the centre of it. The young women came with a lot of sophisticated experience and observations. They did not necessarily put the whole thing together. They certainly did understand when people turned around and looked at a girl with a big belly on a bus. They understood the permission that members of the public gave themselves to touch the young woman's belly or to comment on her state. Those people would often be white and the girl often, though not exclusively, would be black. That was something that they talked about repeatedly. It shows an awareness of the way their image operated on a local level.

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***Expectations*: the exhibition**

Finally, at the end of the six weeks, they developed an exhibition. They put a lot of artwork into baby cribs. All through the floor of this YWCA they had their installation. They brought their families. I think about 100 people came and watched them go through this graduation ceremony (fig 3). You may know of Barbara Lee of the State Congress of anti-war fame as the only woman who stood up to Bush in Congress. She wrote a certificate that was given out. We had graduation speakers. This woman, Richonne, was one of the graduation speakers. They performed a dance that Unique worked with them on. The ceremony was then the end of what I would call Part 1.

Part 2 was an additional eight weeks and took the form of an installation at Capp Street Gallery, San Francisco . Now Capp Street Gallery functions like Tramway here. Maybe it is not as extensive in terms of media, but it is the gallery for avant garde art installation in San Francisco. I had been asked, two years prior, to do a project and this is the one I selected.

We were faced with the issue of how to represent the young women in a context of engaging them in the installation in some way. This was not taking the work to New York or to Los Angeles, but working with it in San Francisco, which is adjacent to Oakland. We used it as an opportunity to bring the young women, and engage them in a variety of ways in both the opening and, for about 15 of them, the actual production of the work.

We worked with an architect who designed a giant crib (fig 4). Unique as a sound video designer developed a series of sound tracks from the young women's video diaries including very graphic descriptions of the body and the pregnancy. We used their drawings reduced from a very large scale. The 15 who continued to work with us created unfired clay sculptures that were embedded in the exhibition (fig 5). All of them came to a symposium where their experience was centralised along with Health Care. The symposium was moderated by Arnold Perkins, the Head of Public Health and politicians. The discourse was developed through the mixture that we always brought in, which is institutional, political, service providers and the young women themselves.

At Capp Street we had that conference followed by an opening. This opening was in an auxiliary gallery - a big park surrounded by dot.com enterprises and consequently very 'trafficked' during lunch hour. In the Garage Gallery, as it was called, we built a crib that fitted the size of the gallery to the exclusion of anything else. The Garage Gallery has a glass door and when the door was rolled down we had phrases from the young women's writings in vinyl letters so the audience peered through their writings into the space. From outside the gallery as you looked through, you could see the giant crib and hear Pete Wilson (who was the Governor of California's State of the State) repeating a section of a speech over and over again. Pete Wilson is saying, 'And of course, as unwed motherhood increases, so does the rate of …' and then he listed the litany of prison building, crime, mental health problems – pretty much everything that was going on socially in California at the time. This speech is made in the middle of the debate concerned with the dismantling of welfare in the United States.

Unique then made a video tape depicting Pete Wilson talking in slow motion but without the actual sound. His voice could only be heard from the outside, disconnected from any imagery. You could only get into the gallery through the back so you could still hear Pete Wilson's voice projected from outside. During the day the glass doors were rolled up and you could walk right in off the street. You heard Pete talking – over and over.

On either side of the giant crib, you were forced into a into a very constricted space (fig 6). It evoked an overwhelming sense of child-bearing. As you went along you could face the crib (which was not very interesting), or you could face a collective narrative that started with 'My date out and how I met Harry' and went to 'When Harry and I first made love'. The narrative then continues at the back on a green chalk board with a chalk board railing.

What I loved about this piece was the imagery. The collective statement was pretty powerful. Everything from the image of a young woman's water breaking, to several scenes of child-birth which are, I think, incredibly gorgeous. Some of them were more graphic than others (fig 7).

At the back at the chalk board, you had the ability to climb inside the crib. The inside was chaos (fig 8). It took the shape of a schoolroom, its desks in disarray. Presiding at the front was Pete Wilson talking out of sync and all the legislators applauding out of synch. It was a kind of slow motion, so you got a weird experience of him at the head of the classroom, visually dominating as the teacher would, but his voice was coming from outside. It did not quite connect with the image. Inside, there was one small television set – that was the only sound that you heard in this space. It is one of the young women, Asha Zitani, who is reading a letter to Pete Wilson. It was actually pretty funny. She said, among other things, 'Dear Pete Wilson, You call us illegitimate, but what about all those politicians who are up there having affairs?' In the earphones were collective narratives (or sound tracks) on individual topics. Unique developed these. Then you could see the schools, the child-bearing, the judicial system, and so on, as unfired clay sculptures.

We invited some of the young women to come in and graffiti the school desks. As you went back outside, Blanca Rodrigo's narrative ended, 'Oh my God, I finished school' (fig 9).

That is pretty much the project. There were a lot of aspects to it, but I do not want to go into too many of them. I think what we should do now is entertain two or three questions about the structure of the project or other issues. Then let us launch into inviting Tom up and having a conversation.

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Adult Involvement in *Expectations*

Speaker How were adults involved in the project?

Suzanne Lacy There were a lot of ways. We always try to involve parents. Frankly, some of the staff needed more emotional support than the young girls for a variety of reasons and not all were to do with the project. Some had personal reasons. We not only had a very enriched teaching staff but we also had access to a lot of facilities including Mental Health. The girls were broken down into small groups so they were core groups with a core mentor.

The question is critical. Frankly, there is no way that an art system in this environment can create adequate and appropriate support for the children. I ended up doing things like going to hospitals. We ended up hiding a girl when her

abusive boyfriend came by and taking a kid to the hospital when she had bladder infection that had not been tended to. The people working on the project as staff took care of those kinds of issues. The real truth is, the systems do not exist for them and an art project is not going to suddenly create them.

There is a human ethical responsibility: when you work with people, you know them and care for them. That is a normal relationship.

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Curatorial Dynamics of *Expectations*

Monica Vykoukal (core group) I was curious about the curatorial dynamics of the project. Was it left entirely to the teen mothers or was it headed by the team mentors?

Suzanne Lacy Do you mean the construction of the first part of the project or the installation ?

Monica Vykoukal The installation.

Suzanne Lacy OK. I'm pointing that out, because neither was. While it was participatory education, the teachers authored the programme in their role as educators. Those teachers were carefully selected to be people that represented the young women and included individuals I had worked with before. So the authors of the education programme were a mixed group of people: mixed race, mixed age, mixed social position – but all educators in one way or the other.

Both teachers got pregnant during the course of this project. Maybe it is like menstruation. When women work together, they menstruate together. One was happily wed. The other was not.

For the art project it was the same. There were young people representing the young women. There were young people from prior projects that had become quite accomplished in their ability to critique, to challenge and to formulate imagery. There were people of all races. There were people of different art media, from architecture to performance to visual art and so on. The installation was authored by artists and the educational programme was authored by educators.
Everything used in the work was approved by the individual involved. Every young woman's drawing and every audio voice was approved by that young woman. The young women created the drawings and the clay sculptures. Did they design the crib? No. Did they have an input into it? Yes.

These are very complex negotiations, which is why I am going into detail about it. They are not one-liners. I think this is really key to the issue of power: I can satisfy you in some way by figuring out what it was you were really looking for, but the truth of the matter is, not everybody will be satisfied by any practice. It is really important to lay out the complexities of these negotiations.

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Capp Street as a venue

Tom O' Sullivan What was the response of the art community to the second part to the installation, considering the kind of space that Capp Street is as an important gallery?

Suzanne Lacy There was not a lot of response. I think social practice saw Capp Street in 1997 (when the project was done) as pretty acceptable. There was not a lot of critical discourse. I do not think it was seen as much by the art world as it would have been had it been, for example, in the Museum of Modern Art. Our choice of location was a choice that took the work a little bit out of a strictly art venue to populate the audience. We did not seek art coverage particularly. It was not bad if it happened, but in that instance, at that time, whether it featured in the arts section in the San Francisco Chronicle, was not a huge issue.

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The Legacy of the Oakland projects

Kerstin Mey, (core group) How has the memory of that practice been preserved?

Suzanne Lacy In Oakland?

Kerstin Mey Yes, in Oakland and in general.

Suzanne Lacy In general, I could not tell you. I think, in general, those artists (who were many) who participated over those ten years, carry the legacy in some way in their own working practice. There is a kind of mythic legacy to the work. For example the phrase *Roof is on Fire* is a catch phrase among activists around Oakland referring both to the particular project in 1993-4 and also youth voice in public. This is largely because a documentary film was made locally and it was broadcast several times on television.

Code 33 (the project was 1998-2000) is a also catch phrase. I was approached by a group who said, we want to do a *Code 33* with our teachers. We want you to help us to do that performance.

That local level, which is not grand, is just what exists in the memory of the community. We were funded locally. It was very interesting that the most radical funding agency (one of them) that was not located in the community did not fund us. They were worried about our exploitation of youth. The other one, which was the one embedded in the community and a very radical agency, gave us five times the amount that the other one did. I felt an honour to receive that funding. It was really a validation of 'we understand your work in this community'.

The interesting memory is the one that resides in people's heads. I still get emails. I got an email from Delilah Dimes a year ago who said, 'My boyfriend of 15 years who was my fiancée of 15 years, died in a shoot-out. I know that when I was a sophomore in high school, the two of us were in *Roof is on Fire* and I wonder if you have any video footage.' I began to have conversations with Delilah and I went back and interviewed her for this thesis project. It was very interesting the way it lived in her memory: not as some big momentous experience, but an experience that she was glad she participated in and she understood why we did it.

One year I was driving down in Oakland and Richonne was standing on a notorious corner where all the drug dealers hung out. I immediately stopped my car in the middle of the street (which you can do in a ghetto), jumped out and went over to the sidewalk and said, 'What are you doing on this corner? I haven't seen you *forever.*How are you doing? Did you have any more babies?' Then, 'Why are you on this street corner, Richonne? This is not the street corner you should be on – you know that. What's going on?' We were re-establishing the contact.

Unique and I were talking just before I came here, 'Where is Kessia now? What's going on with her?' Leuckessia was the teacher in *Expectations*. Just before I left I got a phone call from Unique as she was walking around the park in Oakland. She says, 'Guess who is on the other line', and she hands me the phone and it is Leuckessia. So, in that small community, that memory of the projects live as a series of relationships. What we, in the relationship did, is almost second to that. It is not that the work lives, it is that the relationships live.

I think we should go on now and shift this to the conversation to all of you.

It occurred to me, looking at your questions in the last seminar, that it was very profitable to allow you to lay down a topic. In the last seminar Grant and I responded after the questions and it seemed to work well. I do not know if you want to do it right now from the get-go or if you want to move in when Tom and I have explored our questions with each other.
I really do not want this to be a conversation where you and I are in constant dialogue back and forth, but one where we lay out a territory. I think there are some exciting, critical and loaded issues that this group of people could be very instrumental in thinking through.

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The gallery as a venue for *Expectations*

Tom Trevor Can I start then with a simple basic question? Why did you want to present the project in a gallery?
Suzanne Lacy Because I love making visual things. I am very visually oriented. I would make that work in any gallery space – but that particular gallery space, and that particular location, continue to operate within the field of politics that I had set up, both the mass cultural politics and the specifically local.

In this work, *Expectations*, you opened the door, and there was the artwork as a walk through. You did not go through a portal like here at the CCA. The artwork was quite visible from the street. I would probably have also done this in the Museum of Modern Art. The reason that it was ok for me to work in the gallery was because the girls were part of that process, of the opening and setting up. In other words, they inhabited the space.

Somebody asked about PR. There was a load of local media, not art media. The girls were the ones that talked. The whole gallery piece was for them to go to San Francisco, to make the journey to become verbal in front of a conference, to speak before the media. It was an act of taking charge of their experience.

For me, there were other agendas. A lot of them had to do with the ability to make that giant crib. I spent hours reducing those xeroxes and just loving the way the drawings looked, putting them together, thinking about the body experience inside the space. I found those very exciting things to think about. We could have made the work outside of a gallery but, in this case, it was better done inside a gallery.

You could have put it in a mall. That would have been interesting.

Tom Trevor In a sense, you have got a set of relationships, and the dialogues that came out of that. But then, it seems a very different activity, the word was substantive, to have an object in a gallery space. Would it have been a weaker project without the gallery manifestation?

Suzanne Lacy You know, it is unusual – in all of the series of Oakland projects, *Expectations* is the only one that *did* take place in a gallery. In the afterlight, I see it almost like two projects that are deeply linked - the one drawing more on the resources of the research than the other.

We did one other project. We were invited to go to Japan. We could have done anything, but decided to do *No Blood, no Foul*, the basketball project that originally happened in Oakland 1995-6. In Japan on 1996 it was in the middle of a huge warehouse space. It consisted of a number of interactive projects brought together in Tokyo as part of an attempt to introduce this form of practice to Tokyo and to Tokyo artists. We developed a huge basketball court – probably like this room: big fences along both sides. Embedded were video monitors with police and youth talking about their experiences on the streets in Oakland but they were all talking in Japanese. We had Japanese voice-over. There were basketball hoops on either end. Unique, Annice Jacoby and Mike Shah who were part of the *No Blood, No Foul* project, came with me. They organised a discussion with local youth.

It was not what I would call 'big engagement', but it brought local youth to the site. It was part of re-presenting Oakland culture. Other than those two, all the Oakland projects were not in gallery spaces.

I find this issue of the art space intriguing and complicated. I think one of the issues of power that arises, is how the experience of people who are not in the art world, is treated within that venue. There are a very problematic set of issues around power. I have seen things that I find highly visually compelling – we have talked about them. They are also very disturbing in terms of what human dynamics are being presented and the way people are being represented. It is not that I am critical per sé. It is that I find them disturbing and something really worth us thinking about, worth *me* thinking about. I do not feel it is the space of the gallery that is problematic. I feel the problems we have as artists is the entire system. How do we as practitioners in public, as temporal, ephemeral, experience-makers, relate to a world that is structured predominantly in visual terms?

Tom Trevor By visual, do you mean …?

Suzanne Lacy In the terms of visual representation, visual display – particularly now. That is a question I have for you. I have been really curious if this observation is accurate, or to what degree it is accurate.

I did so much work in the Oakland community. I was very engaged there so I was not spending a lot of time in London and travelling elsewhere. I have since discovered that there is a whole field of practice with a level of spectacle that I find quite interesting.

It seems to me that artists have in the past ten years begun to adopt a lot of resources and mechanisms that they were not available to them before. Part of that is because money has flown into the art world. In particular, there are a lot of resources to produce new work. So what do you get to produce? You have the opportunity to produce at a fairly high level of visual display, using cinematic technologies and materials, advertising technologies and materials and digital technology.

With the resources available to artists practising in museums and galleries, it seems to me there is a convention of visual display that is part of what is considered the quality of art now. Do you think that is the case in your ten years of working this field?

Tom Trevor Yes. I hope we are at a moment of change. I think the system that you are describing, as I said yesterday, is really about supporting the monologue of the artist. In a sense, I am an embodiment of a kind of contradiction because I want to try to find a way for the institution to open up to more dialogic processes. Maybe it does not make sense to do so. Maybe it is an old mould or maybe different kinds of practices can live alongside each other.

Suzanne Lacy But is it true, do you think, that in the past ten to 15 years, the quality of visual display (particularly for ephemeral processes) has become radically transformed and, if so, in what direction? Why? How?

Tom Trevor There has been a general professionalisation of all areas of the visual arts. For example, the lottery money that is coming into our facilities has transformed places like CCA and Arnolfini. But with money comes a whole set of issues. I think what was arising yesterday was that, in some ways, money is what institutionalises and, in many ways, disempowers an organisation.

Suzanne Lacy But you are talking about an organisation. What about the practice? What if I were Gilbert and George, and I gain access to certain kinds of money? Does that shift the quality of the visual nature of my display? Is lack of access to those resources and related display part of why I (Suzanne) did not do the show at Tate Modern? Do you see what I am saying?

I am wondering if our visual (and audio and everything else) sense of aesthetics is changing and the work is changing in response? or Is the work leading to that changing sense of aesthetics?

There are so many works you go into and you see people from outside the gallery re-presented in large-screen projections. Maybe the film-maker (the artist) had a very deep relationship with that person. Maybe they did not. Who knows? Is representation in the gallery the priority of those in this area of practice? I think a lot of this has to do with the shift in photography and video.

Tom Trevor The strength of arts discourse is its self-questioning and through this, the way it refreshes itself constantly. It might be that we have got to a point that the conventions of display have become so professionalised and so well-funded that we actually need to rethink that. This is why it is really important to bring this area of socially engaged practice into that space.

Of course, in the last 15 years there has been a lot of money going into contemporary art, into display. But does that mean that the quality of the ideas are any stronger? A lot of what I have seen in the last 15 years has been what you call a 'reprisal' – a regurgitation of ideas from the late '60s, early '70s, but somehow polished up for the market.

Suzanne Lacy Really polished, yes.

Tom Trevor It looks polished. But it is the ideas that are important and the embodied experience of those ideas as well. Now, the issue of aesthetics in a relational practice is a really interesting question. The veneer of display can be a kind of

trap.

Suzanne Lacy *[a whispered aside]* But that is not an answer!

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Documentation: for whom?

Janey Hunt, core group I was thinking about the issue of display and its connection to the current preoccupation in art education with documentation. There are a set of connections here between the scale of a project, the use of good documentation in order to prove your outcomes to funders to secure funding for the next project and one's ambition for the work. Ambition and scale are measured through the existing systems, which are about display and documentation.

Tom Trevor Do you mean just purely in terms of meeting the funders' requirements?

Janey Hunt Well, yes.

Suzanne Lacy Not meeting *anybody*'s requirements. Modes of display are context specific. If the context is TV, they meet TV requirements. If the context is a gallery, they meet a gallery's requirements.

Tom Trevor Yes, but in terms of making meaning, this is my fundamental question - Do you need that gallery system? What you are talking about in your work is a different set of relationships.

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Creating different points of meaning

Tom O' Sullivan It seems to me there were some politics in the way you were developing the exhibition, whether you want to call it the politics of representation or not. I understand there were different points of meaning going on in the projects. There was a point of meaning at the first stage, in the actual situation. I find an equally interesting and meaningful point at the second stage, in the actual exhibition in that particular art gallery, that is precisely to do with the politics of display linked with the politics of image. There is something about those particular images reduced down, the particular kind of drawings, the way the drawings are articulated on the paper, the experience of the viewer going up to them and walking down the side of the crib, walking through the space and the experience of seeing the chairs. For me, that could be an equally meaningful experience and equally political.

That is why there seems to be real value in having these two parts to a project. The first part has a way of engaging political meaning in a certain sort of situation, but then you take it somewhere else as well, and it creates another politically engaged situation in that second place. That seems to me very crucial.

Suzanne Lacy One of the big questions for me is - Where does the art take place? I think this might hinge on this issue of display and museums and biennales. Does the art occur in one place? Is it then possible to recreate or re-present it in another? Art has always been documented but the question - where is the art? - is very important.

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Authorship, Experience and Power

Venda Pollock, core group Following on from some of the comments already made, I have been taking some of the discussions you have been having back to my students and talking to them about it. They were looking at *Roof is on Fire*.

We discussed issues of authorship and the kind of power relationship that was played out in that project.

To cut a very long discussion short, they decided that the key moment of the project was in the unpredictability of the encounter and the kinds of experiences that were shown on the DVD that you gave us such as the people who had come to see the performance. The power was actually in the experience, in its unpredictability and that was heightened by the location. Then I said, 'Well you are watching this in a classroom. Let's imagine this as a gallery. How would that change?' They agreed that, yes, it still does have a meaning, but that meaning is altered fundamentally from the context in which you experience the work. That is how a gallery is structured. Yes, you can have that bodily experience you were talking about with walking through by the crib, but because of the baggage of the institution, you walk in expecting to have certain kinds of experiences. You expect certain kinds of meaning to be conveyed. They argued that the kind of power that you have from the unpredictability of the encounter is reduced in the gallery. The experience is fundamentally changed by being in the gallery. It was a curated, more organised, more articulated message than in the whole *Roof is on Fire* experience.

Tom Trevor That was a weakness, was it?

Venda Pollock Well, it was not a weakness, it was a difference.

Suzanne Lacy It was an observation, yes.

Venda Pollock Do you think there is a sense that you almost need to de-institutionalise the experience or somehow fundamentally change the space within the gallery to convey that unpredictable quality. Looking at *Roof is on Fire* the students put that unpredictable moment down to when you parked the final car and opened the doors. Who knows?

Suzanne Lacy No, but that is not an accurate observation, although I take the point.

Venda Pollock Yes, that is a bit naïve.

Suzanne Lacy I was directing everything with walky-talkies behind the scene.

Venda Pollock Yes, but people walked into that, not knowing what to expect.

Suzanne Lacy That is true.

Venda Pollock In terms of the conversations and the way people moved physically around the space, what was going to happen? You could go from one car to another, whereas what happened in the gallery is more directed. It is a more curated experience. In terms of power, I think that is a very interesting play. Can you cultivate spaces in different ways to recreate the experience you might have outwith the gallery space, but within it?

Suzanne Lacy Well, I do think it is something that is – well, I am not going to respond. Let us hear from two or three people.

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Encountering the unexpected

Chris Fremantle I am just thinking a little bit about that because by implication one of the challenges that faces the contemporary art institution is that people walk into it actually knowing what to expect. Putting work in the gallery comes within a framework of expectations which are somewhat driven by, perhaps an over-exposure to, the avant-garde.
I am thinking back to your analogy about the '70s and the idea that when you went to the Museum of Modern Art in New York or the ICA in the '70s, you would see a guy beating shit out of a piano and the fire brigade turning up. At that point the experience within the institution of the gallery was perhaps closer to going onto the roof in Oakland. You had no idea what to expect. But now, we are so used to being challenged by these institutions that, in effect, the gallery has somehow lost its ability to present the unexpected because it has presented so many unexpected things.

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Analytical frameworks: affirmative and transformative politics

Damian Killeen I have been listening to this discussion of yesterday and today from a different position of other issues, other areas of politics in society and trying to understand - Where does this debate fit in? I am wondering whether some of the political/philosophical thinking of somebody like Nancy Frazer is not helpful here. She is a person who currently in my mind. Her thinking is very sophisticated. Fraser distinguishes between the politics of recognition (and misrecognition) and the politics of distribution (and acquisition). In separating them out analytically, she also recognises that in the real world these are bound up with each other and complex. Recognition or identity of minorities can lead to the displacement of those minorities through reification. Therefore recognition needs to be considered alongside notions of redistribution (of wealth or resources) .

I think this was coming through our speakers the last couple of days. How do I deal with issues of recognition and also deal with the fact that I am apparently in charge of this plant, this resource, or whatever it is?

I feel this discussion needs some framework like that of Nancy Fraser to help us break down what kind of political interaction we are actually talking about at the moment and how it relates to other kinds of political interactions, at some point to turn that round to *intent.* To say, 'what do we intend?'

Another distinction that Nancy Frazer makes is between affirmative politics and transformative politics. Essentially, affirmative politics, however exciting it appears at the time, ends up not changing anything in the system because it is not fundamentally about change, whereas transformative politics is about attempting to change something in the system.

I would throw that back as a question to Suzanne and others. When you are exposing some of the systemic issues (like these issues about teenage mothers, the relationship with school and so on), to what extent is this simply (I do not mean that derogatively) an exposition of what is happening, and to what extent does it become engaged with issues about the social justice? How can art practice help promote change?

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Imagine a culture where contemporary art is not particularly respected

Ruth Barker (core group) People talked quite a bit about the power inherent in the idea of an institution – whether that is an art gallery or an art school or whatever. I think what has been quite clear is that that power manifests itself in two different ways: an instrumental power to get things to happen through money or networks and a symbolic power where the gallery is almost like a plinth. It isolates and elevates things.

I think, given that discussion, my question may or may not be as devil's advocate. I guess if we imagine a culture where contemporary art is not particularly respected – let us imagine that it does not get taught in schools, and that the media is not that keen on it, and people make fun of it quite a lot.

Suzanne Lacy Well, that would be America!

Ruth Barker Let us imagine this crazy world in which the only moment when people talk about contemporary art it is to complain about art being given money. The question is whether in that hypothetical reality the art institution still has power, and what it might mean to talk about power. The flipside of it is that actually institutions are some of the very rare places where art is given a bit of space and a bit of respect, a bit of time and a bit of that moment to go, 'Actually, it is worthwhile to make things. It is worthwhile to think about things in that way'. I just wondered if that was a legitimate position or where you might stand on that.

Suzanne Lacy That is great, Ruth.

I know, it is a hard practice, isn't it?

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Going back to first principles

Deidre McMann I thought we are coming back to some key issues that I think Tom articulated quite well last night in relation to a centre of gravity. In conversation later we were suggesting that perhaps we need to think about more than one centre of gravity. An institution or an organisation that is promoting the arts needs to be centred. In our ideal world – in the world that we are trying to tease out at the moment, the relationships within that institution need to be based around good working relationships, good dialogue and conversations. At the same time, the relationship between the institution and potential artists who might actually enhance that dialogue could really do with a focus. Artists too need a centre of gravity to be artists. Suzanne is a great example of that.

I question if all artists do think through in a deep personal way why they are making work and why they would go to work in a community before they find themselves in an engaged practice. Sometimes, practice follows funding and practice can follow funding in institutions too. I really think that those are big issues to start talking about.

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Alliances across diverse practices

Jean Cameron (core group): I am still thinking and feeling my way through this. This is an observation, rather than a question. I went home last night and in my Inbox there was a new report, *Towards a Healthy Ecology of the Arts and Culture,* Missions, Models, Money 2007 . Reading that, Winston Churchill was quoted in terms of talking about how we shape our buildings, and afterwards how our buildings shape us. Thinking about these issues, I have a very different experience, coming from a live art and dance background to both CCA (where I have been the dance performance programmer) and also an ongoing relationship with the Arnolfini. I think you have an incredibly rich set of practitioners and thinkers in terms of that area of practice within Bristol.

How do we align ourselves with other people as part of our own ecology, whether that be our private ecologies outside of the institution or the different voices within the institutions? How do we align ourselves more successfully with people engaged with different practice publicly?

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Power and ecology

Reiko Goto I was thinking about our discussion yesterday and why the concern with museums or galleries. Of course, as an artist, we have to show in museums and big galleries. We dream of doing so every day. But, let's put that aside for a moment.

Why do we become involved in socially, critically and environmentally engaged art practice?
One artist showed flower arranging in the gallery and through that created an interaction. I would say, 'yes, that is one way, and that is fine'. But I would like to also see some artists saying, 'Flowers flower for themselves'. Flowers do not speak so somebody has to speak for them. It does not matter if it is accepted or not, but it is important that it is said.
You used the language: 'subordination', 'domination' – we should never become dominant. We are always small.

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Power and the tyranny of engagement

Heather Lynch I am interested in some of the comments made last night and today about how power is produced. Some of the comments seem to assume that power is a quality that is latent and not produced as a dynamic process. In relation to that, I think about some of the work that you did, Suzanne, links very much to community development and ideas of recognition and subjectivity.

Within community development there is a huge critical voice which links with the tyranny of participation, that is participatory projects that are effectively rolling out government agendas. I wondered, with the project that you named, those young people appeared to me to be constructed in deficit because they were in need of education.

Suzanne Lacy No, certainly not.

Heather Lynch In deficit – in deficit roles – as in need of education and therefore there is a power issue. There is a power issue impregnated within that work.

Also, from both of your conversations, Tom and Suzanne's, you seemed to put the expert on a platform. Within educational discourse, there is a huge conversation about the cult of experts and the educators that create and curate the educational space. The artist curates and creates the artist's space. There is also a relation of power impregnated within that. What I am talking about is the rhetorical production of power and how those young people are immediately placed in recipient deficit roles. Art has the potential to enable people to own their own subjectivity and recognise their own subjectivity, thereby becoming more powerful and more aware of their own power. However, those rhetorical situations can actually make them subject to yet another agenda.

In relation to that, I am thinking about places where people have taken control of their own subjectivity in terms of identity politics within the area of work done by the disabled community, where community groups have actually taken charge of their own cultural representations in ways that have not been engineered by outside experts or government agents.

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Inhabiting the City and building constituencies

Ed Carroll I just have three questions.

What is our responsibility in terms of young emerging practitioners? How do we bring them into this debate? It seems to me that this is a very important area. How do young practitioners find the north, south, east and west, in terms of how they inhabit this very complex world full of debris and full of history? By young practitioners, I would also think about that axis between what might be termed the artist practitioner or the community development practitioner or the youth work practitioner or the young person practitioner.

My second question is - How do we find certain principles in terms of how, as an artist or an art organisation, you inhabit your space – be it the city or another place. I am thinking about the drama or the trauma of a city today, be it in terms of regeneration; be it in terms of justice policing – you know, 24/7. I see on the posters in the underground or the metro here the trauma of migration/immigration, of dislocation. How does an arts organisation or an artist inhabit or respond to those situations? How do you try to find a space where, instead of responding to a situation, you are actually listening in order to understand that situation?

The final question is around the idea of constituency. We are in a different context in that we are a small organisation in terms of a big city like Dublin. One thing I suppose you feel in your gut without knowing why you feel it, is that, unless you try and find a way of building your constituency, then you have nobody to talk to. You send signals out, but there is nobody. In some ways, how do you, in this very complex compressed world that we live in – where nobody has time – how do you find ways where you build your constituency? How can your centre of gravity be another – or *the* other – rather than your own obsession with yourself and your 'When are we getting funding?' and 'When are we going to fill this application in?'

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Responses: Tom Trevor and Suzanne Lacy

Tom Trevor Well, those were the same questions as I was posing. I was asked here but I really wanted to *be* here because I want to see what we can take from existing structures and how we can change them. I really do think that power relations can be produced. I do not want to own a situation, but I want to see how we can get the best out of it. That is about listening.

In terms of emerging artists: a lot of time they want to use the status or prestige of a gallery to move ahead, to get a platform, a profile. It is not right just to abandon all that stuff if it is useful for people. But, what I really need to know from you, is how I can help to change that space, to make it more useful, to belong to socially-engaged art practice. Francis is doing this at the moment as well through Creative Commons and Open Source as ways of bringing a bigger conversation together. The more traditional idea of the gallery space is also still useful otherwise you would not be referring to it.

I do think the idea of the centre of gravity, for me, is key because I see a lot of participation practice represented in the gallery and that is really where the centre of gravity is for some practitioners. To me it means the work is reduced. It has become an illustration. It has been sapped of any real meaning.

I think of Venn diagrams. You can exist in different places. You can make meaning in different discourses. You can have a centre of gravity in different places.

Perhaps, with the project we saw earlier, it could be represented in an entirely different forum and have nothing to do with art practice at all. I do not think that is a problem.

Suzanne Lacy Well, it was in different forms. It was in multiple forms. Forms invaded each other. In other words, the political discussion invaded the gallery, and the gallery was invaded by the girls. It was basically intersecting systems. I am curious: I do not want this phrase 'centre of gravity' to become a catch-phrase where we all love the turn of phrase. What do you mean by 'centre of gravity'?

Tom Trevor I think it is about intention. It is about what you really want from a project.

Suzanne Lacy What if you want two things? I came out of a time when this work was not permissible in art. Never did you see a mention of menstruation. I was actually disqualified as the highest candidate for a UCLA position that was subsequently given to Chris Burden. I was disqualified because my work on rape frightened the male audience committee. Just the topic was a problem. I come from a very different time when we tried to align ourselves as artists with Artaud, Beuys, Kaprow, the Situationists, Dadaists – within that trajectory. Having come from a background of politics and community organising, I decided I wanted to talk there too. I did not want to give up the community. I did not want to give up my 'centre of gravity'. But I also had another 'centre of gravity' or 'intention'. Instead of becoming a doctor or a psychoanalyst, I consciously chose at the age of 26 to become an artist. So I *chose* the discourse, and I have always taken that discourse quite seriously.

I am not sure everybody doing social practice, at this point, cares in the same way about that discourse. I think it is quite possible they do not. Then my question is, what is it we are doing as artists in community? I am always very clear that obviously we produce power to address Heather's issue. It was a really important question. I have read Freire and I have participated in the development of feminist education. Perhaps you have noticed the technique of not letting (including myself, the speaker) respond to every person. This is a feminist educational strategy derived from consciousness-raising groups. I understand those subtleties and complexities with the issue of education. I also happen to believe those young women need an education, not in terms of life experience but in terms of books, in terms of needing a high school credential.

But Freire is really talking about something different from, 'They do not need an education'. He is talking about education being a dialogic process where people bring different expertise and experiences to the table. In the case of *Expectations*, that education was a motivation for the girls. They wanted the two credentials. They could have chosen to participate in the programme and not get the credentials (the credits).

The other issue is that the process was dialogic and based on their experience. Those young women said very clearly and forcefully in ways that I occasionally found aggravating: 'We don't care what you have to say if you have not had a baby'. I was not the teacher in that programme. Other people were the teachers. I structured the whole and worked with the group and I occasionally talked to them about certain issues of art. But they were talking about many issues and in many I was certainly not the authority, nor was the system the authority.

To me that issue is a relevant question. Grant said last time that you keep your contradictions up front with the people you are working with, and that includes in the art world. When I asked you this question of display, it is because I am struggling with it. I am confused about it.

It is not hard to go into a gallery and figure out some of the visual strategies being employed now. Imagine a pregnant teenager with a very large belly talking about the kind of information I have access to on a very big television monitor in a very dark room. That *works*. It is also massively exploitative and I would not do that. I have seen artists that do that, and maybe even do it (*probably* even do it) with the permission of the massively pregnant teenager. I would not do it because I think there are issues of body, and whose body, that are both political and aesthetic.

It is not so hard to find those conventions. The issue is to keep your contradictions in front of you and ask - Where do you draw what line? We were also talking about the fact that all the three presenters with me are men and not women, and what that means. I can tell you from my position that I am completely comfortable with it. My practice - the major subjects of my work, my hiring practices - the people I work with, all include men. *Expectations* is an exception. No men were involved with that project. Men are rarely positioned in the leadership roles. It just happens that way.

Basically I come from such a femi-centric position. It would occur to me to think about their men but it would not occur to me to restrict my conversation.

On the other hand, I am clearly aware of the contradiction that has been established by there being mostly females in this project. We all talked in the selection of participants. Very few men applied.

At any rate, that is a contradiction. That bears discourse. All of these things bear discourse. I only have my position within the discourse, and there are many people (even in Oakland) who did not like what I was doing. That is the bottom line.

I do not think it is every pure. I think it is only intriguing to look at, to think about; or so massively exploitative that it should not be there. I draw that line.

Tom Trevor The real strength of the art discourse is that self-questioning, putting the contradictions at the front. It is perhaps as a result of the discourse throughout the '70s – that is why we got to this point, now. Are you worried that when the big museums come and want to represent your practice that that is perhaps absorbing you into the mainstream? You seem to be suggesting that when you talk about this kind of managerialisation or this professionalisation of display?

Suzanne Lacy There are very few women my age that are worried about that particular issue. I do not feel that a conversation with you is going to overwhelm my economy and authority.

Tom Trevor Oh, I did not mean that! [Laughter]

Suzanne Lacy I know you did not! I mean here, today, in this seminar, although I recognise it might, because of gender, or because of position with some people. Nor do I feel my involvement with Tate Modern is going to compromise my practice.

My allegiance is to art, which means my allegiance is to going where my nose takes me and my sense of experimentation. I could become a photographer tomorrow. Given my background and my politics, it is unlikely, that I would, but I *could*. I think that freedom is part of why one is an artist. Having been on a medical track and chosen, specifically at the rather old age of 25, that I was going to be an artist, I made it as a very conscious decision. It is because of the freedom inherent in art to continually challenge yourself, reconstruct yourself, question yourself.

Tom Trevor It is interesting. Let me put it like this- Suzanne has been using a term 'reprisal'. I referred to 're-enactment'. And to me 'reprisal' is really interesting because it somehow has connotations of revenge of some kind.

Suzanne Lacy That is a British/American thing.

Tom Trevor Yes, it is. 'Reprisal' is interesting in terms of your practice, which is very much about relationships. There is a concept behind that set of relationships where to actually 'reprise' as a simulation seems to me almost like art history containing the practice.

Suzanne Lacy We can talk about a project I am doing now in Los Angeles which is a re-enactment of sorts – a rethinking – of two projects. The *Wack! Exhibition* is the feminist art exhibition by Connie Butler at MOCA . It frames feminism in a very particular way. Feminism was a big part of my practice and I knew most of the practitioners. It is very international in scope. From England is, I think, Margaret Harrison and Cosey Fanni Tutti are both represented.

In this context I began discussions with the curator and with the education department (which was interesting) about framing a contemporary project that re-enacted some of my participatory works from the '80s in LA. There are two projects, *Freeze-Frame: Room for a Living Room* 1982 in a furniture show room and *Immigrants and Survivors,* 1982 which was a giant dinner for 150 women of different cultures. That is all it was. Then there were testifying and testimonials. In that era it was remarkable because feminists did not talk cross race, and this project had every complexion of LA, every age of LA, every ability or disability – disabled women in wheelchairs and so on – all of whom were representing their experience.

How do I rethink these projects in terms of today's practice where those are now issues that people struggle with in very deep and integral ways? This was just the tip of the iceberg, building on conversations between women. I did it as an educational project. I did it with a group of young public arts administrator graduate students at USC and then a group of others that are just my former students and friends – all happen to be women (I think there is one man in this group).

We went out and located groups of women that were working class. There was a problem (and that is a problem inherent in all of this work). There is a level of stereotyping that goes on when you select people based on social profession, condition, gender, occupation, and so on. One of the ways we deal with for individuals to label themselves. Nevertheless, people began to come forward, cleaning women from Wahaca that do not speak English, Iranian middle class refugees or policewomen.

We began to locate and organise these groups. We brought them into the museum. They had discussions with each other as consciousness-raising groups in this setting inside the museum, in the library, with little furniture and behind glass doors. People could come to the museum and they could look in there. Outside there was a Madame Defarge knitting a coloured pillow that matched their colour of clothing. The groups had selected the colour of clothing for themselves.These women had conversations with each other.

Now, in a couple of weeks I am going back, and they are going to have a giant dinner. Part of it will be a live performance with women talking about work because one of the things that is very clear in LA is that there is a massive class divide. Down-town it is business suits in the day, and then at night another population comes in, filled with issues of immigration, poverty, sexual violence and so on. That is the territory of the discourse, and we are 'reprising' or 're-enacting' it in contemporary terms as a way of rethinking some of the difficulties with that practice in terms of today and some of the ways in which it may, or may not, continue to be relevant. Personally, for me, in terms of thinking about where I have come from and where I am going, it is an evaluation period.

In that context, MOCA has not remotely reclaimed my identity or subverted my message. Actually, the museum staff have not been able to figure out how to deal with the project. For example, they do not know whether to advertise it because

other people can not come.

Going into the gallery system is a problem when you are 21, or maybe even 30. I see a lot of young activists now doing so. The problem is that their practice gets structured at that age. When Martha Rosler started showing at the Biennales as a mature practitioner, there was no issue. I am glad that her work is in Biennales.

Tom Trevor I did not really mean that. For example, with a lot of Fluxus' projects you would have a rule that would be the basic starting point for a project. To re-enact that project, you re-apply the rule in a different way and whatever comes out of it – however it manifests itself – is particular to this moment, rather than a simulation of what happened previously.
You were describing actually having put in so much work in a project …

Suzanne Lacy You are referring to another project, the *Crystal Quilt* (1985-7). It is very visual. I am considering whether it makes sense to re-enact it. In a way the reason I would always talk to the art world is the same reason I would write a book, which is to try to get the politics and the mechanisms of this practice into the discourse.

Tom Trevor It is just interesting that the mainstream wants to see it visually within its territory. But, for you it is important because there was so much work in the original project that you could not actually properly re-enact it as concept, but you want to simulate it for legacy.

Suzanne Lacy You *can* re-enact portions. There is no way I would hire 430 women over the age of 60 (which is the only way you can get them if they did not have a buy-in) by saying 'I am hiring you. Show up. You are an extra in a project. *That* makes no sense!

I am saying that that project took me three years and all of my life efforts for three years – completely. So, I will not do that again. I will not do 'Code 33' again.

Tom Trevor The reason I am asking is because, obviously, I am looking to this area of practice to re-invent my organisation. I need to know what we can hold on to that is useful, and what we can change. I am conscious that, in some ways, what I represent (the kind of contradiction that I embody) could be actually a threat. You used that word earlier on. It could be about the mainstream re-absorbing you and disempowering your practice.

Suzanne Lacy I think a lot of these discussions we have are very hypothetical and I think we get really lost in theoretical hypotheses. It is something we have to have a longer conversation about.

Here is a case in point: I was doing a project in a prison in upstate New York on violence against women - *Doing Time New York* 1993. The women were in there for eight years to life imprisonment. They were part of a consciousness-raising group and they had an on-going relationship with each other and with the group leader who was a former prisoner, now a social worker. They were called the 'Family Violence Group'.

We began a discourse about doing a project and there was a point at which the imagery that they were suggesting was, I felt, not imagery. The way they wanted to manifest the imagery, the drawings, whatever, was not going to be very powerful, visually. So I said, 'Ok. Let's lay it on the table. We can do one of two things. We can go in the direction of, 'This is a participatory workshop and I will work with you to implement every one of your ideas.' That is almost the approach I take when I am 'teaching' in a school system. 'I will take your interesting idea about blue eyeballs on a hubcap with tears coming out of them, and I will work with that, and we will do it to the very best that you can make (even though you are an African American woman and I don't know why they are blue).'

So at a certain point I said, 'We can do that, and I will do that with you. I will contribute my time and we will do that together as a respect for you and where you are at. Or, we can struggle it out on the image level – and I will be really frank with you about what I think about the blue eyeball, and we will struggle with it together and make something that I feel is going to be a whole lot stronger aesthetically and then we will take your cars and send them out.' Obviously you are not going to take their cars and send them out unless they want them out. There was a very clear discussion about what level of their information they wanted revealed.

That could look as if I am being a very arrogant artist. But I said, for me, there is an aesthetic issue. It is only *my* aesthetic. Another person would have a different aesthetic and another would have a different one again.

They made a decision and then we worked it through and their reason was absolutely, massively, valid. They said, 'Suzanne, people are always telling us who we are and what our experience is'. And I said, 'Yeah, I get it'. So we had to go back to the drawing board and find the image that communicated well according to my and about five other people's aesthetic.

You do not do it that way if you do not want to. That is the one thing that I feel that underlines all this conversation that often comes out of people who do not practise in community. As an artist, you do not convince masses of people who are intelligent to do things they do not ultimately want to do. And believe me, no way could I have convinced these women in prison. They had no reason whatsoever to follow this little white girl. None. There was no advantage to them. They did it because they bought into it.

Jean Grant I was fascinated listening to your discussion about the Capp Street project because I am looking at the idea of institution and power. Capp Street was started by a person in his house. It was an open house.

Suzanne Lacy Two people: David Ireland and Anne Hunt.

Jean Grant I do not know it terribly well, but I am trying to précis. We are dealing in England with a Victorian idea of institution, museum and gallery, and condescension. I was then moving on, as you kept pleading for advice – very touchingly – to think, in Dublin they sold their gallery and I think that was a very performative act. I am not too sure how the performance has gone. It has not maybe remained public in quite the same way. I am wondering whether we actually do need to repeat that performance a couple of times?

Tom Trevor So, perhaps CCA and Arnolfini?

Suzanne Lacy Can be sold.

Jean Grant I am trying to get out of this Victorian idea and could we talk about it slightly wider?

Suzanne Lacy We have to stop. Let us have the last word go to Tom.

Tom Trevor Recently I was invited by the British Council to go to China. So, I said, 'yes, absolutely'. There was a mix – there were small organisations, but mostly museums and galleries. As you know (well, I do not know if you know it), they are building 150 new contemporary art museums in China at the moment. In order to waive my airfare, I agreed to give a talk at a seminar at the National Art Museum of China to hundreds of new curators to populate these new museums. The speakers from Britain were asked to give presentations around issues of audience and engagement. For the Chinese contributors to this seminar, this was completely irrelevant. They were not interested at all. They thought it was incidental, a detail. As you know, at the moment there are incredible amounts of money going into the art market in China. There is a very, vibrant scene that is basically around commerce. We were asked at the end of this symposium a question by Lu Jie, a curator, who said, 'you are all public-funded organisations, so do you do what the government tells you to do?'
We were there as emissaries of the British Government, effectively. But were we all self-policing advocates of this policy of engaging audiences and what has become known as 'instrumentalism'?

Suzanne Lacy Aye. That's it.

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Studio Session

Tim Collins

Francis, Suzanne and Tim

Francis and Suzanne

Tim and Reiko

Kate Foster

Studio group photo

Suzanne and Tim

Keith Donnelly

Adele Patrick

Jean Cameron

David Butler and Sarah Munro

Amanda Catto, Francis, Anne and Suzanne

Sally Thompson

Seminar 2 A Critical Reflection
Anne Douglas

Introduction

The thematic area - *Power and Representation* emerged in our discussions with Suzanne Lacy as an issue that framed tensions within the Oakland projects[i] specifically, as well having relevance beyond Oakland. These tensions included the artist's role in relation to that of participants as well as the relationship of the artist and participants to hierarchies of value when the work became part of institutional frameworks such as a gallery exhibition. Seminar 2 was an opportunity to explore these issues from two perspectives - that of the artist (Suzanne) and that of the gallery director (Tom Trevor as director of Arnolfini with contributions from Francis McKee, as director of CCA, Glasgow).

Authority can be viewed as a relationship between those who lead and those who invest in or concede the leadership of others in recognition of their expertise or organisational position. At one point in the discussion it was noted that we tended to associate power as object, as some*thing* to accept or reject rather than a process we actively engage in constructing and developing. In this alternative reading, power can be the energy to negotiate authority in different ways and through different forms, energy channelled through different kinds of conduits. The recent curatorial work of Tom at the Arnolfini (such as *Recording Iraq* April 2007[ii]) and Suzanne within the Oakland projects (in particular *Expectations* 1997[iii], the project at the heart of Seminar 2) reveal a shifting pattern of authority. In writing this reflection I felt the need to go back to first principles and to look at Kaprow's thinking in the 70s at the point in time when he offered a significant and articulate challenge to institutionalised forms of authority in art through the notion of the unartist. Kaprow defined the artist's emergence in public as a source of new energy (and power) in culture that mitigated against the entropy of the establishment. Tom Trevor and Francis McKee acknowledged this entropy within their own experiences of directing galleries and were actively seeking ways of radicalising their respective organisations.

Throughout our discussions in Seminar 2, I had a strong feeling that we were somehow successfully bringing *art as experience* to the foreground of the discussion (rather than focusing on the different agendas that drive opportunities for art to happen). The tendency in public art is to seek *justification* in relation to economic, political or social remits. While understanding the relationship of public art to these remits is crucially important, it is also important to remind ourselves of what art 'is' in a specific sense.

In part this foregrounding occurred in a very 'artlike' way. None of the key contributors were quite where the conventional discourse would have placed them. Suzanne was insistent on her right as an artist to work in galleries if she so chooses. (Many would view social engagement and gallery practice as mutually exclusive.) Tom equally insisted on the possibility of opening up the institution of the gallery as a social space of shared and dynamic meaning making. Francis valued the unique opportunity he had been given at CCA's point of collapse to redefine the gallery as a project space rather than an exhibition space, to explore and conceptualise the artist in a networked, digital, open source world.

So our key players framed degrees of uncertainty that kept us thinking.

***Educating the Un Artist* (1971 & 2)**[iv]

Kaprow attributes entropy in the art establishment to the way the establishment tends to confirm its own value systems, practices and conventions. Kaprow implies that it is the nonartist who re-energizes our understanding of what art might be precisely because nonartists choose to operate outside the domain of the establishment.

Conversely, in order for their work to be considered as art, artists need to have their work acknowledged and discussed within institutional frameworks.

As an avant garde practice, nonart (or unart)[v] is different from antiart, such as Dada. Antiart disrupts established canons aggressively to provoke new aesthetic, ethical responses. Antiart displaces conventional practices. Nonart becomes *part of the function of the life world and the way that world can be experienced*. Kaprow explores occurrences in life that appear more *artlike* than art - the communication between Apollo 11 crew and Houston's Manned Spacecraft Centre, the brightly light and stainless steel gas stations of Vergas, the trance like movement of shoppers in a supermarket. When these moments capture the imagination of the artist, they present the possibility of becoming art. When the artist, through whatever means, draws public attention to such things, h/she frames the ambiguous and tenuous interplay between art and life and acts as an advocate of nonart.

Both nonart and antiart emerged in the exchange between Suzanne and Tom.

Power and Representation: the Artist's View

Suzanne Lacy was a student and life long friend of Kaprow. She negotiates the reality of her practice in relation to two spheres of thought: feminism and the avant-garde (of Artaud, Beuys, the Situationists, Dada as well as Kaprow). She operates outside of conventional establishment practices while increasingly, seeking visibility within the museum and gallery system, addressing in her own way the institutional framework that Kaprow refers to as essential to being recognised as artist. In much of her work she intervenes *in* life for the purposes of change (a feminist agenda). She describes the Oakland projects as the furthest she could go to the (life/art) edge that Kaprow set her out on in 1972.

> " When is it art and when is it life? Where do you go to the edge of that boundary? When does your work become a social process that is not art?" (Seminar 2 Morning session) (link)

Each project within the Oakland suite has three elements: workshops/ open-ended exploration, followed by a performance/ a formal re-presentation to a wider constituency, followed by a symposium/a focused address by the participants to the political/policy sector. Grant Kester argues that the art in this work resides in the construction of dialogue throughout the process operating within a new interplay between aesthetics and ethics (see *Working in Public* Seminar 1).

Expectations is an intervention in the lives of young women who, as teenagers, become pregnant. Normally the consequence would have been to drop out of education. The young women were invited to think through, to notice and come to terms with the

changes in their bodies. Prior to the project, these changes had never been discussed or explored. Strangers would regularly touching the young women's bellies and pass comments, effectively objectifying them as means to affirm certain cultural stereotypes. Within the project, the young women were encouraged to read widely. They gradually extended their self analysis to think through relationships - with their families, the baby's fathers, public perception, the support structures available to them in health and education. They externalised and articulated their reflection through drawing, writing, video diaries and clay sculpture. They were supported in this process by artists and teachers. Child care and catering were provided. They elected to receive accreditation. The project at this stage of development offers a different cultural and social construction of teen pregnancy from the one prevalent in Oakland, establishing the means for different individuals to experience alternative possibilities as teenagers, teachers, health workers and artists.

Art is arguably one of several possible functions within this situation. The artist is positioned precisely not as *the* authority or specialist in the way that a pregnant teenager, health worker or teacher carries different degrees of authority over different aspects. (The teens frequently comment on Suzanne's lack of authority on the subject of child bearing.)

> "(The young people) talked about many issues and in many I was certainly not the authority; nor was the system the authority". (Suzanne Lacy Morning Session)

The young women gave permission for their journey to become part of two gallery exhibitions at Capp Street and Garage galleries in Los Angeles. Capp Street is an important experimental space within the eye of the art world. The act of representation involved in creating a public installation out of the first phase marks an important transition. Suzanne worked closely with another experienced producer, Unique Holland supported by 15 other students in an internship. The teenagers contributed the materials of their learning in the form of drawings, video diaries and clay sculptures to the installation, effectively conceding authority to Suzanne to produce an event that would give a coherent, symbolic shape to the issues.

The installation was a series of playful reversals. The Capp Street gallery space is filled by a giant crib around which the passage of audience members is carefully controlled. They *squeezed* around this crib to an entry point at the back of the gallery that allowed them inside. En route the large scale drawings of the young teens were miniaturised. The scale change drew attention *into* the powerful imagery of childbirth and its issues. The reversal of the adult world into childhood implied by these scale reversals was paralleled with another. The inside of the crib took the form of a chaotic classroom in which the voice of the politician Pete Wilson, as the figure of conventional authority, was barely audible and out of synch with his image. The voices of the young women were conversely priviledged.

In the first phase of *Expectations* power is shared across the participants who represent different areas of authority. In the second phase power is invested in the artist whose expertise and track record has given confidence. Where the first phase allows power to be free flowing, to move across conventional hierarchies and roles, the second phase becomes more planned and premeditated, more controlled in its modes of participation.

It is interesting to note that *Expectations* was the only one of the Oakland projects that inserted itself into the art world in the form of a gallery exhibition. All the other performance works, *Roof is on Fire*, *Code 33*, *No Blood No Foul*, took place in public space - a roof top parking lot or basketball pitch. Nonetheless what characterises all these works is the production of aesthetic/artistic formality within another more open-ended process of exploration[vi]. The performances interrupt the rhythm of everyday life in a distinctive way. They create a different tone and pace. They are differently constructed. These formal moments frame a paradox. Without structure and coherence, the artwork will not appear intelligible to an audience. Without the participation and exploratory content of the young women, there would be no artwork.

Power and Representation: the perspective of the Gallery Director

Institutional authority and entropy

Tom Trevor echoed Francis McKee's opening remarks about the entropy of the art establishment. Both Tom and Francis as gallery directors saw social change as happening *outside of* the museum and gallery in the public sphere as Kaprow acknowledged over 35 years before.

Tom sensed that there was a tendency for the establishment to absorb work such as the Oakland projects and undermine its real value. Viewed conventionally, the gallery is something of a 'shiny palace', there to deliver the artist's monologue and educate people *into* the meaning of the work, where participatory modes of working are concerned with developing meaning *through* the experience of coming together.

> "If you want people to have ownership of what you do, the best way is by them making the work, co-producing it, being involved with it". (Tom Trevor, evening session)

The institution's authority is sustained through powerful webs of signification in which art as a cultural form is based largely on the collection and the collectable. Suzanne herself remarks that the legacy of artists being profoundly linked to collections poses a significant challenge to her area of process based work. When socially engaged work enters 'the palace', Tom fears that there is a tendency to illustrate a pre-existing process rather than engage in genuine co-production of shared meaning.

In Seminar 2 Tom presented a radical re-conceptualisation of the gallery that sits alongside conventional exhibitions at Arnolfini. Part of the Arnolfini's provision is now given over to *Social Space*. The vision here is 'to shift from the idea of the gallery as a visitor attraction to something that is a series of platforms for different ways of making meaning' through opportunities to co-produce the work[vii].

Tom's work as artist, curator and subsequently gallery director is concerned with notions of the My Body, in the sense that Valéry defined, as the substance of one's presence in the world. Suzanne and he share this starting point in their work, exemplified through an interest in radical forms of practice such as that of Artaud who as an artist sought to smash through pre-existing forms (of language and theatre) to get to touch life, to remake theatre.

Tom is also interested in the idea of meaning as a social act. Meaning is 'something we make together'. His work, like Suzanne's, frames the contradiction between the power of radical forms of representation to disrupt and unnerve conventions of art and the role of art in constructing opportunities for shared meaning making.

Tom's curatorial work, in particular the exhibition co-curated with Zoe Shearman *The Visible and the Invisible* in 1996[viii] worked with histories of representation in art, in which My Body was explored through siting works where different interpretations of My Body were presented in non art contexts. The artists included Louise Bourgeois, Doris Salcedo and Bruce Naumann among others. When he moved to Exeter to develop the Spacex projects, the context itself dominated as the focus of interest of the work. Exeter represents Middle England - a homogenised, uniform, idealised vision that denies its reality as a diverse, stratified culture. In deconstructing this complexity of representation/reality, Tom encountered more and more opportunities for the projects to become live processes that conceptualised 'home', drawing people - homeless groups, passers by - as participants in the work.

The Spacex projects rest on their conceptual clarity. They were not *dependent* upon participation for meaning to be made. This is different from Suzanne's Oakland projects that frame interdependency between the artist and participants. Nonetheless as this work evolved, Tom became more and more curious about the difference between representation as a process of conceptualisation/figuration and representation involving participation.

In becoming Director of Arnolfini, Tom acknowledges the need for the institution to re-educate itself in the terms of the un artist, to open up to its context. The conundrum posed by 'socially engaged' work is a catalyst, but not the only trigger, to this repositioning[ix]. Tom's wrestling with this issue is evident in a suite of new projects. *Port City*, September - November 2007, marks the 200th anniversary of the slave trade and Bristol's role within it, exploring changing patterns of trade and exchange[x]. Helen and Newton Harrison's multi sited Greenhouse Britain project in 2008[xi], focuses on the implications of sea level rise in collaboration with the Knowle West Media Centre in the heart of a particular community that has already looked at these issues. All of these new projects aim to draw clear connections between Arnolfini as an ‘art context’ in relation to its ‘local context’. The projects develop processes that are initiated by artists but are not artist centric. They are a means of accessing deeper issues through artists working with others.

Ed Carroll's observed

> "One thing that comes out, I think particularly in Tom's presentation was a sense of power, not as a sense of "I have the power to…' but the sense of "I have the responsibility; I have ambitions; I have intentions". (Morning Session, Q&A)

Representation as 'showing figuratively' and as 'enactment'

Drawing on Huizinga[xii], Kaprow points to two distinctive representational modes in the visual arts: a 'showing figuratively' and 'enactment'. Both are ways in which we, as humans, copy or mimic the function and appearance of the world. Both are forms of play and not work. They do not contribute directly to the functioning of the world. 'Play' is also different from 'game' in being open ended in terms of outcome. We play for its own sake not for a purpose, whereas games are concerned with the outcome of winning and

losing. Play is an essential quality of art because it embodies and enacts intrinsic value. Without play we would consume our very existence and find no meaning in that consumption.

This differentiation between 'showing figuratively' and 'enactment' as representational forms appears to me to be crucial to understanding changes in art practice and their relations to power. 'Showing figuratively' is a way of the artist representing the world through the development of a form or concept as a discrete entity. Through 'enactment' we *reproduce* or *recreate* our assimilation of the world through a set of actions in which participation is essential. Huizinga aligns enactment with early rituals that functioned as the starting point to developing social order and social institutions.

We currently live in a world in which 'showing figuratively' has become tightly bound to acts of consumption, either through objects of art or through the media to the point that the quality of being there 'for its own sake' is difficult to disentangle from other forms of value - economic, political. We also live in a world in which there is very little ritual, where play increasingly becomes conflated with game and goal orientated, competitive practices. Perhaps it is in this gap that artists and curators are seeking to address through alternative practices that identify and exploit opportunities for participation in shared meaning making.

Suzanne's work in Oakland is a radical gesture in this direction throwing a ring of uncertainty around what is art and what is life in its three processes of exploration. Suzanne's work has led to some significant developments in new organisational forms in civic life. It is positioned carefully as part of the social realm within an ecology of relationships. The work does not directly provide solutions to civic problems but engages individuals in processes of participation that result in re -imagining the issues. This is close to Huizinga's notion of enactment.

Tom's work also introduces uncertainty into the notion of the museum/gallery as an institution 'driven by prestige, status and security'. He interjects ideas such as social change and social justice that drive new curatorial forms to challenge artists as well as museums. He echoes Kaprow in seeing these kinds of changes as a significant re-education of the whole sector

> " I think we need to untangle the relationship between the artist and the art market; the museum and its relationship with the economy; and then, artists and their relationship on a very minute level with people and the community." (Morning session)

Suzanne, Tom and Francis are creative risk takers. Suzanne in her renewed interest in museums and galleries risks becoming absorbed by the very institution from which she measured her distance - a danger that Kaprow articulated for the unartist. Not to do so also engages the risk that her work may not be recognised as art by its institutional frameworks. Tom and Francis risk the institutional webs of relationships rejecting processes of re-conceptualisation. All three have established trajectories that take themselves from the security of commonly held ideas to each embracing another, more challenging arena for them as individuals. Their trajectories momentarily crossed within the event of Seminar 2. Before they diverge again, it is interesting to speculate about what new modalities of both representation and power might emerge as they respond to their perceptions of creative risk. What was refreshing about the discussion in Seminar 2

was that it did not discount the possibility that participatory forms of art could reinvent, reinvigorate museum and gallery practice and vice versa without eschewing the challenges that that might entail.

Footnote
As I was completing this reflection I turned on the radio to hear yet another commentary on the body in terms of genetic coding. I listened, sensitised to the possibility of the power of My Body, as the visceral and personal way in which we encounter the world, to create new ways for me to re-imagine being in the world. I thought that I was glad to have participated in this exchange and to have been able to think in this way.

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[i] The Oakland projects were triggered by Suzanne noticing in the 90s that the (self and public) image of young people local to her Art School was predominantly negative. TV and the press mediated that negative image largely for political ends, creating a spiral of events by which the young themselves inhabited that negativity. Left to itself the ensuing tightening downward spiral would culminate in a complete breakdown between youth and the adult world.

Suzanne's ten year investment in the Oakland projects sought to invert the power relationship implicit in media manipulation by developing processes and spaces that would allow for a shared examination of institutionalised forms of power (the media and civic authorities) leading to a renegotiation, if not also a recovery, of power by the young people. The projects offered them and others (education officers, community leaders, civic authorities) the opportunity to deconstruct and critically think through how they related to each other as individuals in the everyday within processes that brought these individuals together face to face.

The interventions take the form of projects that are artist led and that adopt a pedagogical practice that is Freirean in character. Freire, working in Brazil in 50s, involved the oppressed peasant class in examining the conditions of their oppression. By analysing and understanding these conditions, the 'oppressed' would become empowered to negotiate alternatives. For the archive see http://www.suzannelacy.com/1990soakland.htm

[ii] http://www.arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/exhibition.php?id=22

[iii] http://www.suzannelacy.com/1990soakland_expectations.htm

[iv] Kaprow, A.,2003, *Essays in the Blurring of Art and Life* University of California Press Berkeley

[v] Kaprow seems to use the terms 'nonart' and 'unart' interchangeably

[vi] Suzanne's projects in Oakland follow a sequence of three elements - workshops, installation/performance and symposium. In the instance of *Expectations* the symposium was an opportunity for the young women to engage dialogue with care providers, educators and policy makers moderated by Arnold Perkins, Director of Public Health in Alameda County with the specific aim of effecting policy changes. This third element effectively allows power relations to be actively re-negotiated in relation to policy and public practice. Significantly these are informed by real people and their day to day experiences.

[vii] I had in fact experienced one of the projects in Social Space in April 2007 - *Recording Iraq*. This exhibition was the public presentation of the Ken Stanton Archive that had followed the development over 3 years of an archive of materials assembled by a network of paid and voluntary contributors - civilians, photo journalists and amateur

operators of their day to day experiences of the war in Iraq. Michael Burke, the news broadcaster, had purchased satellite time from Reuters and made an open request for video recordings made on the ground during the first weeks of the war. He was interested in the possibility of this otherwise unusable material (as TV documentary) becoming accessible to the public. At Arnolfini, the Ken Stanton Archive (KSA) presented hours worth of unedited footage along with interviews with Burke describing the experiences and emotions of trying to make, gather and place such material in the public realm. KSA carefully judged how this was to be done with minimal intervention through editing to allow the public to make their own journey through the material. My own very short encounter with this work left a lasting impression. Normally news is revealed to us in ways that are pre-digested and in the privacy of one's own home or workplace. Here in public, in the company of other individuals, one was left to make one's own sense of the material, to make meaning from the resources, formally installed within the gallery space. The articulation of the space clearly articulated this intention with a light touch.

[viii] http://213.161.73.222/easy/archive/project/76

[ix] I have tried to avoid the terminology of socially engaged practice because this discourse has tended to set itself up as in opposition to gallery practice. For example In working with communities of different kinds, the work of On the Edge is often labelled as socially engaged and in being so some of its radical power as art is lost. In the first phase of this work (2001-4) we were seeking to open up new ways of working in the arts that were not dependent upon urban, metropolitan infrastructure and its mores. In developing alternatives we found (but did not consciously seek) rich interconnections between contemporary artists and areas of tradition in remote rural cultures. These traditions were the locus of change *and* the locus of meaning in remote rural communities. The important driver was that the art, whatever form it took, should be meaningful and also radical in its exploration. We created new work while simultaneously building the constituencies for whom that work had relevance. The process was intuitive and inductive rather than applied. We suspended belief about what kind of art was 'best' leaving ourselves open to many stylistic possibilities and determined this by developing shared critical thinking alongside the work.

[x] http://www.arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/exhibition.php?id=35

[xi] www.greenhousebritain.net

[xii] Huizinga, J., 1955, *Homo Ludens* Boston, Beacon

Reflection

Reiko Goto

“Working in Public Art Practice and Policy: Seminar 2” was hosted at the Centre for the Contemporary Art (CCA) in Glasgow on 22nd and 23rd of May 2007. The keynote speakers were Tom Trevor, Curator and Director of Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol, and Suzanne Lacy, one of the principles of this seminar program. Also Francis McKee, the director of CCA, was not only hosting the event but also took the role of commentator. On the second day of the seminar, the group discussion session was opened for only the core participants (as it was last seminar). Ruth Baker and Janice Parker gave their presentations for the group that I was facilitating.

The main definition of "power", according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is "control" or "dominion". The origin of the word "power" comes from old French poer and poeir, meaning ‘to be able’. How are these two different definitions related to socially politically engaged art practice? The nature of art is not control or domination, but rather the ability to create. How do artists use their power to engage the public? If The Arnolfini Gallery, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Scottish Art Council have the power to shift cultural policy, how do they use it? In this paper I will talk first about some changes in art institutions and practices in the 1990's. Secondly, I will talk about the Helm and Mapplethorpe incident to describe some questions artists and institutions had to face in the 90's. Thirdly, I will reflect on Suzanne's approach and the core presentations that give some examples of how artists interact with and engage the public in different ways. Finally, I will talk about art and other work that is engaged with social issues.

From the 1970's to the 1990's, artwork was made more and more outside of artists' studios, and shown somewhere else besides the "white cube" environment. In the UK Carl Andre's brick sculpture caused quite a bit of controversy at the Tate museum. Carl Andre was an American minimalist artist who also showed his work with earthwork artists such as Robert Smithson, Richard Long and Walter De Maria. During this transitional time, artists started showing their work outside of art institutions. The word "art-space" was replaced with "place", reflecting non-art elements such as history, the environment, diverse people and their lives. Art began to be understood as an experience rather than a commodity. The dialogic approach was developing during this period of time.

Tom Trevor explained how his own practice has been changing over the last 17 years. In the 1990s, Tom curated projects for inIVA, the Camden Arts Center, the Freud Museum and the Wellcome Trust. Between 1999 and 2005, he was the director of SPACEX in Exeter. During this time, he curated a major contemporary art exhibition called "Homeland." A gallery exhibition, "Homeland" included performances, workshops and many outdoor site works. In his presentation, the interaction between art and audience seemed to be changing. For example, Jyll Bradley organized a workshop that invited the audience to participate in flower arrangements, and she presented the result of the workshop as artwork. In this case the audience was involved in the process of the artwork rather than simply observing it.

In the US in1995, Suzanne Lacy published "Mapping the Terrain", which detailed the theory and practice of new public art. Her 'Oakland Projects' was already underway. At the same time, Suzanne was working with Amalia Mesa-Bains and Judith F. Baca, designing a new art programme based upon teaching public art at the newly established California State University at Monterey Bay. David Ireland worked with local artists to renovate old military buildings in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area for a brand new non-profit arts organization, the Marin Headlands Art Center. Through the influences of these artists, the audience in the Bay area became much more familiar with installation, site specificity, performance, multiculturalism in art and new public art.

Political power has an influence on the art world in the 90s:

In 1989, Senator Jesse Helms (Republican, North Carolina) made a notorious remark, "It is an issue of soaking the taxpayer to fund the homosexual pornography of Robert Mapplethorpe, who died of AIDS while spending the last years of his life promoting homosexuality." <Congressional Record, September 28, 1989, p.152111.> (Bourdieu, P. and Haacke, H, 2005, Free Exchange Polity Press, printed Marston Book Services limited, Oxford, p.8) The NEA-funded retrospective exhibition by Robert Mapplethorpe was accused of exhibiting "pornography" in Cincinnati. Even though

the Supreme Court exempted art from the ban on obscenity, it was not the end of the debate. This incident seemed to become a counterpoint to the changes that were occurring in art practices and art institutions. Non-profit organizations which were funded by the National Endowment for the Arts were anxious about whether they should return their funding to the NEA or not. The Helm incident not only implied censorship and the loss of artistic autonomy, but also questioned the value of art. It was a fact that at the time many people were dying of AIDS, and hundreds of AIDS quilts were being made by families and friends of the patients who died from the disease. Many artists were protesting against the government because of its lack of support and slow response to the national crisis. Helm's offensive language revealed that there was some kind of discrimination going on at the federal level. Homosexuality was attacked through representation of art by a powerful politician who had an agenda.

Grant Kester talked about the side-effects of Helm's remarks in his article, "Orchestral Maneuvers in the Dark", which was based on a conference "After the Culture Wars: Is there a Future for Public Funding of the Arts?" at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York in 1993. I understood from the article that the NEA analyzed contemporary art at three levels. First, art was compared to a scientific experiment: artistic excellence could be achieved if art failures were examined and analyzed. Second, the NEA decided to support "basic research" in order to achieve "quality" art work. Finally, Grant added, "It is precisely the role of the artist to ask difficult questions, to pick the viewer's conscience and to call our attention to uncomfortable truth."

The Helm incident seemed to raise an ethical question of whether artists should be obliged to create works of art for the public good if public money were spent for their benefit. The foundations started supporting research in art and emphasizing the need for some evaluation in the process. The administrator's and project manager's role became more involved at a deeper level, especially in the case of the administrator, who had an artistic background and could help with the communication between artists, organizations and communities. While art institutions were introducing and emphasizing the educational aspects of the public art process, Suzanne was clarifying the roles of artists. In her book "Mapping the Terrain", she created a diagram that illustrated a continuum of positions in art practice. It began with artist as experiencer [Suzanne created this word], reporter, analyst and activist (Lacy, p.174). I understood from this diagram that an artist could take a single role or multiple roles. In any case, the basic element was how the audience would experience vividly his/her artistic representation, report, analysis or activities -events.

Examples of the different approaches:

Artist as experiencer

One of the core presenters, Janice Parker, is a choreographer who creates dialogue and sensitively represents the other person's voice to the audience. In her case, the messages exist in the movement of the other person's body. Janice Parker works with people who have learning disabilities. She said, "There is an attitude in our culture where a person with a disability is constantly seen as needing help; where dance is only considered as a service that is offered, and performance a way to overcome problems. I find this is a very limiting understanding." Janice received the Creative Scotland Award from the Scottish Arts Council in the spring of 2007.

Janice presented one of the award-winning pieces she directed, "The Making of a Solo", which was a collaboration between Cesc Glrabert, a choreographer, and Alan Faulds, a dancer and Janice's student. The video consisted of the rehearsal scenes and the actual performance. Alan could imitate Cesc's every movement quite well. He was smiling during the rehearsals. "Happy" might not be an appropriate description, but Alan looked comfortable dealing with challenging movements. The final performance was Alan's solo dance. He danced all the intricate movements precisely and solemnly. Apart from some theatrical elements, such as large curtains on the stage and the audiences' applause, there was no indication of where Alan was performing, or who the audience was. I was puzzled. Was this performance trying to prove Alan was an excellent dancer? Exactly what was the essence of this performance?

"The Making of a Solo" required some thought as to what was going on between the rehearsals and the actual performance. I thought about the difference between Alan and Cesc's movements in the video performance. I also found myself thinking about the term "body", which seems to be an essential element to express ideas and intention.

Modern dance has many different types of people and ages that contribute unique movements. Alan might be one example, but once we move beyond this particular aspect of the dance, what would be really important about Alan's performance? There were scenes where Alan pounded his chest a few times during both rehearsals and the actual performance. It looked like a heart beat. Cesc demonstrated this gesture a few times during the rehearsals. Cesc moved flamboyantly and Alan performed frugally. This did not mean that Alan could not move like Cesc. Alan's choice depended on how he understood the movement. Alan chose the way he would move, and Cesc gave not only autonomy but also reassurance that Alan's choice had excellent quality. Both movements were in harmony and seemed to resonate with each other, just like a real heartbeat.

Artist as reporters

Ruth Barker, another core presenter, presented "Placed upon the horizon," a collaboration with Niall Macdonald from 2005. They were commissioned to produce a permanent public work for South Lanarkshire. During the project development stage, the artists sensed that the commissioners were more interested in some kind of textual-oriented work than a sculptural object. For this reason, Ruth and Niall decided to interview 28 people -- artists, educators, curators and administrators -- on their ideas of public art. Their transcripted audio tapes were assembled and published as a book.

One of those interviewed, Amanda Catto, Head of Visual Arts at the Scottish Arts Council, said good projects were happening, but the Art Council needed a better understanding of the new public art practice. Five years ago, the Arts Council started developing "Public Art Resources" (PAR+RS). Amanda pointed out there was little documentation and record of critical thinking in the thirty years of this field in Scotland. "Placed upon the horizon" seemed to be on the right agenda for PAR+RS. As a result of the interviews, Ruth and Niall created a narrative database consisting of diverse people who have been involved in socially engaged art practices in Scotland.

Ruth and Niall chose to be artist 'reporters' to find diverse projects and practices. The interview consisted of the interviewee's self introduction, the project(s) description, related questions and answers. The stories, which consisted of experiments, successes and challenges, illustrated many ways to engage and interact with communities and the public. Each story has subtle nuances that could only be described in narrative format. Asking the actual people who participated in the project made this documentation very strong. There are no images in the book. Therefore, the reader has to supply his/her imagination or memories. I assume people who received the book probably knew some of the projects and interviewees' names already. The project could be understood as a monument that represents important individual thoughts and achievements in a segment of Scottish public art history. "Placed upon the horizon" is to me an introduction to culture and art that I have never experienced before. If art is an experience, the audience should experience the stories and try to visit the project, place and people, rather than looking for analyses, summaries and conclusions.

Artist as experiencer, reporter, analyst and activist

In this seminar, Suzanne presented a project called "Expectation" - one of her Oakland projects that addressed teen pregnancy in the San Francisco Bay area. She organized an internship program for 36 young women who had experienced pregnancy. The six-week summer program was carried out not only by artists, but also by educators and other experts. During the programme, the participants experienced a lot of dialogue between teens and the project teams, and the young people created many small drawings, sculptures and short written text that described their body changes and their relationships to their boyfriends and families. Obviously, pregnancy created a major change in a woman's life. If she was still in school, the change could be much harder. Those small art works and written text delineated the difficulties and struggles the young women had to go through. Suzanne and the project team believed teen pregnancy should be socially supported rather than condemned. In 1997 the result of the program was represented at a gallery called the Capp Street Projects in San Francisco as an installation piece. When the audience entered the gallery, they found another room that looked like a giant crib-like structure. The inside of the crib was set up like a chaotic classroom. A few classroom chairs and tables were piled up, and a few of them were floating diagonally in the air. Some clay sculptures made by the students, were placed inside the desks. On the back wall, a

video screen was playing back a speech by Governor Pete Wilson, who was criticizing teen pregnancy. The drawings and written text were placed on the wall outside the crib. During the exhibition there was a symposium that included policy makers, doctors, teachers, politicians, the programme participants and audience. What the audience saw at the gallery was a small portion of the programme. In this case, the gallery installation was not the result of the programme, but a symbolic gesture for engaging in dialogue with a wider audience.

Often people compare and contrast socially-engaged art and other kinds of work that relate to social issues. When I was describing this seminar and Suzanne's work, a friend of mine mentioned a documentary movie called "Paper Clips" (2004). How are the Oakland projects different from the Paper Clip project? The Whitwell middle school in a small rural community in Tennessee started a simple educational project to teach their students about the Jewish holocaust. The school principal and teachers addressed the issue of how people who live away from different cultures can understand others without becoming superficial. Through Internet research, the students found the information that during World War II, Norwegians wore paper clips as a silent protest against Nazi Germany. The students decided to collect paper clips that would represent people who were exterminated by the Nazis: Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses. In response to the letters they sent all over the world, they received over 24 million paper clips within four years. They also decided to obtain an old German rail cart that was used for transporting Jewish people to concentration camps. The 11 million paper clips representing the number of people who were exterminated were placed inside the rail cart as a permanent memorial at the Whitwell Middle School. I assume people who engaged with the project would never go back to the way they used to think about racial issues, and perhaps would act differently when they faced different social problems. It was an experience based in true learning, and also a collective learning experience in a small community. I also think this kind of learning existed in the Oakland projects and other socially engaged art practices. If there are some differences between art and other work that is engaged with social issues, I would think the principal of The Whitwell Middle School would never attempt to present the rail cart at a museum. On the other hand, Suzanne or other socially engaged artists would think carefully about where and how the work would be presented in the end.

The Paper Clip project was an excellent example of how an educational institution could take a worthwhile campaign to surrounding communities and beyond. What would be the ideal role for art institutions and the ideal relationship between the institutions and artists? During the question and answer session, Jean Grant, an environmental artist who works with communities in Liverpool, mentioned the Capp Street Project in San Francisco, which had a different way of supporting artists' communities. The Capp Street Project, founded in 1983, was the first visual arts residency in the United States. Ann Hatch started the project with David Ireland, who helped design and build it. The organization supported installation, performance, architectural experiments and off-site projects. Jean described Ann as a very different gallery director from others: she not only talked to the artists and helped with the project, but also cooked, acted as chauffeur and enjoyed being with them. David Ireland, Anne Hamilton and many emerging artists went through the Capp Street Project. In 1989 the organization moved to another location in the Mission district, and in 1997 the organization merged with the California College of Arts and Craft. Ann's interest moved from gallery-oriented art to social practice and art education. She started building the Oxbow School, a new art school for young people in Napa. In 2000 Ann and I were in Chinatown in San Francisco. We were driving through the town to go to the Oxbow School, when I asked her how the place had changed. She said there were many empty buildings in the city.