

One & Other Project

[The interview was conducted from Skype to mobile phone]

My name is Verusca Calabria and I'm interviewing Tom de Freston today on the 11th of March 2010 at about 3.15 p.m. and we're conducting the interview over the telephone recording it via Skype using the internet. Hi Tom.

Hello.

Where are you at the moment?

I'm currently in my studio.

OK so you know I've called you because I'd like to talk to you about your time on the plinth.

Yes.

OK if I just start from reminding you about your performance, you dressed up as Napoleon on the plinth.

That's right, that's right.

And you talked about it in your pre-plinth interview for a while with one of my colleagues and now it's about what it was actually like when you went on the plinth, because we haven't asked you that yet.

Of course.

Do you remember it?

To an extent it's a blur. I remember I didn't enjoy the actual hour, I enjoyed the process, looking back. But the actual hour, I found, I don't think I'm like a natural performer, that's not what I kind of have a passion for doing. So I just found it [a] terrifying experience and the idea of people [who] were looking at you. Because, obviously, I'm used to people looking at things I produced, but not actually at me. So yes. So whilst it was very beneficial, very interesting, I didn't enjoy the hour itself.

OK, what happened straight after, when you came down?

I think that's when I realised I'd obviously been running on adrenaline because I was asked if I was cold, and initially, I said 'oh no I'm not at all', and then suddenly I was very shivery. Obviously my body took a little while to adjust because obviously it was in the early hours and I wasn't, I wasn't wearing much. So I had a bit, I suppose it was almost like a bit of a come down, a combination of being cold and just that rush of adrenaline as well. So obviously I came down from the performance and then went back to stay at a friend's in London.

And why did you not enjoy the hour?

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I think because I'm not particularly comfortable with the idea of being the art work itself. You know this thing of being viewed by an audience, it doesn't mean I definitely wouldn't do it again but I definitely see myself as a painter and this is one of a number of things which I've done in order to feed into my painting. So it certainly wasn't something I relished, but equally I realised I had to as it was [a] quite melodramatic performance. You just have to go full on for it, with no, you can't kind of half-heartedly do it I suppose.

[Voices can be heard in the background]

OK Tom I can hear some voices in the background is there any chance you could be in a room without anybody around at all?

Yes give me one second.

Thank you.

Hold on one sec.

OK.

How's that, is that better?

Yes thank you.

Excellent.

So just to bring you back to your choice of self-representation, why Napoleon?

I think very directly because what I was interested in doing was responding to the space and Napoleon was a character who appears, well a kind of shadow of Napoleon, which has appeared in a few paintings of mine previously and because there was Nelson's column, I quite like the idea tapping into that history, the kind of Napoleonic era, I suppose. And I quite like the absurdity that something like the battle of Trafalgar could be re-staged even though as far as my history goes Napoleon had had nothing, of course, nothing directly in terms of actually have anything to do himself with the fight, but I also think Napoleon is the ultimate symbol of excess power, you know, from the power gone mad, in terms of historical sense. So he fits in quite well with some of the ideas I like to deal with in my art work.

Yes so tell me more about these ideas that also run through your artwork?

Well I'm interested in, I kind of attach this kind of pretentious label to my work as a contemporary history painter, but the actual histories I'm drawing from are part of history paintings themselves. And I suppose I take from the grand traditions, be it the Italian Renaissance or the French academy from kind of 1780 to 1860 and that period in France, [which] is, I suppose, the last kind of great figurative tradition where there was still a hierarchy of history paintings and figures set in space. Following ground rules, stories would still be the ultimate art form until all of that started to

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break down and in that period Napoleon kind of stands out as the political figure and, therefore, he obviously features very heavily in the artwork, but he also becomes, I suppose, a symbol for certain ideas of power and certain structural systems and certain ideals so he's quite an easy figure to poke at to just subvert, that would be the word.

OK so having said that, now how did you plan that into your actual performance, the way that you staged each scene?

So the plan was that obviously I, the idea was that I, would be attacking Nelson and I was obviously aware that Nelson is a statue so you are going to have these series of directives at him which without ever getting a response. So the loose narrative was meant to be that Napoleon gets to be more and more exacerbated and angry as it goes on because he's not getting any response, and that can either be read as kind of a success or as a failure, a victory or a loss, depending on how Napoleon viewed it along the way. And the other thing I wanted, I suppose, is not necessarily any great narrative as I wanted it more to be like a continuous failure to get any response, so all and all, everything was directed at the idea of me leading an imaginary army to attack Nelson column and all my threats being sent to Nelson just not getting anything back. So it was just meant to be scene after scene to repeat that, but lose that idea in lots of different ways so the repetition makes it absurd.

OK and how about your choice of costume?

So that had started to appear in a few paintings previously and, I suppose, what the male nude in art terms has always been used as a sign of heroism and nobility. If you think of Michelangelo's *David* you know these kind of athletic figures who would have gone off and fought. Their muscles and nudity [are] seen like a symbol of that and then, if you think in a more contemporary sense, the idea that socks and boxers [?], it's that difference, I suppose, between naked and aware of the fact they are not wearing anything else. It's a far more vulnerable position or a far more ridiculous outfit than if they were fully naked. But, I actually stumbled across it slightly by accident; I was taking some photos for, some images, that [I] wanted to work on that were loosely based on Caravaggio's *David and Goliath*, but the idea was going to be that there was this character holding out *Goliath's* head but he wasn't actually holding anything. So you had kind of a lack of a trophy and because I was very aware of people walking through my studio as I was taking this photograph I decided that I'd taken a lot of photographs; first undressed wearing socks and boxers, then work through them, work out what pauses, work the best and restage them fully naked. And it was when looking through them I kind of clicked with this idea actually. It was the socks and boxers that kind of added a sense of wit, I suppose, or comedy to this nudity.

Yes you mentioned it and in the previous interview and you also said that you may do some more artwork based on your time on the plinth, has that happened?

Yes tons and tons of stuff has come from it. I mean my work probably splits in two halves; one is the slightly romanticised and floating figures which haven't been at all affected by the performance and, I suppose [incomp]. And then a lot of other history

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paintings of, I suppose, the loose connection has been to follow through [with] figures in socks and boxers [which] have carried on. So the most recent include some images that have been based broadly on a combination of certain recent terrorist acts and on Christian martyrdom paintings, and in particular images of decapitation. So often in [...] Christian martyrdom paintings [...] you wanted to have empathy with the person being beheaded, they were [incomp], not hysteric[al], calm and perhaps even happy, when they were about to be beheaded or even when they had been beheaded. You know, they'd be holding their own head but with a smile on [it] and there's something absurd about that that I wanted to tap into. And the images that I have been playing with, all the figures are all in socks and boxers and the same play on crimson reds and pinks as well.

I noticed on your website you've got this Ben Blyth.

Ben Blyth, yes.

[beeping from a mobile]

And that was based on your time on the plinth wasn't it?

Yes I suppose the drawing had existed before the plinth and then some of the paintings in which he appeared came afterwards. So, I suppose, the two are in constant dialogue. Maybe it wasn't kind of clear which came first, the ones of him kind of took *Macbeth* as a model and, again, but they weren't illustrations of *Macbeth*, it was the idea of the desire for power. But the thing you might have seen is this figure who crowned himself?

That's right yes.

That's very loosely based on Jack Louis David[s] drawing of Napoleon so that relates directly to the plinth. And there was a moment on the plinth where I crowned myself and the idea with that was, that the reason that exists as a drawing is, because it was going to be the figure that was going to be placed in the Coronation painting because Napoleon brought over the pope and all the other various kind of important figures leaders. And rather than the pope crowning him as was sought, obviously, he created this new structural system because he was first in line in a kind of new tradition, he actually crowned himself. You actually, this ludicrous scenario him being both the giver and the receiver of power but someone said to him whilst you are fine to do that depiction on a huge scale, it's a little bit too over the top. So the final painting of the crowning of Josephine just shows him crowning his wife. The only drawing only exists in his notebook, but there's something of it that attracted me; the notion going back to this idea of crowning himself, a real absurdity to that ritualistic process and those drawings or images you've seen. They look nothing like in the David who stood up kind of leaning back whereas the one you see probably generally shut down frontal face [?] in the audience so [what] I really took from that was the idea of the process of someone crowning himself.

[Loud noise of sirens] *OK we talked about the concepts of your artwork but I also noticed from your website that you use different types of materials.*

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Yes.

To make your artworks, would you like to tell me more about that?

Hmm I think the materials, do you mean in terms of different painting materials?

That's right.

I think, primarily, despite any of the kind of discussion or the content or anything else that surrounds my work, that I think this has made me like most painters. That the substance is an important thing so really I can say what I like about Napoleon, about how these figures have developed, but you are kind of just looking for an image that allows you to explore, develop and play with painting materials in a way that naturally suit you which sounds [a] slightly reductive way to look at it. But predominantly, I use oil paints that I use in a few layers with acrylic and then normally I mix them in with a lot of host [...] mediums and varnishes and sticking jells and the whole range fits into, I suppose, a broad tradition of what painters would use. But then on top of that I use a range of photographic methods, printing methods, mono printing, etching and I digitally manipulate quite a lot of my images before I use them. I collage quite a lot and that might be bringing in anything, you know, from newspaper to any kind of household daily materials, I suppose. But that's never in the process of using the material, it [is] just a way to develop ideas.

OK thank you. So, just now that we are on the theme of your artwork, how did you become an artist?

I, at school, I went through the normal route of GCSE and A levels and took art. Then I went on to do an art foundation at Warwick college and then I went to Leeds Met to do a Fine Art course and then came to Cambridge university to do the History of Art course. But probably from [beep sound] 14 or 15, I was pretty adamant that I was going to be a painter and whilst, of course, sometimes you have those aspirations and that's what you think you want to do and it changes for me [?], it wasn't at any point when that shifted or changed. Even when I went off to do the History of Art degree, I very much presumed as a painter learning about the History of Art in order to feed into my practice.

OK so when did you begin painting?

Oh when did I begin, I think, I probably [incomp] painting in what year would it had been? Year 8. So when I was about 12. Obviously I'd been kind of doing a bit, little bits and bobs at school, before then but I'd done this pencil drawing of my older brother that, I suppose, it was the first time I clicked that I could use this thing to make quite clear images, and it worked. I remember the art teacher at the time saying oh you didn't, you know, I didn't take it in. I don't know what it was but it was a real leap and a jump from anything I'd done at school and perhaps because it wasn't part of anything normal, if you said 'oh in comparison to the rest, you can't have made this' and that kind of accusation was like the thing that made me go 'oh god I'm alright at this, I know how to handle these materials' and then from then, I think it was

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GCSE, where I just was painting every single day. I would be painting images every single day, I think that was when it really clicked.

I see so if you look back into your life story, that of your family, is there any other artists there?

Yes there's quite a tradition on my dad's side on the kind of de Freston name side. I mean, my older brother and my dad have both, well my older brother also did a Fine Art degree and my dad paints quite a lot and then my granddad, who my granddad who's my dad's and a fair bit older than me. I never met my granddad but he was a very successful painter and then, broadly a creator type and I believe my great grandfather and my great great grandfather also painted quite extensively. I think one of them was pretty much a full time artist.

So talking about the people that you do know about, your grandfather and your father, what were their names?

My father's name is Anthony de Freston and my grandfather's name was Adrian de Freston and he works for the Royal [incomp] of Arms Society.

OK can you tell me that name again as I could not hear the name of the Society?

Oh sorry, the Royal Coat of Arms Society.

OK thank you, so have you been in contact with their art over the years?

With any of their art? Yes, yes I suppose in terms of my dad it was a case that whenever. My parents divorced when I was quite young so whenever I was visiting I'd spend most of the time when I was there painting. Then I was kind of surrounded with images he was making and there's one or two of my grandfather's images kicking about that, you know, I suppose I was surrounded at my father's house.

What kind of paintings were they, in what tradition?

My grandfather was a very much like 'of-that-time' in terms of what like the majority of art that was being made rather than the stuff that was pushing the boundaries. So, I mean, normally landscape scenes, maybe with one or two small figures, then oil paintings quite high finish and my father's stuff is a mixture, but predominantly figurative, and then quite a lot of flat bright colours. I suppose his drawings style is quite graphic.

To bring you back then to the time you got your studentship; the Levy Plum Visual art studentship at Christ college.

How did that come about? Oh well, I was in Cambridge for my History of Art degree and then I went off and did this lecturing on an art foundation course so I just found out. Someone mentioned to me there was this position at Christ College so I just, there's not really any great fancy stories, I chucked in an application and I was lucky enough to be selected.

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So just to have a sense and trace back [...] your own development as an artist, when did you begin to have exhibitions?

In terms of, sorry, I mean in terms of my, where would I trace the development of my recent work?

Yes.

Well for my whole Fine Art BA, I made entirely abstract work and for my foundation too I made entirely abstract paintings. I was convinced that was it; I was going to be an abstract painter because primarily I loved painting and I didn't feel I needed images or subject matter. I kind of got to a watershed moment at the end of that course. I knew something had to shift which is why I went to do the History of Art course. I don't really know what it was, but it was a study of that History of Art course; those figures of Titian particularly theories such the French period from 1780 to 1860 and, surprisingly, the study of things such as Cubism actually which made me realise I want to paint figures and I want to paint figures set in space and I want it to be contemporary and relevant so, you know, I don't want to make paintings like *Gericault*. But that's what I want to be dealing with and I want them to have subject matter and I want them to have narrative. So I mean it was from the History of Art course onwards I suppose the figures started to well, from the history of art course I was aware I wanted figures and after the course that they started to reintroduce themselves.

I notice here in the press release that you sent me about your exhibition at Brick Lane Gallery, which is coming up quite soon, that you use masks on your figures on the paintings and you were wearing a mask, of course a painted one, on your face when you were on the plinth.

Yes.

Why is that?

Again this probably has got two stories. One which is practical and one which is kind of [an] idea based, the ideas [were] based [on], [...] I was playing about with some small studies and as it was going to be a quick thing. I was just printing out photographs that I had taken and working into them rather than throwing them up. I wanted to chuck kind of 20 or 30 out without too much thought and see what happens and it was in this process that I started doing the thing of laying white paint over photographic face while that had just been laid on to describe the face. It had this mask like quality and that opened up an interesting potential and I think what it is if you look at, I'm not saying the figures I paint are anything like *Manet* [Edouard] figures in how good they are, but if you look at a *Manet* [Edouard] painting there's quite often this return of the gaze where the figures look back out at you and they have this sense of being masked, nothing, it doesn't really have a mask but there's a lack of tone or range. There's a kind of coldness of the face and it is this idea that a line of communication has been opened but that actually they are not giving you anything. It's quite cold almost half dead figures and I wanted that in my work so

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maybe that sounds more exaggerated. So the idea of, I like the masked figures to be over their face, if that makes any sense, so you don't read them as being a total mask. It's more like the white paint that I have on my own face. It's kind of a covering up of elements of the person of their personality and they are looking out at you but they seem not to be giving much back certainly in terms of communication from the face.

OK thank you, it's described here on the press release as a sort of exile, people are in exile and that they do not belong in the world in which they are in, how does that sound to you?

It sounds OK. It's one of these things that I've become aware [that] you have to let curators and writers and art historians and critics take their own twist and I'm certainly not going to take issue with anything. Anything goes. I kind of I think there's a variety of truths but there are things which are wrong and that statement rings true to me, even though it's not something, even if it's not one of the things I was dealing within my head when I paint these figures. Does that sound, does that makes sense?

Yes, sure, thank you. Now I just wanted to ask you about your website, hmm, when did that come about?

You might have seen two aspects. That's the Whale Crow [www.whalecrow.co.uk] and there's the Tom de Freston [www.tomdefreston.co.uk] and they are very closely aligned. So Whale Crow initially was started up by myself just be[ing] an online studio between myself and [an]other painter Andrew Folds [?] and the main idea was to upload images and discuss ideas (very waffled, spelling mistakes littered blogs up there) and then more recently, so then in answer to your question maybe three years ago, summer [20]07, I suppose, so that's grossly developed more as a website. You know, there was an official element where we both have our own webpage to upload images and then in the last month or two months I decided to officialise that and separate out and create my own website for that reason to create a more slick professional artist's website while Whale Crow keeps running but as more as a discussion board, as a way to develop ideas.

Yes in fact you didn't put your own Tom De Freston website on the One & Other profile did you?

That's right because at the point it didn't exist even though a lot of the content on the Freston website has been lifted straight from Whale Crow.

I noticed you've got a blog on your website, do you blog on it yourself?

Yes only myself and the other painter Andrew Folds and, probably more often, myself.

OK did you write about the time on the plinth?

Yes it may not be up there though because I wrote it, I was asked to write about it by the [inaud] the Cambridge University student paper and so it's definitely on line with

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them if you were to type in [inaud] Tom de Freston plinth or something and I wrote about it in the form of an interview between myself, Oh it sounds awful when I describe it, myself and my character of Napoleon on the plinth.

And have you got that text?

I do have it, yes, I can, would you like me to send it you a copy of that?

Yes please that would be very helpful, thank you.

I don't have a pen is there any chance you could take notes of anything I need to send you?

Yes.

And then I'll send them all.

I will, I will, I'll send you an email after the interview to remind you.

Thank you.

That's fine, so just to bring you back to your time on the plinth which relates really to social networking, did you have any sort of dialogues with the viewers of your performance?

Yes and I was keen for that to happen, but nervous that it wouldn't work. I thought what might happen is that I would do my performance and be totally ignored so I try to set up the performance so that if it was totally ignored there was something quite interesting and absurd about that. If I walked past and saw this fool on there shouting out nonsense and no one is responding, so I suppose the spectator takes on a similar role to Nelson. Or if people did respond that opens up something quite interesting so there was this surprising amount of responses. It was a combination of pure heckling and responses where you could tell people were [taking] the mickey out of you but there was an element that you were actively engaging with the content that was kind of like excellent. That's been a success because even if they think they are taking the piss they are actually tapping into the things you are dealing with and so the example being one of the lads coming up saying 'you are an effing idiot' and he started to take apart my performance so he was saying 'they didn't even have guns in that, in Napoleon's time' and I was holding a tiny green water pistol so [chuckles], so there was something quite nice about that. The fact he was mocking me for being historically inaccurate when quite clearly it was a ridiculous performance and he was finding it increasingly frustrating, but he ended up stripping down to his own socks and boxers and kind of saying, 'oh I've joined, I'm fighting against you I've joined Nelson'. So this dialogue opened up where it then became the idea of what you are wearing; you are wearing Napoleon's outfit, presumably you are on my side and the other extreme is people shouting out things like, you had people saying like 'oh shut up you idiot' and then it went quiet in the end and I had this kind of mocked death. They were saying, people shouting up 'oh you are boring, boring

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get back and make some noise' culminating with one lad shouting up 'idiot get up I'll buy you a Mcflurry'. I wish he had extended the offer.

And how about connections on the internet, did you publicise the thing in any other social networking sites?

Not hugely. I mean I kind of sent it to friends on *Facebook* you know to let them know it was happening and I wrote a little bit about it on the blog as I knew it was quite a self-contained thing for me. It was a way to develop a character and develop an idea for my work; the need to have a big audience and big recognition wasn't hugely important. I certainly didn't see this as like the equivalent of an exhibition of my own work which it becomes really important to come along and to have them involved.

And how about your own website, did you get much contact from people after your performance?

[Pause] a few people kind of wrote, a couple said 'Oh I [saw/took?] photos of you in the evening, I thought you'd like them', a couple of others [said] 'Oh I've seen your performance'. I guess there's been 5 or 6 of those. Definitely 4 of them from people who saw it on line and a couple when I was there. Now that's probably because the One & Other project has been an online success. Of course, it was whatever time in the morning so even though there was a bit of a gathering and audience you obviously would not get the flock of people you would have had in the middle of the day.

OK, so did you get any media attention after your performance?

There was some before because I was asked along [to] the press release day by Bolton and Quinn. I was in all of the kind of pre-plinth press stuff in various papers, *Financial Times*, *Sunday Telegraph* and then the Sunday before I was phone[d] up just before I was going on and they did a bit of a focus on 4 or 5 *plinthers*. So there was a kind of photo, a larger photo, a kind of double page spread in the *Sunday Telegraph* a week or two before I went up.

So I know you mentioned Bolton and Quinn in your previous interview but it wasn't very clear the connection between them and the One & Other project, would you mind explaining that to me?

I, as far as I believe One & Other was, I mean obviously it's Gormley's promised [?] project but it was kind of organised in the kind of running of it by Artichoke. But Bolton and Quinn have done all the PR stuff so I suppose really their role was prior to the plinth happening. You know it was getting the press there and let[ting] people know about it and Artichoke were always very much the logistics; how are we getting people up there? How are we going to contact them? And so I think they just, they are an arts PR firm I think, that's all they've got involved with just getting the PR set up.

OK, thank you, now revisiting the reasons why you took part, do you remember how you heard about it?

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I'd seen about it in a few bits of news and hadn't thought too much about it and actually it was through Bolton and Quinn asking, they'd seen a couple of my images [of] [...] me in socks and boxers that were at the phase of preparation for paintings so they contacted me because I'd done some other work with them. They were aware of me and said is there any chance you can come along to the press release day, we need someone to slightly, you know, capture the eye and, I suppose, so would you come along and pose as a potential *plinker*? So at that stage I hadn't really thought about going on the plinth. So if anyone went along to the press release day and stood in Trafalgar square as *plinkers* all of them said they were applying then I decided to chuck an application in.

And do you remember your original motivations and hopes and fears about the performance?

I remember that originally I was planning to be a play on Caravaggio's *David and Goliath* and then, it was when I started thinking, I still want[ed] to be iconography in terms of socks and boxers, but actually it would be quite nice to respond to the area. So I knew I was either going to respond to Trafalgar Square or to a depiction of a painting in the National Gallery and my hopes, my hopes and fears were I'm not, as much as I was up there being loud, it might look [like] I like the attention. I'm not someone who likes attention directly at me, I'm quite happy obviously - if you are an artist you have to accept you are making these objects and you want as much attention as possible for them but the idea of people looking at me scared, scared the daylight out of me.

And how did you find the media attention before going on the plinth?

Yes, fine, the, I mean it's a petty quibble things like the Sunday Telegraph did a very short interview and totally misquoted me. I don't know, the fact they misquoted me didn't particularly matter, but it's not you know, it's not any big dispute it wasn't going to make me look really, really bad, but, and I think I'm trying to remember and this is how they got away, I think, I waffled in a bit like I have done to you; 'Oh here is what I'm planning to do' and it was obviously way too long to go into it, into a [pause] sound bite so he went 'so would you blah, blah, blah'. In a conversation you go OK and he just took the thing he said which was a kind of, I just found him a little bit stupid, so I suppose it was one of those snippets into how the press works but it didn't bother me so much of the image he gave of me, but realising how they kind of go about their business.

OK thanks for sharing that with me, now I wanted to bring you back to the experience as a whole, how do you think it affected you if at all?

[Pause] I think it definitely made me, I think previously I'd been taking these photographs to lead into paintings, but very much they'd been about just, you know, using myself or someone else or some model and snapping them and then using those as verbatim for drawing a painting and that whole performance has made me realise that, actually, that the role of that stage photographing is more important, that can actually take over a whole performance development. So while that doesn't

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mean every time I have a fake identity to go out and do a performance to an audience that I can see that whole act as having that kind of theatrical quality and that allows the character to develop. Now when I take an image I don't just use myself but use someone else and [say] right this is how I want you to look, I kind of see that half hour of taking photos as an opportunity for the idea to develop as well so you are kind of getting people in inverted commas acting for, you know, while you are taking the photos in order to see what happens.

Have you thought about using different digital mediums such as a video camera?

Yes I've used similar, like bits and bobs, and I've recently kind of made one or two little bits of videos but it's part of this idea that definitely use [?] myself as a painter and that the still image or the photograph provides the best kind of medium to lead into painting. Obviously I could video something and 'still' it but for some reason photography keeps being the most successful medium when I use it, it might be just down to my inability with video of course.

And do you think the experience changed you in terms of your career path at all?

No.

OK.

Sorry, very short.

That's OK, I was just wondering whether getting the media attention had an impact?

OK for that viewpoint. [Pause] I have become increasingly aware and I think the plinth performance was one of the things that fell into this awareness; how much being an artist is two things. There's the making of the artwork and obviously when you are making that you are focussing on [a] single artistic merit and then there's just this whole game which is this PR game which I'm not naturally strong at which I've realised you have to develop and that actually you, if anything, in terms of becoming successful, it [is] almost more important than the work itself and while, of course, I never want that to take over the work, you kind of are aware, you have to play that game a bit and I think the whole One & Other project was so strictly organised and [I] managed to reach such a large audience and it got so much media attention and I suppose being involved, you become aware of slightly the ways and devices in terms of the things you need to do to get that kind of attention.

And do you think it had an impact on any of your friends and family?

[Pause] I think, I think other people have kind of commented [to] me that, you know, that it's made them kind of think about the way, friends and family were concerned about how you go about things, that there's, there are ways you can get your artwork to the next level in terms of interest and attention and I don't think friends and family were surprised that I did it and that it made me feel not like a 'me' thing to do.

In what sense was it not 'you'?

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[Chuckles] I'm not 100% certain in the big sense other than having just said it, but I think it was, maybe it feels quite like an extroverted thing to do and I think I'm naturally far more introverted.

OK thank you, so what's happening now in your life Tom?

Now I'm at the Leys school in Cambridge which is I, e, y, s, and I'm their artist in residence so that means predominantly [being] given a few years of space to get on and paint and then in return for a studio space and the accommodation that they give me, I do a little bit of teaching every week and then I do some lecturing and supervising in the History of Arts department at Cambridge university.

How are you finding that?

That, basically both of them are actually brilliant and one, any stuff I take on in terms of pay always has to, in my decision making processes, it has to allow me to be able to paint. Either that means, because it is giving me time and money, it does that or because the stuff you are making and cover [?] includes my paintings and luckily both of them are doing both, the History of Arts in particular, the course I've been supervising in 'Modernism and After' looking at art from 1945 to the present day, loosely structured around the semantic titles. And while I have taken on the role of a bit of lecturing and supervising, it has obviously also been like a learning curve for me because inevitably you are having to cover certain elements of material that you weren't as familiar with as perhaps you should be and other areas you are looking into that perhaps you already were familiar with. It's forcing you to go that little further.

I see, well it's been a pleasure interviewing you today, how have you found it?

It's OK. It's going back to the experience I mentioned, now when I'm being interviewed, I'm so weary of either sounding too things; either sounding incredibly pretentious saying the kind of stuff if I was to read it and someone else would say 'what a *plonker*' or sounding really stupid so I'm always wary with that in interviews, I suppose, how you make yourself come across. But yes it's been very interesting, some of the questions really made me think about that performance because I had not thought about it for a while.

Sure, well I'm really glad that you agreed to be interviewed thank you very much.

That's wonderful, I look forward to receiving the email and I'll send you all the stuff that you need.

OK, thank you.

END OF RECORDING