

Discussion

P: I'm very interested to know about you've observed about how your work is affected by how explicitly you prepare in writing before, during, not so much after but whether you're kind of using the same fuel or tapping into the kind of, the good stuff and maybe drawing that off, tapping it a little bit instead of using it in the painting, does it ever go like that?

Jenny Eden (JE): I think it's... I use writing during the painting activity to bring to the fore the stuff that I'm taking [from the painting] and that the painting's giving. I've come to think recently that looking, although I'm all about looking..., looking is not enough. There needs to be some kind of translation of looking into writing for me to find out what to do. So I use writing to give answers really, but just saying that in itself is way too simple to describe what goes on. I'm saying [in writing] what is there, what is present in the painting, to describe it, which gives me an indication as to what I might need to do, if anything, to it.

P: This is a general question to, I suppose people who are kind of practitioners in general, is maybe say a bit more about this word "authentic", because it's something that's come up the whole time. I was really interested by what you said about the painting that doesn't have the essence in itself or of itself and it's a word that's already come up in some presentations, so yes, authentic?

JE: I think about the word "aura". An aura from the inside. What the painting's about, what kind of painting it is, the characteristics of it, the personality that it holds. Obviously I do the painting, so it's got to be a dialogue [between me and the painting] that's created the aura. As an artist, when you're (well this is the way I see it anyway)... when your intention is greater than what the piece of work is asking for, then the balance slips and you end up with a situation where, like I said at the end [of the presentation], you think you've made a great painting but two days later you realise "no", it's really not [a great painting] because I applied too much of my own stuff to it.

P: Do you think it's got anything to do with the plasticity?

JE: Of paint?

P: Of you as well.

JE: Of me? Tell me what you mean a bit more?

P: Just like if you're not, if you don't keep yourself malleable enough and you can't bear that state and you want to stiffen up and bully it and ...?

JE: Yeah, yeah.

P: I wonder if it's about having to, rather than keeping in a state of tension, that negative capability makes me think of, it's more of a state of almost like inertia or playing dead or something.

JE: Yes, while you're talking I'm thinking about the importance of allowing the information to be presented to you and not backing it up with your own agenda.

P: Which is very hard to do.

JE: It is very hard to do, I think, yeah.

P: Trying to get rid of that sort of object, that influence, when you... I know with myself, I just have to find ways to not judge what I'm doing, constantly trying to just let your work happen without making decisions based, I don't know if ...

JE: I think sometimes, yeah, this stuff that I'm thinking about, the psychoanalytic stuff, I'm thinking about it away from the painting. So the painting happens, and then it's

thought about separately, so when I'm "in the zone", who was it that said that? Was it Horsten?

P: Horsten, yes.

JE: I like that paper, about being in the zone (BITZ). Yeah, I think sometimes I put down some paint or do something and I know that I needed to do, just get it out of my system. That was actually my infliction, not what the painting needed, so if I can get rid of that paint and all's well in the painting then I can do the next thing. But usually things can't be fully obliterated on a painting, there's a trace, something still there. But sometimes, as well, it's the bit you wiped out, to get rid of, which still holds the journey of the painting.

P: There's an idea that I have in my head of, when I turn away, leave the work on its own, the writing, there's like a half-life of wrongness so there's like a decay has to occur over there and it's got to happen, it's a natural phenomenon and it will, when I get back to it, I will obviously see things differently, I wondered if that happened to you with painting, if you leave time and go back to it, to experience?

JE: Yeah, time is a crucial thing. I'm finding that now I'm doing the PhD, and because I work in the art school in a few different jobs as well, I'm not painting as much as I did last year but, actually, it's so much better because "time" gives me "the time" to be able to read the painting authentically and find out if it's doing some of the things that I [we] wanted it [ourselves] to do. You know, sometimes if I think I've finish a painting and say "Yeah that's absolutely great, I'm really chuffed with that". In these cases usually the painting is not very good because I've been seduced by something in the moment of goodness. The best paintings are the ones where you're really not sure at the end, maybe you're just absolutely exhausted in the 'sustained togetherness' thing, and you have to leave. Then you see it again a few days later and maybe engage and write and find out what it's really saying.

TB: You've just made me think about the kind of hidden qualities of some of us around the table or aspects of what we do which is teaching students about how to work, you know, with their practice and in some ways, a lot of what we've been talking about today, it's not straightforward to model as a curriculum and I'm also interested therefore in that we're in it everyday actually, and for long periods of time and so I'm interested in those around the table, we're in a higher education institution today, how does this interest, involvement, engagement, putting enquiry into reverie, stick or become manifest in your teaching that you're involved in? The non-artists, the non-cultural practitioners?

AR: But are you a non-cultural practitioner?

P: [laughter]

P: Teaching how to do reverie, to put it into a tweet that I don't do?

AR: I would just say that Marion Milner's book *On Not Being Able To Paint* all started from her work in a school as an industrial psychologist when she was very concerned that a number of the children found it hard to access their imaginations, and she also felt that about herself, that she couldn't paint so she did this experiment on herself which was to understand what reverie and who has access and who doesn't and the need for safe spaces to be able to enter this state; in high schools in the UK at the moment, many of which are like prisons, people are actually locked into various spaces and they're only allowed to enter the next space when it's been unlocked, so I think it's incredibly important to think about that question.

Myna Trustram (MT): I feel I'm learning about reverie, how to do reverie through being here and talking about it. So you know, I've got ideas about how I'm going to go away and use what's been said ...

Tim Brennan (TB): Yeah, but you work in an art school, right? That's fine, I'm thinking about those who don't work in an art school, I'm just interested, it's not accusatory, it's not like we're better than you are, I'm not doing that, I'm very interested in how do

you teach reverie in science?

P: I teach in a school so not exactly, not art but it's different and we are trying to experiment with not asking students to design things, to do projects but to put their [inaudible 00:12:25] in a stage or in a situation where they need to be in something and so they are always asking where are your [inaudible 00:12:36] design? And you answer them, "You are already designing?", but they see, they don't see they are getting in a project like this or this or whatever, and so suspending the idea that there are some results at the end and we are doing work in [inaudible 00:12:58] museum since the last year and we are inviting some indigenous artists to be with our students and then this very special [inaudible 00:13:08] artist, he's from Amazonian region, he's 60 years old I think and he has all the technologies the shamans have, singing and drinking and preparing [inaudible 00:13:20] but his work as artist, now he has suspended [inaudible 00:13:25] drinking and he's started to do workshops with a lot of different people in different situations and he came to our school, putting people to listen to the myth and singing and playing with water and then closing their eyes and then our students, they became to visualise everywhere in the [inaudible 00:13:48] but without [inaudible 00:13:50], and this is investigation this [inaudible 00:13:51] artist is doing, he's suspending the plans but going through creative processes and through art he says, "I'm doing political art" and our design students for him was the best, not students, the best, he has the best results because some of our students entered in a state of visualisation with closed eyes and then after drawing and painting and he was like, "whoa, designers can go easily to that".

So I think doing these kind of experimentations, we are trying to teach or to engage students in championing kind of reverie state or attitude.

P: I wasn't meaning to er, make a point of the [inaudible 00:14:51] engineering practice but that's [inaudible 00:14:56] question too but it was actually directing back to the original thing, which really struck me in your talk, was that a [inaudible 00:15:03] phrase you used, I was the same in my thesis but describing engineering practice and particularly most, there was many encounters with mechanical engineers, product engineers but an electrical engineer and how he works and perceives energy, thermal radiation and responds to things and does things through practice, and my own interest [inaudible 00:15:26] partly because my, I don't feel that science or engineering has a sort of model where there's a concept and it projects onto the world, as a schematic but actually as practice, so you're working in technical practices and it's very skilful and involved and you get immersed in it as well in its own little world, but all these phrases like relationality, sustained togetherness and dialogues, this is really prevalent, words that I've used and one thing that was really prevalent to me was that the practitioner, what you [inaudible 00:15:59] intertwined in the field it was in, that was for me, I thought, I had this idea of a matrix of activity with a person, materials and space, the air, everything is going on and form is emerging in that space and when I mean form, I don't necessarily mean a form as in, I mean the forms of body, the forms of mind, the forms of thing, are all kind of emerging together and so therefore one, I never have a point where I thought, a kind of cognitive schematic precedes action and in fact, it's always in response to and response with, so the engineers make something or connects things or feels things or touches surfaces and then responds to things and does things, so it's dialogic, there's never, it's not material first or body first, it's like together. But also watching the [inaudible 00:16:56] of different people and how they work and how they get immersed in their world [inaudible 00:17:04], so for me it's very prevalent in engineering science [inaudible 00:17:06] but it's just not being written about very much and I'm not sure why that is.