

Project Art Works, in conversation with Mark Sealy, Transcript

2:28

Mark Sealey: One of the problems that I have Kate, with the world that we work on- when people start talking about inclusion and diversity etc- is that there's almost, like there's a kind of right way to do everything. Everybody wants the right way to do something. It's almost as if we can't get out of this kind of prescriptive way of thinking.

2:45

For the limited experience that I have working in a kind of neuro diverse way or thinking outside the box or trying to even understand the complexities of race, is that there is no one set space for all of that. I mean there's a direction of flow I would say, where I think the word care comes into being, but if we take age and time and experience of institutions, and all of these things- weather even, the atmosphere which we live in, then we have to be, we have to work, we have to try and use all the tools you've got including film to help us get to a better place of understanding, rather than be formulaic, about everything we do.

So that film for me when I look at it I was thinking: 'Wow, there's a learning zone, I would imagine, while all this is going on.'

3:39

Kate Adams: What happens is by enabling that freedom, that Jamie also brought it back. And he understood what he'd done in covering n in blue paint, and then towards the end covered himself in in green paint- In order to be equalise it. So he was, he was leading this process of equity, and eliminating hierarchies between him and Jon as a sort of teacher facilitator figure. Because he was in the context of a school, which created that for him.

So, that was a very complex process, that was a search for the individual.

4:22

Mark Sealy: That's quite a powerful thing really isn't it- the idea of being able to create an environment where you can do that and see how it's processed through the time of that. We've seen that where people try, where the people feel as though they might have crossed the barrier. And then they'll pull themselves into that barrier as well. It's like: I want to be in that space too. I've done this to share not to actually do it to you as a process of harm. I've done it to test where the boundaries are, and now I also want to go to those. I want to be in that space too. I imagine it felt brilliant. I did worry for Jon as he's wiping this stuff out of his eyes. The two then all of a sudden you have got a little green kid there, which is amazing.

Which is like: there's a blue bloke and a green kid and it's an orange space which has just been transformed. And it's like, it does feel as though there is a kind of a freefall, which I think is not a harmful space but a safe space to freefall.

5:23

Kate Adams: it's creating a form of freedom that we are unused to, is bringing people into a leadership role, who are used to being seen, or who are placed in the role of vulnerable, or needing care.

It's a very complex relationship.

5:53

Mark Sealy: I would argue that like the coloniality of making, I know this is a weird term, but the coloniality of making has been so- you know- Eurocentricised that anything else becomes either kind of tribal, or made something else or just not taken seriously; or studied for other reasons that say, rather than for parity. And I think, for me, I've no doubt that people like Jamie, or Sharif, or the Project Art Works project, provides a really interesting conversation about how we read what we see and who has a voice in that space. I think that's the key really, and why we have to look at that. The next face of the argument is we need this like, how do we begin to understand the formal qualities of work within the work. So how do we begin to talk about the work, the work is doing. And I think that's really, really important beginning to read about it, and write about it in a way that does then give it kind of critical equity, rather than social equity.

6:47

Kate Adams: We can't work and then walk away. You know, we can't do something and then go: 'right well we'll see you next week' or if you can't, if your care package comes down: 'just come back to us when you've set up a new one that enables you to come.' We have to grapple with the systemic elements of person's world as well, because if you rely on systems in order to just have the most basic freedom, then those systems have to be addressed, and they have to be understood and harnessed, to enable a person to have the freedom to engage.

7:32

Mark Sealy: Well, that's the rights-based issue within it, as well. It's like- you know it's like: What rights do you really want people to have? I think, again, it seems to be a very long and difficult road for people to understand, you know, civil rights for people really.

And we know, and people talk about things being resource heavy. But are they that heavy in comparison to all the wastage that kind of goes on out there? If we look at it, we would have to look at what the value- that's the key, I keep on using this word these days- the value of that. If you can look across a society and think: I'm part of that, that values the treatment of these people in this way. That we've done the best, that we can honestly look at our ourselves as politicians, or as people in the community, and honestly say this is the best that we can do, then I think that's a really good place to kind of get to.

8:28

But at the moment it feels like this is the most that I'm prepared to give you- the best to give you to keep you quiet. And I think that's from like education, healthcare, as we can see, and, you know, even points of access.

We could do so much more. Couldn't we? So much more. People want societal change, and we do and we want you to sell rights in the 60s, you know, the Greenham Common feminist movements or gay liberation rights, you know, we're talking long, long trajectories of conversations that get massive setbacks, depending on the type of leadership that ran or the societies that we live in.

Tragically, it seems to me that, you know, most of the world's populations are still living under extreme conditions of violence but they just can't see the violence, because it's a very, very soft type violence. No, it's not the kind of violence that drives you on the street and hangs you up, the way that they used to be able to do to people, it's not it's not the kind of violence that ridicules those

people that are seemingly normal or puts them into, debasing situations for spectacle. But there is a kind of a kind of violence out there- the violence that means that everything you do, is a struggle; just to have a life. Everything you do is a struggle in that space, and that's pretty heavy going on a daily basis. That's pretty violent- the idea that you're filling in a form, or having to go to an institution, or being cast as scrounger. I do think to be extreme: it's a kind of latent level of fascism, that runs under people, that still runs under many regimes, which says that I'd rather get rid of you, than help you.

10:21

I guess my mission really, is that you want to get over those patronising kind of barriers that people have that they come to you with, almost immediate, almost as a kind of default position. It's almost as if they wake up every day and they reset themselves to be incredibly patronising to those which they see is other, disabled, gay, all those kind of others, which is why I guess I argue with the idea of the way that some people use empathy. It's not no one wants to be sympathy you've got to get actually just get close to people and then the rest of the stuff goes away.

10:57

So I think that's really important and I think film, rather than just looking at the thing that someone has made- you stand back and you admire; understanding the conditions in which something is made in, is really important. Whether that's a kind of domestic situation, or whether that's a studio environment. I think we have to do that and I think if the filming of the process communicates that really well, and it becomes part of how you theorise the practice, and therefore we can talk about the 'praxis of it, then I think we're in a good place.

11:31

I mean showing Sharif's film, alongside his paintings, it really helps people kind of just be present, the way that he is, in a sense. I think that's really important. So, I think the film that you made with Sharif, understanding the conditions of the painting, it almost joins the dots. I just think it's a really, really important way to have a conversation with people, in a way that they're familiar with as well.

11:57

And I think if we can go on a journey in time the temporality of say Sharif's experience, communicated through that film, absolutely implicitly helped me understand the things that he was trying to communicate through his drawing and painting, without a doubt. And it might be that in the time that I encounter the paintings, at the first time say a studio, that he wants to have or share that conversation. So at least the filming of that conversation when he's in a more, let's just say familiar environment, helps anybody understand what the artist is trying to do.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Whitechapel Gallery

GENESIS