





*It might not work, it might be too noisy in here..*

Would be good if it worked here.. to be specific to the situation.. where it started..

*Yeah that's true..*

So, yeah. Maybe I should talk a bit louder.. so it works.. so, what was I gonna say?

*I'll start.*

OK

*So where did the title come from?*

I always keep a list of stuff on my phone um which is like often ideas for titles and things like that so it's just two words that I had, in my head, for a very long time and it seems appropriate. I know when I like the way a word sounds. and I think it's mainly because 'danger' is a very loaded word and mezzanine is a very technical word. if you put the two together it sounds an odd combination

*yeah*

but I suppose, in a sense, that just kind of relates to the work. with their jarring influences - that's another good title for a show, that's the next one - but erm yeah, things that fit together in a kind of higgledy-piggledy way but come from very familiar things so they make a kind of sense to people.

*there's a pretty interesting relationship there in that a mezzanine is designed to bear weight, it's a load bearing device, a way to save space. it chimes interestingly with the whole 'dangerous' thing.*

yeah, it's also from Italian, 'Mezzano' - meaning middle. which I didn't think it would derive from, 'mezzanine' - it doesn't really suggest a middle.

*no*

and also, at work there's a mezzanine, it's somewhere where I have to go up and load things onto and it's always a bit of a chore... so I think that was probably an initial input.. the first spark was maybe just me thinking "oh shit, this is a dangerous mezzanine, if I fell off i'd probably break my legs" cos it's a couple of metres high and it's weird but that's where everything starts. It's just a little seed that you notice

in the everyday and then it grows into a work but the 'talent' is being able to find that seed and then turn it into something else and twist it and bend it, y'know, put it into steel, put it into a frame, put it into words, put it into a song, that's the art. and that's the art that I like. it seems appropriate that we're sat here as well. Which is where this was conceived, the idea of doing the show and where we kind of met for the first time. and yeah, we're drinking the same beer as well..

*it's good beer!*

it's very good beer!

*you seem to be at a very interesting place in your work at the moment. You've had all this stuff happen from Mostyn to Italy and just from personal conversations I know that you're getting your own studio and we've spoken a lot, just anyway, about being very, very busy. How's this busyness and all these changes factoring into the way that these works are being made?*

it would've been really easy to say "no, I can't do this show in the time we have" but obviously you're moving on from there so there's probably never gonna be another time that I could do the show. so I either do the show or I don't do the show and of course I want to do the show because it's a really interesting place and y'know the more you practice the better you get, like riding a bike. so yeah, it's come together very quickly but this busyness helps cos you have to make the decisions quickly and you have to try to make them as eloquently as possible so in that regard there's room for surprises whether it's like, I dunno, i've got this thing in my wallet which is kind of appropriate to the - I think it's here - I should probably frame it and put it in the show or it should go on the press release or something - I can't find it - but yeah, it's like a little a drawing that I did while in here of this guy on the beer mug, so even though you are in this busyness thing, when you are having a break or you're in a cafe having a coffee there's always little things that pop up and are worthy of works, so.. ah, here it is..

*Jesus, it is small.*

and why isn't that a perfectly formed work? it probably is. I should probably put it in the show now.

*I think you're gonna have to.*

yeah.

*so, for the sake of conversation, would you list everything that's in the show at this point? so if the show opened tomorrow what would it consist of?*

umm there's a small framed drawing. it's a drawing through carbon paper, y'know what they use on receipts and stuff, of a friend's piece of furniture he bought which is like a beautiful carved camel. I thought it was something for a shoe-shine. something for someone to put their feet onto cos it's really ornate and looks like it's from probably India or something like that or the middle east I dunno. I don't know exactly but that's the point, it's sat in his room and is surrounded by lots of other contemporary things whether it's like ikea furniture, a sony widescreen, so you just think - every object has a history but this bizarre object which has found its way into his front room. and just on the back of it it's got a cup of tea and a bowl of cornflakes that he was eating so it was a photograph of a scene that I transformed. it's drawn so that it's in a box-like gallery behind it. so it's almost like you're in a gallery looking into a gallery, a bit like the Sims or something, a space that refers to another space. what else is there? there's a work that's like a drying t shirt. it's a remade t shirt of a band t shirt that's kind of fading away at the moment, I've had it for about eight years.

*whats the band?*

it's a band called Million Dead who are a British kind of - I would say post-hardcore but I don't really know what that means - erm but yeah, something that I've grown up with and it's fading out. So it was an attempt to distill the t shirt and remake it so it could live on but also the image has been adapted as if the image is jarring so you don't see part of his head, you only see his arm sticking out and it's repeated a little bit and it's like my attempt to visualise a disc skipping and also, the disc as a format that is dying out.. y'know obviously mp3s don't really degrade, it's hard to corrupt them physically so it's probably gonna be named something like "Remembering The Times When We Were Jog-proof" because that'll never happen again. you know when you used to buy like an Alba CD player that said it was 'Shock-Proof' and it never really was shock proof if you shook it, I dunno. it's a little bit of nostalgia for that I suppose like bus journeys to school and things like that. but also this fading of the t shirt and I suppose just me realising that maybe that's linked to that busyness, this time of change, so I think it's quite an appropriate work what with the context being very domestic.

*it's funny you say that. and remind me to come back to the other potential works*

yeah, we're digressing,

*I hope not too far. but yeah, it's interesting you talk about the space being 'domestic' when every effort was taken to de-domesticate it as much as possible and it kind of reminds me of a conversation we were having another time in some upmarket fast food type restaurant, maybe it was Leon or something, about that attempt to decorate in a certain way*

like a re-hash? like nostalgia?

*yeah, like a commodified nostalgia, a faux-homeliness that gets pushed into places that would otherwise be left blank and austere, so it's interesting that you are talking about taking these things that have a homeliness that is degrading and falling away and then re-inserting them into a context, a space in a place, that is a house but that we've tried to de-domesticate by declaring it a gallery. it's a fascinating and ugly parallel to the sort of techniques used by these corporate interior designers or whatever.*

yeah, and that is interesting, it's something that's rife, it happens all the time. I use it too much but it's the word 'pastiche' and I think it's the same with art, there's a lot of art that looks like art, maybe i'm guilty too and some of my art will look a lot like art that looks like art but I try and I feel like the initial point is never really art based.

*I don't know if it does. I mean, like, and i'm gonna hold onto that in a bit of a silly way maybe but if it doesn't look like art what would it look like? your work i'm asking about.. because it doesn't look like 'art' like Richard Artschwager - he died today by the way..*

yeah I thought that might come up cos I hadn't seen any of his stuff before

*and then as soon as you see it you realise "oh, i've seen this in a hundred degree shows"*

I suppose it does look like art but he's obviously been doing it since a long time ago, I can see why lots of people would be really influenced by that now, it seems really current now. so it's not appropriate that he's died - that's horrible - but it does look like some other stuff that I've seen, very slick artwork. I wish I could be that slick.

*don't we all. I don't know how some people do it.*

but also, I suppose that's a good time to talk about the spice rack.

*ok, pray tell.*

out of context, that's great.

*it's not a slick transition at all.*

the listener or the reader or whoever's reading this won't know that - what the spice rack is.

*go on do the spice rack.*

so the spice rack's just gonna be like... so yeah it was a visit to the last private view or something and just the beauty of the shared spice rack in, I suppose, the communal living space next to the gallery and just to move that from there into the gallery and make everyone walk to get their spices. I use a lot of paprika so that would be walking. but yeah, I hope it doesn't piss too many people off but it's a beautiful work if people don't start hating me.

*it doesn't matter anyway if they do. you should never worry about that sort of thing.*

it's a bit, obviously... it reeks of Duchamp but just to move it twenty feet to the right. and it's a beautifully designed thing, i've not designed it, but it doesn't need anything 'else'. it's a perfect work. that slightness, it's honest, it's beautiful, I don't need to do anything else to it. it's ready, there. it's a ready made! exclamation mark!

*So, spice rack, t shirt, frame?*

yeah, I think they're the three - and maybe this little drawing should go in somehow. maybe just on the floor?

*it'd get destroyed.*

Put a vitrine over it! lets make the work now. we don't have long. yeah, maybe just on the wall, let me think, i'll sleep on it. But I think that should definitely go in. Maybe something else... oh! the lightbox.

*is that the one to do with the drum?*

yeah, it was a drum that i'd initially made that was shown at Bethnal Green Working Mens Club and then after a friend saw it, a friend who's a curator, saw it and wanted to put it in a show in a very short one night show down in Peckham - which

kind of was how it sounds, in a kind of temporary space. And he sent me a text message the night before saying “oh I don’t think I can make sure that it’s secure cos it’s more of a party thing, probably gonna be loads of people piled up, dancing around like a herd of twats” but I ended up making just a simple sleight on that, y’know, just making some flyers with an image of the drum on it like a collaged photocopy that was to be chucked around the floor of the room suggesting a club night or something like that... kind of as a bit of a, y’know, as a conceptual way round showing work and having a show in that context. I think you have to be light on your feet, these days I think if you’re not light on your feet I don’t know how you can be an artist.

*light on your feet?*

the show was gonna be called Light Hands but I went for Dangerous Mezzanines in the end.

*probably good you didn’t call it Light Hands.*

yeah,

*it’s funny, this is going to be the last show i’ll organise for the Institute.*

I should be interviewing you.

*yeah, maybe you should. But it’s interesting. It’s funny you talk about nearly calling it Light Hands, in that the first show I organised in the place was No Hands.*

oh yeah with Harry,

*yeah, which had a work in it which was a reference to one of the first shows I organised as part of the running of a gallery in Leeds that Harry had a show in where me and him had a conversation, and that was the show.*

seems like it’s come full circle! you’ve blossomed into a beautiful butterfly!

*behold the ugly duckling that became the ugly duck.*

but no, it seems appropriate. i’m pleased to be getting a chance to do something. it’s a bonkers place. you just don’t expect it to be there, the gallery. when I explain to people, it almost reminds of a shipping container-like space within a greater space. there’s nowhere else like it but it’s perfect for me because it throws up so



many specifics but also the way that the show's been developed super quickly but through discussion with you hence why we're doing this discussion now and I think that all the works, they'll be strung together by that. even the t shirt thing, I remember I was talking about a ladder out in this pub's beer garden - that t shirt, I remember talking to you about there. so some of these works been, even though it feels like they've come together very quickly,

*it's a prolonged discussion.*

yeah, yeah,

*it's a slow birth.*

yeah, and I don't think I necessarily focus on a way of working like "this is the show I am working on so I will think of five works now" sort of thing...

*it makes me think of that whole 'light on your feet' thing and the classic exchange between someone like a graphic designer and a client who wont pay them, when the client will be like "oh well, why should I pay you all this money when it only took you ten days to do" and it's like "NO it took me ten days plus all the days and years in the past since i've been learning to do this" so it's like you may need to be light on your feet but you have to learn to be light on your feet sort of thing*

yeah,

*and then these histories and stories that have been infused into the work*

everything folds itself back into it. it's like a really good cake, or a good loaf. you knead it, everything's fucking kneaded into it.

*it's why those sort of 'life as artwork' pieces never really seem to chime with the same resonance that the people who still make them want them to have. it's like, if you're doing 'this' properly, and you care about it properly, it automatically is your entire life and you can't escape it even if you were to try.*

it's like when you say to yourself 'oh i've had a really shit day, I don't want to be doing this anymore' then you see the flip side and you realise "it's not a choice, what else would I do?" it seeps out of me like a bad gas, this is gonna sound so cheesy, so horrible in written text, in a nice Helvetica.

*Arial.*

Arial, sorry. the slightly cheaper one, the less classy one. but yeah, y'know, I don't know what else i'd do. I do do other stuff, I go to the shops and buy food from Tesco's usually and I play five a side football, which I sometimes see as art, or play the drums, playing in a band, which is a creative act, which is like a work to me. it's all game. everything's up for discussion. even being in the pub is up for discussion. you never know when something becomes. you keep these on the back burner until something steps out into the spotlight, maybe that's interesting in terms of a stage, in terms of a mezzanine, which is a risen platform. so yeah, to put something into the spotlight and give it it's moment, things take a while before they get to the spotlight.

*definitely*

when we first chatted about your background in poetry or how that's affected the way you work, I mean, it's similar with me. I like writing as well. I think it's something that all artists should make a good effort to do just cos it contextualises stuff. but yeah, it's like Saul Williams - we sort of talked about him and there's a lyric of his that always chimes with me, something about when an idea gets it's five minutes, you make that synapse, "this is the one, it's ready to go now". it becomes like acting like a collector, a sieve, and letting things go.

*i'm always surprised at how many people don't like Saul Williams as a writer.*

really?

*yeah, I always assumed he was universally loved by all peoples of the Earth, but yeah, i've said to people before "oh yeah, I think he's really great and whatever, really loved him when I was growing up" and they've stuck their noses up and gone "but he's not proper" it's always very funny to hear that, but yeah.*

This is what, often, the problem is. A sense of logic, a lot of his stuff goes fuzzy. it's fuzzy logic, you don't always know what's going on and there's not a kind of obvious reason behind it but that's allowed and you have to allow yourself to do that. sometimes with work, you can get too stuck up in like making the perfect structure of a work while forgetting that you can just do things if you wanna do things, it can be nonsensical in it. sorry. i'm not making myself very clear.

*it's alright,*

we can always edit this bit out. erm but yeah, that's the beauty of being an artist.

you can do anything you want, you have that license. I mean, I think a lot of the work does have a certain structure to it but at times you need to throw in red herrings, then throw it the other way, then throw in something you're just not expecting, it's quite hard to describe because it's like... is... is 'etherical' a word? as in, of the ether. it's like... it's like... you can't describe it, you can only beat around with poles at metaphors to try to begin to describe.

*I mean, that's the thing. i'm making a work at the moment that's essentially an illustration of a metaphor but then as soon as I make it, as soon as it becomes a real thing in the world it's not just an abstract idea, it's stops being a metaphor and transcends into something else, it's no longer a illustration, it's no longer a metaphor.*

it's a real thing.

*yeah, exactly. it's maybe parallel to a metaphor, was borne of a metaphor but it's wholly and fully not a metaphor any more.*

yeah, it's nice. I always have one that always comes back to me. it's when I describe practice and it being lots of the things that influence you, or you like, and I always think that a good practice is like a circular camp with lots of tents in it but you don't want to pitch all of your tents too closely together but you don't want them to be too broad. you want a perfect sized circle where it kind of feels like you have enough space to explore and enough different materials and stuff - I know there's big arguments about people's attitudes towards mediums and sticking to one medium.

*i've never heard anyone give me a good convincing argument as to why one should take precedence over the rest.*

well I dunno, variety is the spice rack of life! Some ideas are just naturally better formed into certain materials. you could, and this is a good work actually, you could make the same work fifty times in all different mediums because the medium has some sort of voice. I'm making a print for Rome of a type of cocktail that I make every time i'm at a posh opening, it's disgusting, it's like battery acid, but it's a print I chose the mode of a woodcut for this because I knew that it would reference german expressionism - of which I have a very limited knowledge, seen a handful of things - but it's like trying to dupe someone into thinking that that has history and this is something that i'm working on, every time I make it i'm trying to add to it's history, so this is kind of like an illustration of that kind of folkloric work where it's such an insignificant thing but it's been in interviews, it's grown, it's built it's own

history as a work and there's a romance to that - so that's why I chose the woodcut mode. it's a vehicle.

*I like that, this way of inserting history, which links back inevitably to ideas around faux-homeliness and shifting things to the right or to the left or forcing perspective changes on things whether they're wanted or not, letting the needle skip or laser needle or whatever, letting the needle skip on a CD player, it would be easy to contextualise these things as a sort of cynical strategy but there seems to be a real 'care' taken within their usage. even though these are strategies that have been used in entirely different, sadder things there seems to be a real certain happiness or joy in the work that i, as an artist, really struggle to key into when making work. i'm probably just a miserable goth but..*

no, we were talking about that sort of thing before, about this aggression inside and maybe that's why it's good that the Dangerous Mezzanines thing suggests an untowardness. There is a certain aggression, you could probably ask my girlfriend. I think you're always agitated, I think a lot of artists are, if you weren't you wouldn't be searching for something, you wouldn't be trying to find needles in Haystacks.

*even as a continuance of that, of that aggression, I was thinking about this after you were talking about it previously but yeah, things like the cigarette packets that were at the Mexico Project Space show in particular, they're almost like a double exorcism. You, by your own admission hate these objects, made them because hated them, made them because you're disgusted by them or you don't like the thing that they represent which in a sculptural sense is really interesting. as I say, it reminds me of an exorcism, or some other banishment, where you destroy something's power by making a totem or a fetish of it.*

yeah, I mean, the titles are 'True Craft' and 'True Craft Light', y'know and 'True Craft' are the Marlboro Reds and the 'True Craft Light' is Marlboro Lights and they are kind of deliberate nods at representational work and y'know they're two blocks of wood with a door hinge inside and it's like easy art, like diet concept art. I feel like it looks a lot like the idea of contemporary art so by doing that and titling it in that way, 'True Craft', then I hope it makes me kind of fall on the right side of the line.

*I dunno. That's one way of looking at the development of an idea but I always think, the same as the whole 'light on your feet' thing, you have to done something for years to be able to do something very quickly. i'm always not convinced when people who have long storied histories of quite conceptually integrated, considered works then say that a new work is a throwaway, 'oh this work is a light idea' because it's from all of their training and muscular development of ideas.*

It becomes natural.

*yeah, so this 'True Craft', this taking the dimensions of something that is real reminds me about earlier ideas about the world and the universe and stuff from antiquity and whatever and the idea that there are only x amount of objects in the world, there's only so many shapes and once you destroy something it has to make itself again, it can exist again... and in my own mangled, horrible understanding of this complex world views and philosophies that's where like totems, voodoo dolls and effigies and stuff come from. Maybe i'm projecting onto the work but to fill the space with an alien, cuckoo copy begins a way to block the original reforming to return into it's place. you remaking it to your own specifications, to your own demands, means that the original can never come back because the space it would retake is taken up by something else so it can't hurt anybody or harm anything which links back to the t shirt where you're avowedly saying 'this t shirt is dying, I need to remake it so it can't die' it's of course not the same t shirt as it was before but now no t shirt can replace the place that the new replacement has taken. you've filled a place.*

that always interests me about art in general and the collection of art and y'know, working in an environment around art and conservation and a general sort of everyday slog to make sure everything is maintained perfectly. I feel like i'm constantly striving for quality all the time and that's just.. I dunno, it's an interesting mindset to have because in one sense it's very good because that's what art is, and when people try to suggest art is luxury or excess it really pisses me off. I simply think art is people doing what they want to do and doing it very well. if you pull a pint and you pull it well and smile when you hand it over and you clean the pipes properly...

*you'd think that wouldn't be so hard a thing to do would you...*

no, no, it happens in here cos it's a really nice pub but y'know what I mean? it could be someone cleaning leaves off of a street, you could do that well. I dunno. that's why it annoys me when people declare art as luxury, 'oh we shouldn't teach kids that because it's unnecessary,' yes it is! it's everything. yeah, it teaches you the principles of time and care and realising your mortal. each artwork for me is like an anchor, a proving to myself that I have some sort of purpose. it's basically a defence mechanism, so I don't feel like I have no worth.

*definitely, I always love it when people on the other end of the spectrum then try to say that art's a cultural construct, or it's invented, or it's the product of our society or*

*museums. if that were the case you wouldn't be able to crack open a cave that's been sealed shut for 40,000 years and recognise artworks on the walls straight away, no matter the religious or civilisational drives that created it, straight away, that's a piece of art. y'know what I mean? Museums wouldn't exist if art didn't. i'm sure people are gonna pounce on that.*

i'm drinking too slowly.

*you're talking too much. do you have anything else you want to talk about?*

I dunno, what else could I say? what would be good to say that might end up on a piece of A4 paper that someone might read? what could I say that might make someone think 'this guys semi-intelligent slash relevant'?

*no one's gonna read the whole thing*

this is probably at the end anyway.

*someone might skim the PDF but no one's gonna read the actual text on the night.*

but it was still worth it, if only to have an excuse to have a pint.

*definitely, any excuse for a pint.*

maybe we should wrap it up now that you've finished your pint. I think, that's probably enough.

*yeah ok, this is where we find out that we didn't press record.*