

One & Other Project

My name is Verusca Calabria and I'm here today with Ceri Aston on the 15th of March 2010 and it's 7. 30 p.m., hi Ceri!

Hi Verusca, how are you?

I'm fine thank you, how about you?

I'm good thank you, nervous.

Oh don't worry it's an oral history interview so it's very much about following up on your time on the plinth and I've listened to your previous interview and I wanted to ask you a few more questions about yourself and about the experience in retrospect.

Yeah.

So there's no right or wrong it's very much perception of what happened, so just to remind you, you went on the plinth and you brought some of the ashes of your deceased husband with you.

That's right.

And you had a very personal journey, it wasn't to entertain the crowds but more a journey with yourself.

Yes, to be honest it was a bit of a last minute decision to do it really. When I was first invited to go on the plinth I never thought, "Oh I must do the ashes thing," it wasn't the first thing that came to my mind at all. To be honest when I got the email to say that I was going to go on the plinth I was in the middle of a very busy edit. I was making a documentary for Channel 4 and it was all a bit stressful and I got this email through and I was like, "Oh my god I'm going on the plinth" and five minutes later I had to forget about it and it was one of those things you know that a few, a couple of weeks before, the day had come for me to go on there. I had to then start thinking what I was going to do and somebody suggested to me that might be a nice thing to do but I was really worried that I wouldn't be allowed to do it for health and safety reasons and to be honest I thought I am not even going to mention it to the organisers because they'll just say no there's no way you can take human remains up there and start throwing them off the end of the plinth. And so I thought I'll do it quietly and I won't take, not that you can do anything quietly on the plinth because you've millions of cameras watching you but you do actually forget about the cameras I thought I'll do it quietly and I won't make a big deal of it at all but I think it was four or five days before I got to London that I just had this overwhelming need to explain to people what I was going to do. I think anybody who loses someone who is sort of special to them, you know, wants to shout from the rooftops, you know, how great this person was and how much they should be remembered and commemorated and so I decided to just put it on my online profile and just hoped that nobody noticed.

And when I went up there to be quite honest I was so nervous that I really struggled to get the lid off the container that I'd taken the ashes in and I remember a friend of

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mine ringing me and I was like, "I can't get the Sellotape off" and I was just really, really worried and I stood there and thought, "Shall I throw them, what shall I do?" And I noticed there were holes in the corner of the plinth which is presumably where they bolt on the statues that are normally on the plinth. I saw the holes and I thought I'm going to pour the ashes in there and nobody will notice what I'm doing and so I kind of kneeled down and poured them into the holes, but I thought what do you traditionally do with ashes you always scatter them and I just thought I'm on Trafalgar Square I'm taking part in something absolutely monumental I just want to scatter them. And I remember like just chucking a few over the edge and somebody shouting what's that what are you doing? And I thought my God I can't say anything, I can't say I've just scattered some ashes because I didn't want the whole crowd to freak out about it so I just kind of made up some random excuse about what I'd just done.

But something really strange happened though a few weeks ago because I was having a meeting in London with an academic, an historian who wants to present some TV programmes and I was talking to her about some ideas that she had and she said, are you Ceri Aston, were you on the plinth? And I said yeah and she went did you do something to do with ashes or something? And I said yeah I scattered some ashes up there and she went, I'm [inaudible] Hughes I was one of the panellists that used to take part in the weekly shorts on Sky Arts with Clive Anderson and we used to do the weekly kind of reviews of all the *plinthers* and we were talking about you and we were saying it was one of the most moving things we'd seen that week, and you know what, I was absolutely delighted when I heard that, it's just, I thought I was so touched by it. I thought "Oh my God somebody noticed what I was doing and somebody realised the kind of significance of it," because I tried to keep it quiet, to downplay it so much because I was so scared they were going to take them off me and not let me scatter them so it was nice to have done it and for someone to have noticed them.

Thank you for that, just to bring you back to the time, you talked about how you felt about going on the plinth before you went up in the interview carried out by my colleague, what was it like when you were up there, can you remember?

Very surreal, it was really, really surreal and you are so full of nerves when you are on the cherry picker thing which is just hilarious and the whole thing is just bizarre. I mean I think I talked in my last interview about the kind of enormous amount of pressure you are under to perform, to do something and that starts quite early on because the local papers start calling you and you know you get on there and that's just you know amplified a million times you know people about saying what are you going to do, do something and you become slightly obsessed with who was the one before you and who is going to be on afterwards. So you could, I can see how people get completely obsessed with doing something absolutely bonkers or zany and I really tried hard not to kind of be too kind of, you know, sort bullied into that although it's not the right word but you do get a lot of people in the crowd wanting you to do something amazing, take your clothes off or do cartwheels or, you know, I don't know do a jig or something so you know kneeling down and scattering ashes of your dead husband is not up there with zany things to do but I wasn't quite able to shut off. But I wasn't able to perform either I kind of felt a little bit as if I was in no man's land and I

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found the attention I was getting you know really kind of fascinating but really scary at the same time you know I work in telly so I kind of work with celebrities and who are always in the public eye and I kind of got a little, little glimpse of what that's like in terms of just being on display and it was just bizarre. And I must admit actually it kind of got to a quarter or 10 to the hour and I was thinking I'm ready now, I'm ready to walk away from this, you know, I kind of, the adrenaline I think started to drain and you know the adrenaline kind of, the nervous energy that kept me going as soon as I scattered those ashes I could have quite happily just got off and got on with my life.

So just now thinking about the experience, what sort of effect do you think it had on you?

The effect it has had on me, well I was absolutely delighted to have been part of it. I will never ever forget it and I've seen quite a lot of previews. I went to the Sheffield Documentary Festival recently and somebody who was there from Sky Arts they were kind of talking about, you know, this has to be the most amazing kind of months and months of programming they had on Sky Arts. And I look back at all the footage again and I just think my God you know you almost have to look back on it to kind of place yourself in there again because it was such a bizarre thing to do that sometimes I think I imagined it, you know that I actually ... I had some photographs sent through to me the other day they just appeared randomly in the post they were pictures of me on the plinth and I was like oh my God yes, I did that. Because as I said part of me just wants to go up there do the ashes thing and get on with my life and in some ways I kind of pushed it to the back of my mind but then you get these little reminders like the lady at the BBC telling me that she saw, she discussed me on television scattering the ashes and all the photographs coming through the post and you suddenly get these little reminders of how amazing it was and I think you know I don't know if I would do it again but I don't think you have to do something like that again and it's once in a life time thing and I'm just absolutely delighted that I was one of those people that kind of made history, if you like, I would never forget that moment.

And if you don't mind me asking you, how did it work in terms of the significance of scattering the ashes of your deceased husband, what sort of effect did it have on you to do it in Trafalgar Square?

Well, I mean it's weird because Damien really didn't like London at all he was a mountain man, he was a mountaineer, he was the outdoor type and I was the TV producer who was kind of always down there you know in the sort of city and we were very kind of different like that. I scattered his ashes in many different places you know the plinth on Trafalgar square is one of the quite sort of bizarre list of places where his ashes have ended up but I think that he would find that fantastic, I think he would smile about that. And you know I was in London just the other week and I was there for business and I was in a taxi and we were around Trafalgar Square and I looked on that plinth and I thought, "Yes, you are up there and I can remember you when I'm down here" and I don't know what's going to happen to the plinth in the future, you hear all sorts of things about what that fourth plinth is really for and what is it waiting for, is it always going to be a temporary kind of place where people just put random bits of art on there? I don't know somebody once said to me actually that

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plinth was there waiting for Queen Elizabeth II so when she dies she will be commemorated on the 4th plinth and you know what if that's the case that would be amazing because I'll always be able to look at that and think he's up there with her you know, how great is that, I just think it was just the most, of all the places that I've scattered him I think that's probably the one that will always make me smile and will always make me feel warm inside and just, you know, bring back happy memories if you can have happy memories of scattering ashes then you know that's one of them as far as I'm concerned.

Thank you for that Ceri, just to ask you more about Damien, you obviously talked about him in the previous interview but we don't know anything about him, do you feel comfortable to talk about him and his death?

Not at all, no. Damien was a mountaineer he had just, I'll start that again, Damien was a mountaineer and he'd always climb mountains from an early age and he learnt to be a mountain guide he wanted to make his living just taking people up the mountains on guided walks and hikes and climbs and things. And we lived in Sheffield for quite a long time and he did quite a lot of climbing there and he was also a teacher and it just kind of bored him. He felt trapped, he felt caged in, he didn't want to be doing this kind of job and he decided to go and live in France and I stayed here and I carried on with my life and he decided to go to France and train to be a mountain guide and he passed it, he got through the qualification later and I remember him calling me to say I've done it. And I thought, "Oh my God, finally you are going to, you've achieved your dream you are going to be a mountain guide."

And it wasn't long after that he was due to come back to Sheffield and he said I'm just going to go and do that one last climb and he was on a glacier on Mount Blanc and there was an avalanche but it was a rock avalanche not a snow avalanche it was kind of late spring and it was a bit of a freaky occurrence. They don't really happen that often those kind of avalanches and there were two people climbing and unfortunately he was the one that got caught up in it and died. So he was 33 at the time, it was a very young age to go but I remember when I got the call to say that he died, the first thing I said to the person who called me was, "Oh my God has he wrapped his car around a tree or something?" Because he used to drive like a lunatic, he used to drive so fast and even though he did a really dangerous sport I always had such faith in him as a climber you know. I kind of knew how talented he was that he never in a million years did it dawn on me that he could actually die doing it, which is a strange thing to say because obviously it's such a dangerous pursuit. But I just thought he crashed his car, but he hadn't so that was that really that's how he died, we were sort of childhood sweethearts. If you like we met when we were, well, I just turned eighteen and he was seventeen. We kind of survived [inaudible] into the university thing and we managed to stick it out really and we had our ups and downs but we ended up getting married and you know all of that and then he went off and did that and what happened happened.

Can I just ask you something Ceri, have you got many computer applications opened because your voice is going in and out?

I've only got hotmail [half word is heard].

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I can't hear you anymore again, okay let me just call you back, okay?

[It was decided to finish the interview the following morning]

My name is Verusca Calabria and it's the 16th of March 2010 and it's about 8.45 a.m. and I'm here to interview Ceri Aston again because there was some problem with the internet signal yesterday so we only recorded about 15 minutes. So Ceri how are you this morning?

I'm very well thank you, the sun is shining, it's all good.

Great, okay so if you just start where we left off yesterday, just to remind you, you talked about whether your experience on the plinth changed you in any way and then we talked about your husband dying in an accident and you were just talking about him having gone to France to train as a mountain guide and that's where we left off basically. And I really wanted to ask more about you, your life story, your career, you mentioned you are a workaholic on your profile.

Yeah, yeah.

You also said that you put a lot into your career and that you've been working at the BBC for eleven years and then the last couple of years you became a freelancer so I'm just wondering how you got to be doing all of these things?

I was with my mother and father at the weekend and they were kind of laughing about the fact that when I was a child I used to kind of read sections of the newspaper out loud because all I actually wanted to do was be a newsreader. I just wanted to be Celina Scott one of those women that were on television when I was young reading the news and that was kind of it.

And that was a bit of a childhood thing and then I grew out of that because I had absolutely no desire to be on television really at all but I always wanted to kind of be involved with the cut and thrust of news and journalism and that kind of thing and when I was about sixteen I got a job, well, I kind of got a Saturday job if you like, on a local newspaper. I did a couple of days a week and they asked me to stay on and I said no because I wanted to go to university. So when I got to eighteen I went to university and I did a degree in something completely unrelated to journalism and then when I left I did a postgraduate qualification in journalism and went straight into the BBC local radio system. I worked for Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester and did that for many years and that was great, you know, I mean it was the days when we used to record everything on a quarter inch tape and we used to edit using razor blades

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and bits of tape and you could kind of chop away at your tape and you'd stick two pieces together and you were doing that incredibly quickly because you had to get things on air, you know, you had deadlines. And so I look back on those days with quite a lot of nostalgia and think oh my god that was mad considering that's how we were working but it was incredible to think that was how we were doing it at that time because obviously it's all computers now. So I kind of ending up researching for radio 5 live / radio 4 and then I kind of fell into television really and what I do in television is I started as a researcher and I kind of worked my way up and I became a producer / director making documentaries, factual documentaries, news based programs and weirdly when I got the call about the plinth I was actually making a *Dispatches* [programme] for Channel 4.

You mentioned that yes, so what kind of documentaries do you make, do you make the same sort of styles or have you changed over the years?

I didn't hear you then. There was a little, right okay, I suppose I have changed my style over the years. When I left the BBC I basically spent years and years making current affairs documentaries on any kind of conceivable subjects so one week I would be doing, I don't know, you know the 7/7 bombs in London and how that affected people in the country? And you know two weeks down the line, I could be doing something on the dangers of sun-bed tanning. I mean it was just the whole variety of it is crazy. Put it this way I would be very good at a pub quiz because I seem to have this sort of mini broad knowledge of a million different subjects but I don't really know that much about any of them if you know what I mean. I can kind of get by you have to cram your head full of the subjects that you are doing and make sure you make a programme that people can understand.

When I left the BBC part of the reason for doing that I think was to actually start making documentaries that weren't so factual, weren't so serious and I made a couple of documentaries for ITV one of which with the actress Leslie Ash about cosmetic surgery. She'd had quite a lot of it and a lot of it went wrong and she wanted to do an investigation looking at the perils and the dangers of it so that kind of gave me a slightly different profile because I started making programmes that were a lot more mainstream, a lot more populist and ITV is a very different channel to the BBC so you kind of have to adapt the way you make your programmes and Channel 4 is a complete different fish all together. So that's what's been so good about freelancing that I've been able to make things with different channels after years, years and years of making stuff for the BBC.

Okay and you also mentioned in your pre-plinth interview that you really wanted to find time for yourself, that was one of the motivations for going freelance.

Yeah definitely.

Have you?

Yes I have a thing because ... I think you are right that was definitely one of the motivations for me going on there because a few years previously after Damien had died I had to have a hip replacement because I had an arthritic hip and I was in

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hospital for a week and you know I was, I couldn't make a phone call I couldn't cook a meal because I was so morphined up and on a drip. I couldn't even go to the loo myself for a few days so it was as if every kind of function had been taken away from me and on one level that's not great but on another level it was like, "My God I've had months and months and months" because obviously Damien died and there was a funeral to arrange and everything where ... I wasn't working at the time but I had to kind of drop a very complicated project and everything was just getting too much I think. And actually when suddenly somebody put me into hospital and said you know you just lie there for now and you are going to be looked after for a week it was fantastic. I almost didn't want to come out in the end and that feeling has stayed with me, that kind of feeling of just not having to think for a while, and I think that everybody needs that and that's kind of what I wanted to take with me on the plinth.

I think there were two motivations really, there was that motivation and once I decided to scatter Damien's ashes there was that cathartic motivation as well because you know, as I mentioned previously in the interview, you know he's been scattered in lots of different places and you kind of get to that stage where you really want to find that defining place to do it and when you got these, I mean I had these ashes stored in the attic for ages in a box and it's like, "Oh what am I going to do with the last lot?" And I think once I made that decision it kind of, that weight sort of lifted I think and I was able to just kind of go up there and have that time to myself again and do what I needed to do with Damien's ashes.

Did you say you scattered the remaining ashes you don't have any more now, is that what you said?

There's a tiny bit left and the reason I left those is because one place I haven't been to is Mount Blanc in France where this happened and I think that maybe when it gets to the 10th anniversary or something significant like that, maybe for what would have been his 40th birthday or something like that, I would probably get to France and I would scatter them near there but I kind of always knew I'd do that. So I kind of kept a very small amount to be able to do that because it was the mountain the killed him but it was the mountain he loved so I kind of done what I wanted to do with these ashes which is the plinth thing and I kind of felt that I need to leave a little piece of him to put him probably where he would have wanted to be which is there.

Okay, thank you for that, just to bring you back to what made you become a journalist when you were a little girl and you liked looking up to all these female presenters.

Yes, I mean I think that makes me sound I want to be some kind of TV presenter and you know it could not be further from the truth. I've definitely got the face for radio definitely, the camera makes you look far too fat and I could not be bothered with having to constantly look my best. Yes it was more about the journalistic side of things. I think it was the fact that your work day was never quite the same, you never really ... and it's still the case in television that you never really quite know what you are going to do and what's going to happen and you know what you are going to be covering and that can change from hour to hour sometimes and that's exciting. When you've done that for quite a long time it would be very difficult to go and work in a

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bank or work in an office somewhere you know. But that has its downsides as well and I think that it was good to go freelance because it kind of gave me a bit of ... I took a bit of time out and then I started being a lot more selective about the projects I wanted to do and what I didn't want to do because one thing it definitely does is take over your life - the birthdays that I've missed, all the things you miss out of. It's a big commitment to take that kind of vocation on, it's not a vocation it's a profession, it's a big thing.

Yes. Ceri, how is your health now?

No my health is fine I've, the hip replacement was kind of one of those, sorry, I was giving you a bit of a bleep, I start again.

It doesn't matter.

Sometimes pop ups are coming up on the screen and I wonder if the sound is dipping at your end, okay? My health is absolutely fine now I don't seem to have any more arthritis at the moment. I had my other hip checked out a few weeks ago and so far so good and it was just one of those freaky things. I mean I was 34 when I had the hip replacement and it was kind of strange because I was in the corner of the ward of the hospital and everybody's else in the ward was over 80. So I was just a complete exhibit in the corner not dissimilar to the plinth actually this complete exhibit in the corner and of course because they were all pensioners in there they all had friends that could come and see them at lunch time whereas I never had any visits at lunchtime because all my friends were at work. And so they'd all come in with packs of chocolate and just sit there and stare at me eating these sweets going, "Oh my God, she's a bit young isn't she?" They were right, I was very young to have it but people have had it younger than me and it's fine now. I'm kind of getting around, I'm back on the bike, there's lots of things I can't do. I can't go running any more, I can't do anything with impact. I can't fall, I've had to really kind of change my lifestyle but you know at least I can walk around without being in pain anymore which is fantastic [inaudible].

Okay can you hear me okay?

I can hear you fine. Okay sometimes you can go in and out but we can talk about this technical thing at the end of the call, so just to bring you back to the experience of the plinth now to close the interview, just a few questions.

Yes.

Do you remember I asked you yesterday about whether it made any difference to you personally but I didn't ask you about whether it made a difference for your friends and family, you know what sort of impact it had on them?

Well I have actually moved on in many ways in my life and I do have a new partner and one thing that, I start again.

Sorry can I ask you what is it that is popping up on your screen?

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Oh there's nothing popping up on the screen.

Okay.

Can you hear me?

Yes thank you.

I'll start that answer again, I think one thing I need to say is that my life I've kind of moved on quite a lot this year will be the first anniversary of Damien's death and in that time I have met someone else and I'm in a new relationship. One thing that I did do on the plinth, I held a poster and that poster is about *Band on the Wall*, now *Band on the Wall* is a very iconic music venue in Manchester where Joy Division did one of their first gigs there and you know, the Fall and all the big iconic Manchester bands and my partner is a marketing manager for it. And at that time they were reopening the pub after years of closure and, you know, they really wanted it to kind of rise from the ashes again and I don't know, I mean I wouldn't necessarily ever equate Damien's life with a nightclub but there was something very nice about kind of drawing one line and kind of helping someone create something new. So I kind of put the plinth poster, the poster on the plinth and you know people were able to see that this amazing music venue which was some place Damien used to go when he was a student actually because he was a student in Manchester. It's kind of open to business again and I had many happy nights down there since it did open I mean he was ecstatic about me appearing on the plinth, my new partner Malcolm, he loved it and my mum and dad, you know, were watching on line in North Wales and they took them a bit of time to get their around what was going on I think it was actually quite a difficult concept to explain in many ways it's not that easy to explain to people what you were doing. And my little niece Macy, she couldn't get her head around it at all but I had a lot of support, you know, my friends were texting me and calling me and I remember there was, like, I was standing on the plinth and my friend Helen called she was just started talking about complete kind of normal stuff and I'm like "I'm standing on the plinth in Trafalgar square and I've got a massive crowd watching me and it's probably not the right time to be talking about you know the price of fish of whatever" and it was just kind of strange that some people were completely kind of didn't get it some people thought it was such a kind of a normal kind of thing that they just almost didn't acknowledge it and it was just kind of strange to see the way that people around me dealt with it and actually I just kind of stood there in this complete surreal bubble for an hour and kind of loving it and hating it at the same time.

Thank you [noise in the background] are you [noise ends] okay I wanted to ask you about the press and media attention that you got, you mentioned that.

Yeah, yeah.

That you had some before you went on the plinth can you tell me more about that?

I did, I agreed to do interviews. I thought it was kind of silly as someone who works in the media and persuade people all the time to bear their songs on telly or radio I kind

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of thought it would be a bit rubbish if I didn't do the same. So I agreed to do all the pre publicity but what was kind of interesting, I mean there wasn't loads of it in all fairness, but there was quite a lot locally and you know what I found really kind of difficult about it was that they weren't interested if you said to them look I'm not going to do much at all they are like but you must be doing something? And in the end you end up ... kind of I remember for the local paper I ended up talking myself into the fact that I was going to read a book and I don't quite know where that came from. I think it was more to do with the fact that I felt so sorry for the journalist who desperately wanted me to say something mad or zany and I felt like I had to give him this photo opportunity and he was like what book? And I was like, well you know just the book that I'm reading at the moment. What book is that? Oh it's this book can we photograph you reading that book? And I'm like yeah all right and it was just like pressure, pressure, pressure and at that stage I hadn't even decided that I was going to do the ashes thing. And in a way I'm sort of glad that I hadn't decided by then because I didn't want that to be something that appeared in the Manchester Evening News, I wanted that to be something that I did for the first time on the plinth and that moment to be the first moment that I share. So I'm really glad of that because otherwise they'll have me standing in the local paper with you know a blummin' casket in my hands with the ashes in it and I just thought no I'm not doing it that. But there's also some amount of pressure to come up with something wacky and you know that was never what I was going to do I was going to go up there and enjoy myself and I was not really prepared to entertain. I was up there because I've been chosen as one of the 'plinthers' and I just wanted to do my thing really and the ashes thing came along later but I'm really glad that that became quite low key because I think it could have become quite hideous if I had sort of spoken about it beforehand.

And how about immediately after you came down the plinth, did you get any media attention at the time?

No I didn't actually, I didn't get anything at all which is absolutely fine you know I mean it really. I remember when I was coming off the plinth the girl that was coming on after me I stood and watched her for about five minutes and she had this tent and she kind of got into this little tent it was a bit like Tracy Emin's tent, she got into that and she kind of took her clothes off and started painting herself black and came out of the tent and laid on this big sheet and started making all these kind of prints with her naked painted body and you know you kind of look at that and you think oh god sorry and you think oh god I'm really boring compared to that. And I can imagine that a lot of 'plinthers' have probably starting assessing their own words in terms of who went on before them and who went off afterwards and then I thought no this is silly you know I have absolutely no regrets about what I did up there. I was just myself she has just been herself and I think that's all it's about really isn't it?

But I didn't get a lot of attention, I had a lot of attention up there from the public, I had a few people asking me out which is quite nice and a few people came and said how nice my shoes were, you know, but no, media wise I didn't get anything. But the author of the book that I said I was going to read on the plinth when the Manchester News man interviewed me did get in touch; he was delighted because I had given him this enormous kind of publicity for his book so he sent me a signed copy so, you know, it worked out in the end.

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And what was the name of the book and the author?

The book was called, oh he'll love this because I'm giving him another plug now, the book was called 'The Fallen' and it is a book about every single member that has ever played in the Fall which is that amazing Manchester band. The author is called Dave Simpson, he's a music critic for the Guardian and various other papers and he was delighted when I gave him that bit of publicity. It was a massive piece really big photograph and I don't know I kind of feel really sort of there was part of me that thought, oh I don't really want to be doing this, you know, I feel as if I'm being slightly disingenuous because I'm not entirely sure that I'm actually going to read this book when I'm up there you know. I don't even know what I'm going to do. I just felt like the need, you know, this is how the media works. I'm exactly the same myself when I interview people you have people in boxes and you know what you want them to say and you know that you need to get a certain amount of content out of them whether it's emotional or whatever and he needed me to come with an interest in something I was going to do on the plinth because I had to be photographed for his paper. So I just felt the need to kind of create something that I was going to do which I've never really had much intention of carrying out.

Okay so just to bring you back on the time about the contact with the physical audience as you came down do you remember what people said to you about your performance or your time on the plinth as soon as you came down?

Well I had my boyfriend there, he was absolutely delighted but with his kind of serious marketing hat on which he never switches off. I met my match on the workaholic state I can tell you that, he was just delighted because I'd given him an hour's worth of amazing publicity for Band on the Wall. My best friend Clare was there she ... unfortunately her husband also passed away last April and she's about to come up to the first anniversary which is just crazy to think that two mates in their 30s who you know went to school and grew up together and holidayed together were bridesmaids to each other's weddings would both lose their husbands in their 30s that's just bizarre. And she, I said to her I was going to take Damien's ashes up with me, she turned the event into her own little memorial and she brought some of Colin's ashes along, I didn't take them on the plinth with me but she was undecided whether to take them up there and I think she brought them along just in case but in the end she decided she wasn't going to do that but she did bring some kind of really lovely sort of candle, she lit it and you know we both in our own little way kind of turned that into a bit of a memorial event really so she was there and yeah it was, I mean the thing is you don't get a massive amount of attention when you come down because there's someone coming up behind you, you know, there's another person coming up on the plinth and all eyes are on them it's like, it's almost like Ceri who in the end you know I've done my time and someone else is coming in now.

Okay how about the social networking sites, of course, you had a profile on the One & Other website like everyone else and you had some comments.

Yeah.

What sort of impact did that have on you, receiving comments?

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It was really nice to receive comments you know there was a few comments there from people I knew but there was a few comments there from people I didn't know either and I don't know I mean I think as a kind of a society especially as a young society I think we've all become you know, this kind of need to kind of feedback and people telling you that you are ok it seems like it's like part and parcel of the way in which we live our lives nowadays and I think that you know if you look at *Facebook* you put a little comment on *Facebook* and you get 6 people saying I really like that comment, you feel good about it don't you? So I think it was the same with One & Other really you've done your time you know on the plinth, I've made it quite an emotional moment for myself and I've mentioned it on my profile although I've not mentioned it to anybody who was up there and it was really good that some people actually kind of acknowledge that you know what I have done or thought was a lovely thing to do and a couple of people said things like you know you were great up there you really kept me entertained and it was nice to hear you chatting and 'oh you are a nice person' and I think it was nice I mean I looked at it a few times and I kind of got something out of it, I'm not saying that it made my experience any better but it was good to get that kind of feedback.

Okay so you mentioned using Facebook, did you use it to let your friends know you were going to go on the plinth?

I did, I used *Facebook* in fact I think I was on *Facebook* when I was up there as well because I had the *Iphone* I was able to use *Facebook* when I was up there. I probably got a lot more comments on *Facebook* actually and obviously after the event as well I was able to post pictures up there and things like that but I actually think that the One & Other site was very, very good and I think the capacity that it had to hold that archive what I did do a few days after I've done the plinth was that I watched my hour back again and I think it's fantastic that the website, if you think that anybody who was on the plinth could do that it was amazing that we were all able to go back and watch our moment because otherwise I could not have seen me, it was actually nice to go back and watch it.

Okay thank you. So now just before we close I wanted to ask you what do you think was the significance of scattering your husband's ashes in Trafalgar square on top of the plinth.

It had an absolutely enormous significance for me the moment I decided to do it, it absolutely seemed like the right decision, it was absolutely this is the most obvious thing that you can up there and amazing that it didn't come to me sooner actually I think it was because I was so busy when I go the email I was so preoccupied with what I was doing with my job that it kind of I almost had to get that out of the way before I could start thinking about it I think you know Trafalgar square was one of the most iconic London images. And it's an image that people around the world know, it's a global iconic image and you know it's probably ... I don't know whether it's the busiest part of London but it's kind of up there isn't it in terms of [in]audible tourists? In many ways going to scatter ashes in a place like that seems horrendous - why would you do that why would you go to an urban place and scatter something you wouldn't just do it in the middle of the street and expect that to have any

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significance? And what I really loved about this moment was that in amongst the chaos and the fact it is so kind of busy, mad, chaotic, you know, I was able to stand on that plinth and have that kind of hour of just being myself, being above everybody else not in a kind of hierarchical sense but [background noise] sorry my ear piece keeps on falling out, I was able to have that moment on the plinth that moment with myself you know where I was above everybody else not in a kind of you know snobby being above people but you know physically being above people and able to just scatter those ashes and I felt at that moment like I was at the top of the highest mountain you know. I could have been on the top of Everest because I still felt if it was just me and him having this moment and I felt that I was able to kind of you know do that in the middle of somewhere really busy and as I said earlier in the interview you know a few weeks ago I was in London and I kind of went around Trafalgar square in a taxi and I saw the plinth and when I see that plinth now weirdly I don't necessarily think oh that's the plinth that we all stood as part of that project, I think that's the plinth where I scattered Damien's ashes so One & Other for me has become you know the memory has become something different but that's not a bad thing I don't think it seemed like completely the right thing to do and I've done lots of things with Damien's ashes the bit of the top of Snowdonia at the top of Wales, I had a mosaic made where I had some of his ashes put into the grout to cement the tiles together, his mum and dad have scattered some ashes in his home town in Wales and there was some left and we are nearly 4 years down the line now and I felt like I needed to do something special and significant with them because as I said I saved some for the Mount Blanc experience when it's like you know in a few years but this was just you know the most unusual thing I have ever done but in many ways it felt completely right for me because so far I've been thinking about where would Damien want to be scattered, what would he want, well actually that was about what I wanted and I think that was, it was great to have the opportunity to go up there and do that and I don't know what's going to be put on that plinth in the future but whatever is put up there whether it's Queen Elisabeth II or some other iconic significant figure it makes me smile that he's kind of up there with them as well.

Oh thank you so much Ceri, I've really enjoyed talking to you.

Look thanks ever so much and I'm going to have to order this book, I haven't ordered it yet and we can get it cheap aren't we? We can get it for like £19 or something.

That's right if you do it earlier, thank you so much Ceri it's been a pleasure talking to you today.

Sorry there's been a few technical problems but hopefully you have everything you need if you need any more just let me know okay?

I will, thank you.

Take care then bye!

END OF RECORDING