

One & Other Project

My name is Verusca Calabria and I'm here today to interview Antony Gormley, on the 29th of June 2010, about his experiences of the One & Other project. First of all Antony, if I can ask you to talk to me about the conception of the project?

Well, originally I was asked to propose a project for the fourth plinth actually before the whole project had begun and I was extremely uncertain about it. I thought, "Why should contemporary art have as perhaps its highest aspiration the possibility of occupying a cast off 19th century plinth? If they're serious, if London and the powers that be are serious about integrating contemporary art within our daily lives why can't I just have the whole square and let me do a 21st century public square?" I felt that it was somewhat an insult to contemporary artists that somehow this was the best we could hope for, to be given some old bit of urban tat that nobody could think of a use for.

But anyway, years went by and I guessed the project had been going for about five years when this recurrent idea kept coming back and I couldn't get rid of it and the sequence of ideas was very straightforward really that my first idea was how do we democratise this plinth that was originally designed for a king. How do we make it somehow for and of the people and my original idea was to see how many people you could actually get to stand on the plinth at once and cast them all and this crowd on this relatively restricted area at the top of the plinth fourteen and a half feet by five. And that would have been an exercise a bit like how many people can you get inside a telephone box but it was still going to be in sculpture was still going to be cast, it was still going to talk the language of the statue. And in the end I gave that up and realised that if I really wanted to democratise the plinth it would be better if it was real bodies in real time and at first I tried to forget that idea but it wouldn't go away and in the end I applied, along with everybody else, for the Fourth Plinth.

There's a sort of application period and I was amongst whatever the six semi-finalists and then there was the TK maquettes were shown at the National Gallery and I was quite surprised that they actually chose it because it ... we had spent three and a half months, the studio for assistance, the studio has spent three and a half months researching the real issues and we produced an eighty-five page document that supported our application which made it clear that we had seriously considered the issues of health and safety. We had looked at the methods of getting people up and down. We had realised the necessity of having a very easily identified reception centre that we had looked at issues of, I suppose, accessibility and the opening of the public space to accommodate the fact that the internet represents the most exponential explosion of public space in the last hundred years and anyway they did accept it so then we were landed with the problem of actually realising it. We had done our costings and we reckoned we could do it for about a million pounds that proved to be not the case in the end. It cost just over two million to realise the project and ... where am I?

Once we had been given the commission it was our problem to realise it and I realised that it was going to completely destroy the life of this studio if we did it. The administrative burden was so huge and we ... you know my life is essentially making things, not making things happen so I spent quite a lot of time looking at potential

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agents, some of them theatrical, some of them performance, some of them are production people. And there was no question that there was only one agency who could really do it. Artichoke. And I had two meetings with the ... Helen [? Marriage] she said "No, we don't do this, we do our own projects, we invent our own programme." And I said ... well I didn't take no for an answer basically and eventually I persuaded her that this was an opportunity that she couldn't refuse. And I had to say that I thank Michael Morris of Art Angel for helping me in that job of persuasion because actually without Artichoke we would have been sunk. And with Artichoke came Sky and with Sky came the possibility of a thing that we really needed which was 24 hour live streaming at high definition. And that sponsorship represents about one and a quarter million a very, very serious amount of money. I'm not sure that we've got off the point of your question. What was it?

That's fine because I was going to ask about how you went about choosing these partners, or collaborators, let's say. I suppose it would be interesting to find out whether Sky Arts had ever done anything like it before and what were the challenges.

Yes, Sky had never done anything like it before and Artichoke had done something like it with the [? Teletube] project, which was an open access illusion. They could look down a tunnel and talk to someone in New York in real-time which I think was a taster for them of running something twenty-four hours night and day and I think it prepared them for the unpredictability of doing a project in a public space that involves the public as performers and participators.

But anyway, yes, Sky was very, very keen to use the project as a promoter for their three dimensional high-definition and we spent a lot of time, well, not a lot of time, but we went down there and they demonstrated the glasses and the 3D thing. They were very keen. They saw it as an even more concentrated version of prize fighting and what's wonderful I think, for them, about a boxing match is that it's a defined field and, in terms of reconciling the three dimensional double image cameras, that kind of defined field is perfect and this very field of the top of the plinth was even more perfect for the demonstration purposes of ... but I was very unkeen and I thought it was anyway. But that was one of the ... that was one of the first meetings that Sky and the studio had. Jeremy was very good from the beginning, Justin was very good, Laura ... I think we were very lucky and then John [? Cassey] was very good even though I think he was quite suspicious from the beginning and I'm still not clear really what he thinks. I think Jeremy really saw the ideological side of it, I think he also saw how good it would be for Sky to be associated with something that was this groundbreaking but also it's not just the groundbreaking, I think, that appealed to Sky was the fact that it was obviously a high profile and you know central to the capital and therefore central to a potential new audience for arts.

Anyway it was a very ... I really take my hat off to Sky. They did not stint on the technical and professional support that they gave and they brought in Steve who was absolutely brilliant. We weren't getting a lot of help from either the mayor's office or from Westminster. They refused us any cable access between the three high definition cameras on the plinth itself and the broadcasting centre, which was going to be integrated into the reception centre. So we needed very sophisticated wireless

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transmitting devices from the plinth to the reception centre and that was all supplied by Steve and well, he was absolutely brilliant really it was absolutely incredible the way that different people came out of the woodwork to help. And we had nearly 50 editors that were doing the remote camera articulation deciding when to pan when to zoom, what indeed to look at. Whether they were looking at the crowd or at the plinth and some of those I think really evolved during the time of the project. They evolved from being technicians to becoming artists themselves. In other words deciding what details and what to concentrate on and, in fact, to get involved in the interplay between plinth and the square in a way that has nothing to do with sports reporting. It's quite interesting with Sky because it is, it was ... you know, getting Clive Anderson involved who on the one hand is, I suppose, a current affairs kind of joker but a very, very, very, very powerful studio presence. But really you know Sky's expertise is on sports broadcasting. So we had this very well known presenter doing, in a way, a presentation, a weekly presentation, an hour long programme on 'This Week on the Plinth' as if it was, you know, a FIFA ... you know international football match and the two you could think wouldn't fit at all but in a curious way it worked. I mean it kept it, you know, if we were thinking about making a bridge between contemporary art and a sport audience that probably would, in any other respect, have complete disinterest in contemporary art I think this alliance worked extremely well even though I didn't like the programmes very much. They didn't leave much space for reflection. There were too many presenters and not enough just quiet observation of what had actually happened. I think the plinthers themselves were not given enough time and it became a rather ... well it became an example of the very thing that I was not terribly keen on even though I was using the conventions of which is sort of the power of the media allowing people for a moment to feel that they were celebrities or somehow that their opinion mattered. The sort of token appearances of plinthers rather than, you know, on the interview couch as opposed to actually looking carefully at what they did on the plinth for me was yes, a mistaken editorial choice.

Having said that, I think that Sky were absolutely brilliant in finding, I guess, ways of structuring the experience of people on the plinth and making it palpable to people. Having said that, the whole way of it in which the project, which was essentially to do with time and duration in time, translating that into a kind of one hour magazine programme that actually barely gives 30 seconds in one go to any one plinth I think destroyed the sense of the project. I mean that the project didn't fit into this very fast moving magazine pace but as a result of them having to really look at material very carefully in order to construct those programmes, for instance when it came to making the book, we were quite grateful for the amount of pre-sifting they had done in terms of interesting moments on the plinth.

Just to ask you more about the notion of documenting the project so getting Sky Arts involved not only to show it live to potential audiences all over the world but also the idea of documenting the project. Was that something that you thought about to begin with?

Yes it was very important to me. I realised that the piece would have two very different lives and one, you know, one would be the real time experience of the work on the square for people on the square whether they were plinth or public. And

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then the other ... the virtual audience which would be worldwide I didn't realise quite how many worldwide audiences there would be. I mean it's quite impressive really, a huge part of the English speaking and net connected world looked in but strangely Korea and Japan were also very high in terms of visit numbers to the website. But it was, I think, the ... I think that both aspects of the registration of the work, the immediate one to a live audience in real time globally and you could say the digital archive whether that was still or moving.

Really a part of my responsibility, in terms of using this resource, it's a high huge amount of resource and I would say that the, you know, the major part of that resource is actually in man-hours in human time The money was large for a project, for a contemporary project of this nature, but I actually ... it is the number of people that were involved in making and realising this that makes it so extraordinary and I think, you know, rich in real terms if you think there were about fifty people involved with the filming and editing, there were about fifty people from Artichoke in terms of the invigilation of the reception centre, there were probably another fifty people involved technically with unusual the [?] the riggers that adapted the plinth and put all the electrics and whatever up.

I suppose the reason why I'm asking is because I realise that the website could potentially be put offline at the end of the project because of the funding stream and then the British Library web archive picked it up and made it available through their server.

Yes, well we couldn't have afforded that. I mean I think that would have been ... so it's marvellous. How we know that it's there is still a question because at the moment the, you know, the original website is still there and tells you where to go if you want to see all the live footage and that's still being hosted and paid for by Sky which is great. I'm very grateful to them for it. But that won't go on forever. I think we've got another six months and then, well it'll be interesting to see how people actually get the link, how they know where it is if they're interested. I guess all plinthers will know but the social historians might not.

I think it's already on the web archive for the British Library if you put the website title in this is where you will go directly it's already off.

Oh, is it? What it doesn't go via the original site?

Not anymore but if you type in the address it will take you there but it is just a slightly different design to what it used to be.

Just to talk about this again in terms of the value of the performances and the video art have you been involved in this kind of work before to document your work using video rather than photography?

Yes, all of my exhibitions are documented by video because I think it's the only way you can really evoke the experience but often these are very, very amateurishly done. I used to do them myself thought I don't do them myself any more. I simply ask [?], I ask the White Cube documentary department to do it but last year I had it in

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New York I just get the gallery to wander around the show with a handy cam because I think real time documentation of how objects relate to space are much closer to the truth of how you interact with art. So I've always been interested in ... you'll see a few on my website.

So the One & Other Project what has it meant to you, this whole thing of having all these people standing up there performing?

I still have a very, very, you know, uncertain relationship to it. I want to carry on working with real time, I'll carry on working with dance, I'm still very, very interested in working, as it were, with the collective body as a co-producer of events but what will happen next? I'm talking to [? Denver] at the moment about a big project which will be the second one of "clay and the collective body" which involves, well, in the first one which was in Helsinki last year in March it was a hundred tonnes of clay and about 1200 people over ten days which is just a bit, you know, a big void space with sort of temporary pneumatic buildings, thirty-six metres by thirty-six metres and thirty metres high with a hundred tonne block of clay in the middle. Ninety-five degrees humidity, twenty-four degrees of heat and we allowed up to one hundred and twenty people in at a time but they had to commit four hours of their time. They weren't allowed to bring any electronic equipment; no cameras, no telephones, no recording devices and once in the airlock there was no possibility of either being looked at or looking out within this very luminous wet space and you could say that was a social experiment, almost the absolute opposite of One & Other insofar as it was non-performative. It was a uterine space that had no direct relationship with the outside except that for people walking through the city they saw this huge great white igloo with its accommodation and cleaning blocks and I mean it was a very big project, another expensive casting. This 300mm thick slab for the under floor heating for the heating of the thing and yes arranging for the clay cube to be built and all of that and, indeed, generating all our own electricity and basically I wanted to have food, accommodation, showers, cleaning areas a refectory area. They had their five medical and psychological staff on hand, again for health and safety reasons, but I'm interested in what happens, if you like, and that was another controlled situation which was a confrontation of people with ... mass and each other and the idea was through non-verbal communication, how do people react? This, I suppose, invitation, it's an invitation to the ... I mean people, they didn't need any instruction It was clear what they were supposed to do and it was clear what would happen, you know, if you take clay from this large mass and make a separate world, as it were, people will respect it. If you work directly with the cube it will be destroyed and transformed and people accepted that absolutely.

Anyway that was an extraordinary experiment and I will carry on and do another one probably at the beginning of next year in America. So I am interested, I mean you could say in dance performances that are very, very controlled and in a sense in the subject is this coordination of space-time and body in a very defined performative arena. I'm now interested in opening those arenas out so clay and the collective body is one project I suppose One & Other is another. I'm not ruling out the possibility of doing more ... the project for the Olympics was another example of setting up a situation which was closer to sculpture where the viewers became the viewed which is another kind of model that I'm very interested in. In a sense the art object by

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becoming porous and by becoming, in a way, about the articulation of space which becomes about the articulation of choices ... can the viewer in some way become the thing that is viewed by other viewers? And yes there are lots of models for this. I'm interested in labyrinths, mazes, in allowing people an opportunity to yes, maybe 'confess' is quite a good word but anyway expose an inner life in a collective situation so this secret exchange ... I'm quite interested in secrets exchange. It's a kind of public exchange of secrets I'm quite interested in but anyway there are plenty of things bubbling up in my mind. I'm aware that I'm a sculptor but maybe some of my capabilities are now about not simply making objects in a way a concentrated form of material organisation that I can use organisational principles to set up situations and I think that One & Other was a good example of this situation ... is it working?

It is. It is. It's just picking up the electric cables somewhere, something, is your mobile phone on.

No.

Okay, let me just check something very quickly. We just [?] ... It's absolutely fine. It's gone. Is there someone else's mobile around that we don't know about?

Just to bring you back now to the way in which the project was organised. We talked about Sky Arts and we briefly mentioned Artichoke. How about the National Gallery, at what point did they get involved with this?

I wanted them involved right from the beginning because I thought this was a serious attempt to some way hold a mirror up to us now. I'm dubious about nation statehood; I don't think nation statehood fits the contemporary condition of identity. I think that we have been sold, you'll see in the book, two of the essays, but particularly the last one by [?Hugh Brodie], he constructs and analyses very carefully the illusion of national identity that we in a way continue to play up to so our affection for the queen while also in some senses recognising her as a living anachronism underlines certain other things that English people perhaps prefer not to acknowledge. The fact that we live in a time of hyper-mobility of provisional identity and are offered, at great cost I have to say, these illusions of belonging that I think we pay dearly for in terms of our personal freedom and ... sorry what was I answering a question about?

It's okay, I was just interested in understanding why the National Gallery...

Oh the National Gallery yes ... sorry I thought I've gone right off the point.

The issue about getting this national institution that is supposed to be in some way creaming off the most representative British identities in order to keep them in this box of kind of, you know, ancestral worship is an intriguing anachronism in our present day but nevertheless it was very, very important to get them involved because this is a point of registration where if you're serious about acknowledging the individual, well we need to in some way reinforce the ... well, I think the cogency and seriousness of the project by having an institution that is interested in national identity and I was pleased, I was just pleased that they did come on board and that they were prepared to have that monitor permanently on and they certainly are still

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interested in keeping the entire archive of portraits of the 2,400 plinthers minus the three who decided to [?] completely be baffles me. How you could sign an agreement and want to take part in the project like this and then decide to go anonymous?

What happened there then Antony? What was the reason for these people to change their minds?

I would just refer to Plato and say that it's absolutely impossible ever to know what is going on inside another person's mind and I have no idea.

So now, just talking about the National Portrait Gallery you mentioned about the national identity and there was something I wanted to talk to you about today because I noticed in some of the promotional materials, for example, in the video in which you spoke and invited people to participate and explained the reasons why the project would be an important way of representing Britain today. There was, I felt, a tension with the national rhetoric a little bit about come and speak for Britain. What do you think about that? Because you just mentioned that you wouldn't want that to be about a monolithic notion of who, you know, who Britain represents and that kind of thing.

Yes, I think that, you know, I'm probably as contradictory as anybody ... with that video I suppose this was my missionary moment. I was saying, "Come and sign up and be part of this because I think this is an interesting opportunity in a way to see who we are now. And I don't know whether I did play the nationalistic flag particularly. I was just very keen to get people excited and to get them involved. I'm not sure that I framed it as, you know, Britain needs you, come and sign up and reinforce the fact that Britain is great because I don't think, you know, that kind of well, I mean unless it was highly ironic that kind of rhetoric wouldn't work.

So what about the promotion strategy of the project? I know that you were invited to participate in one of the radio programmes for the Archers. Is that right?

Yes.

And how did that go?

I don't know. My wife told me that I sounded like an eager schoolboy but anyway I stuck out like a sore thumb as not having... I mean the Archers is, you know, a monument to well, the power of radio. I was extremely honoured to be asked and I don't know. I never listened to my performance, I can imagine I wasn't very good but it was really ... it was a wonderful thing for ... in a sense it was very, very important to me and that was where my missionary rhetoric came from. It was very, very important to me that we did touch all the regions, that we did get a composite picture of, in a way, all of the British Isles. And it's extraordinary to me that people were prepared to, you know, at their own expense come all the way from Northern Ireland or the Shetlands to participate and it shows that well, the need to belong is still very strong. And I guess that was my ticket, you know, come and belong to this. And I guess I could have made this much less complicated and made life a lot easier for Artichoke and everyone if I'd just made it open access. We wouldn't have worried

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about distribution of male to female, we wouldn't have worried about I suppose the distribution of time in a demographically accurate way and would have ended up with a very different, probably London centric, project. But it seemed to me a centre periphery dialectic where in order to justify making the thing in the centre you had to engage the periphery and that was that was really where the purpose of this rhetoric came from.

So what after your time on the Archers could you find out after about the impact that it had on the number of applicants for example?

No, no I've not idea but you know we know that the rural, you know, I think that everybody listens to the Archers and particularly people, you know, in the far flung places ... it is a collective imaginative place that in some way connects very different social areas as well as geographic areas and I think that it's a great achievement in fact. And, I don't know, I can't give you statistics but I imagine that the Archers was absolutely critical in getting the knowledge of this project and the opportunity of being part of it out there to the world.

What other strategies did you employ to promote the project?

Massive. I mean we employed two very competent PR companies: Goldman [?Crin] and Idea Generation and Idea Generation basically did the regional press and Goldman [?Crin] did the national and international and we made it clear that ... I mean we give every single plinther basically a press and publicity pack that would help them notify and alert their local newspapers and radios about participating and obviously we used a great deal of local radio. Local radio were doing stories about people either getting a place or interviewing them before they went or when they came back about the experience and I thought that was very, very important that there should be ... in a sense every plinther should bring their own public to the project and I think that was very, very true. I mean I was amazed when I went to Beijing and a girl behind the desk in the gallery said to me, "Oh well, my friend was on the plinth two and a half weeks ago." And she had downloaded her hour, I mean her friend's hour, and showed it to me and that was amazing I mean that was basically she was a Chinese art student at Goldsmiths who had applied and got a place on the plinth. But as a result, you know, there were a large group of her friends, you know, the other side of the world who were turned on not only to watch her performance but others. And I think that was true for lots of people actually. This sort of extraordinary web of connection that spread out all over the world.

Just talk about the number of individuals who were involved. I know you were interested clearly to get a good balance between male and female and across different areas of Britain to represent everyone. Do you think it was representational, though, if we were to look at, for example, issues of class or of race?

No.

And ethnicity?

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No, I think that we didn't do well on black Britishers. There were a few but not a representative number. I think we did better on Asians; there was one woman in a full shaddor, fully veiled. In the end you just ... there was a degree to which we were very diligent in ... this sexual division and within the distribution of ours geographically. But I think then we had to allow for random access and use what we got. I constantly was asking Artichoke and the PR companies into how many languages the invitation to be part of the plinth had been translated. How many minority group interest radios we had contacted. How many minority interest groups specific language groups had the invitation translated and the advertisement about the project and I would suggest that we probably failed miserably in getting, you know, say the Senegalese or Bangladeshi population to think that this was their project. That was that was the challenge that I gave to Artichoke and indeed the BBC, when the BBC came on board I just said, "You've got to get your, as it were, you know, local broadcasters in Birmingham or wherever to really get this opportunity out to your, as it were, ethnically specific audiences."

So why do you think they didn't manage to do it?

I don't know. I don't know. But I would say, you know, I think that both the book and the films, well indeed, and when you look through the photo archive you're aware quite a few Sikhs and quite a few Chinese and Japanese but I think we were bad on Afro-Caribbean and generally black English.

So what would be the implication for the democratisation of art then if you hadn't ...

Well it's rather like, I'm sorry it's just one of the failures, you know. I sat on the Arts Council and, you know, we were insistent that we should have more of a more representative employment strategy for the Arts Council itself but actually it's very difficult. It didn't happen, it certainly didn't happen swiftly and it certainly didn't happen while I was still on the Arts Council, it's an ongoing issue I would say.

Okay, thanks for that Antony. Now just to go back to the project itself, just to elaborate on the idea on the title One & Other and your interest in the body which is essential to your work. Do you want to tell me more about that?

I think the notion of [?] and selfhood have been ... well they expanded, deconstructed the, you know, looked at by nearly everybody whether it's the Frankfurt School and kind of European philosophy or evolutionary psychology or now kind of Steven Pinkeresque understanding the biological basis in a way moral systems. The notion, or in a post-colonial notion, of the world you know post-colonial world the distinction between selfhood and otherness I think has been blurred to the point where we are all others and I think that was the point that I was making and asking whether this archaic instrument of dissociation. You might say I think of the plinth as implicitly trying to establish hierarchical value where notions of heroism, moral probity, uprightness are emphasised by putting you high up on a column and implying these are the values that are embodied in this body are very high. And by implication the rest of us who share the street are very low and the powers that be that can decide these things recognise that this is where this inscription of the highest moral order should be ... implies that in some way we should know our place

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on the street and I wanted very much to turn that on its head and realise that actually you know those hierarchical distinctions are as dangerous and subject to abuse as, I think, distinctions of, you know, superiority of the civilised over the savage.

Well to try to use this dead prop for hierarchy as a lever to allow for certain self-realisation and that in the process of being yourself, everyone ... the individual actually begins to see themselves differently and themselves as, in other words, an other. And maybe that was an illusionary and having too great an expectation. Some of what you may have picked up in your oral history interviews would reinforce this aspiration that in some way by allowing people to abstract themselves from their own social and indeed functional matrix, because so many of us live within a world in which our choices are obligatory, we make things for others in time periods and in conditions that we do not personally control and that life of duty obligation and, indeed, kind of embeddedness in an economic system that often we feel very much victims of rather than contributors to.

There isn't a time in which a human being can think about, in a way, their lives and I think that that this is a strange paradox that in agreeing to represent yourself – and this didn't happen for everybody by any means, you find that you are in this place that is of the world but not in it and so you are given the opportunity of, in a way, reflecting on your own life. And I think some of the most touching contributions were people who simply used their time up there to think out loud and tell us about their fears and their hopes. So the man whose wife was diagnosed with having three weeks to live or the woman who had lost her baby, you know, those are very obvious public expressions of a personal loss. That I would like to think, you know, did two things. One is that it expanded our world in a way witnesses this confession or admission or sharing but hopefully it also made those subjects able to witness their own grief or their own mental state, their own emotional state from outside and they would do that presumably by looking at their ... and I don't know what you know. I don't know whether you picked up on any of this. I mean this is a supposition on my part and I think that maybe some of the reasons that people chose then to remove themselves, these three anonymous people, and I wonder whether they didn't like what they saw so much that they felt that they were now ... they now wanted to be different or [?] or they didn't want to acknowledge that person that had committed to be part of the project.

But anyway One & Other I think that we don't like to admit it but we are strangers to ourselves. The fact is that we all live embedded, we live embedded in political systems within urban matrixes within language systems, within our own appearance that surrounds us and that we live the other side of ... we peer out from a façade, from a face, from a body, from a life. But in many senses we didn't choose and the idea of deconstructing representation by allowing people to self-represent to the point where either they, in the manner of, you know, a cross dresser or any form of actor take on a persona which is a kind of escape from the dictates of a given identity, given job or a given name or a given address, all of the things, in a way, foisted upon us and there are many escape routes, you could say, so you can dress up as Napoleon or Nelson or the one I loved the best was William IV himself who discussed with us the problems of his impending marriage having had eleven illegitimate children. I think the mind body problem, you know, is the core of my

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project now. I want to celebrate the paradoxes of ... in a sense, you know the Cartesian division is still pertinent insofar as we can all have thoughts or desires or fantasies about different lives than the one we're actually living and this is a natural expression of the fact that our mental lives and our material situations are very rarely in perfect synchrony and I want to celebrate that. I mean I think the mind body problem, while I know from my Buddhist experience, can be resolved and we can recognise that the body is itself in a sense the instrument of mind and vice versa. And that this is, in a way, a path of balance and acceptance of dependability of minds and bodies on each other. I think that for the majority of urban occidental dwellers this is absolutely the contrary of their experience. I don't know how many of us but I think still, you know, from being a student onwards we are immersed in kind of financial systems and job opportunities and in some way force us into behaviours and conditioning that our only escape from is, in a way, a mental safari and I guess, you know, Yes One & Other may have been a vehicle for some people to do exactly that in a very obvious way live a kind of alterity by being another person.

Having said that I assume you're referring to the actual performance of the individual on the plinth so that really brings us on to talk about your interest to capture their stories in the audio format because you approached the Wellcome Trust to get this collection going so I just wonder whether you can tell me more about that and the context or how it came about.

Well, I thought it was very, very important that the dimension of, in a way, personal motivation and indeed to somehow capture ... well maybe this is more personal illusion but I wanted to know whether or not the effect of having taken this time out having abstracted their lives into a representation how this would affect people. So yes, I wanted this very important, very, very important primary interview just asking people who they were, what's happened in their lives, why they were motivated to take part, what they thought they were going to be doing and then for that to be qualified by a later and hopefully, after an adequate length of time had elapsed, which allowed them to reflect you know from a certain distance on the experience, to interview people again and ask them how they had reconciled that hour with the rest of their lives and I just felt that that was important and I hope that you agree when you see the book. In the end we didn't use that many of your in depth post-plinth interviews but one is there almost in totality and I think it just deepens and enriches, in a sense, that the view that you have of the project. So the Wellcome support of the project has been incredibly important. I think all this, you know, essentially this is an anthropological project. It's an attempt to make an account of us now and it's not simply ... it's very, very clear that it's not simply about a visual representation. I've amplified it from being just from square to being worldwide via the web. I've also tried to amplify it in terms of how people pages on the website and allowed to contact friends and allowed to yes, fill up a personal biography and I think that the interviews are part of that try to responsibly deal with the contributions of people and in the process, understand more about them as subjects.

Thank you, and how would you say that the media reacted to the project as a whole, something we haven't touched on yet?

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I don't know. I've got this something like ten books of cuttings there that I really haven't had time to look at, I haven't got a clue. I think I should think that most people think "Oh well, another one of those mad art things has come and gone like they do" but I'm hoping that it will live on in a number of ways. I mean I am totally amazed that we, you know, we had something like nine million hits during the time of the project on the website. I think that there well, I think that this is still a serious resource for everybody from psychologists through to social historians and I would like to think that it's, you know, it's less an issue now about media and more an issue about using this archive and using material in a way to understand human beings better. But I think yes, I'm not bothered about them, you know, and we used the media I hope. I hope we were not victims of the media.

And about the art critics, how did they see it in terms of the performing arts?

I don't know. I didn't really read very much. You mean what did Michael Billington think of it? I don't think he wrote about it is the truth. I really can't answer that question, I don't know. I didn't see anything stunningly clever written about it I have to say from critics, did you? No.

No, well, well I heard Tim Marlow talked about it in [?].

Oh well, Tim was brilliant but you know Tim, Tim Time ... I think of Tim as being part of the project really because he, I think one of that penultimate Sky one hour documentary was ... well, I think it was a wonderful summing up of the whole project. I'd like to think that this was a new ... I have set a new agenda for the potential of participation and an engagement with the space of art as a space of transformation, of inquiry, of, well, a real test site for well, I suppose, for the future of us as well as for the future of art. Maybe that's a bit hyperbolic but maybe the whole project is a little bit hyperbolic. I mean on the one hand, you know, you don't do anything unless you have a bit of ambition and now that it's done I feel immensely proud that we succeeded against all odds. I mean, you know, there were moments when it looked like we weren't even going to get Westminster City Council to give us the planning permission to allow this to happen. So I mean that's another story that could be written, which is the story of fighting against the odds to make something that was not entirely necessary happen. It's always impossible, there are, you know ... the hidden benefits are much greater than the obvious ones as are, I should think, the hidden, you know, whatever sufferings and negative affect of having done it'll just be interesting to see. It was pretty amazing that we got a BAFTA nomination wasn't it? I wouldn't have expected that.

I didn't know about it so I'm glad to hear it now.

Yes, no, I mean that was amazing.

So in terms of the plinther community ... might call it 'social network' what do you think about that, how you've created that?

Well I think it's amazing, I think it's not surprising. I mean we have wrested the notion of community away from, I think, the evil machinations of politicians and the internet,

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par example, is the medium by which self-organisation and the possibility of open democracy is exponentially increased and the fact that we now have a plinthian kind of social group is a wonderful thing but it's also an expression that they think that people can self-organise and they don't have to have some, you know, pre-existing institution or rotary club or political organisation that gives them a collective identity and I think it's a lovely thing. But at the same time when you ask me am I going to go and be there to celebrate the year anniversary I'm not because I think that I wasn't a plinthian in the end. I was refused a place on the plinth within the system as it ran for the project and I'm very proud of the fact that I set this hare running but I'm not a plinthian.

So what of the project do you think as a whole, what has it meant to you?

It's given me a huge, huge extra faith in the power of human beings to well, have a good time to self-organise with extreme care and consideration for others, that actually there are no rules anymore in how you make art. That maybe art really can be with as well as for everyone. That when you open the studio door even just a chink and people realise that the space of art is the space of freedom they'll come and join you. So I think it's been an incredibly positive experience even though the implications of making One & Other are still with me and you know I don't know in the long term how my life is going to change as a result. I mean it has changed, it's changed profoundly as a result of this engagement, I suppose, with the real people in real time giving often very unreal things.

What's happening next?

Well there are lots of things happening, all quite conventional in many senses. We got forty-three pieces up about twelve days ago in the western Austrian Alps. I'm installing one hundred iron body forms two thousand and thirty-nine metres over one hundred and fifty nine square metres, seven different valleys [?]. Anyway the [?] and we're doing that with the Austrian army and a whole range of mountain rescue teams and so that's another kind of space. This is maybe the opposite of the plinth, it's very, very big and wide and it's calling on participants but you don't have to sign up and you don't have to do anything. You can walk or ski or just motor through the valleys and I'm hoping that they're subtly changed into exactly the same kind of reflexive space as the plinth. In other words you are aware of these silent witnesses and in some senses you seek them out, you look for them and they look out over a wide world. You see them at first as tiny incidents on the skylines but then if you, in winter, take a ski lift somewhere or if you walk up you can become part of their field. So it's a sort of combination of the palpable of the saveable and the imaginable because you might be able to see twelve with binoculars, maybe twenty receding in space but you never know where the space ends as it goes up many [?] anyway that's opening in a month. We had a lot of snow last week, sadly, so we weren't able to continue working on a show at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, a large show of drawings, sculpture in Rome opening in October and so on. Life goes on. We're going to do an ... I'm excited, I'm doing a new dance performance of a [?] for the Barbican in 2012.

What are you making for them?

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Don't know. I hope that I will actually be working with dancers directly this time. Going to try and get a rural studio up and running, bought one hundred and eighty acres of land and we'll try to animate that.

In the UK?

Yes, in Norfolk, in Norfolk. Doing two books. Event Horizon is still on in New York.

What about the Alaskan work? I saw it on the Internet that a permanent sculpture was going to be put up.

Yes Habitat. Yes, that's up, I put that up at the beginning of my trip so that must have been in the beginning of May, we put that up on Avenue D and Avenue 6. It's called 'Habitat.' It's a house-sized sculpture made out of blocks of stainless steel. It sits on the building line with its back to the road looking out into space. [?] the occasion of that was the repatriation of two of over two hundred thousand native artefacts from the Smithsonian in Washington back up to the Arctic North so [? names of tribes] anyway a whole range of ethnic material culture and that work was an attempt to just make an objective [? "plurality of the question"?] What is a human habitat, what do we need in the context of ... and I think this is not far away from One & Other in the context of a growing awareness that more and more people are living in cities so by 2050, seventy percent of the world's population will be in cities. We will be at around 9 billion globally; we know that things will really start collapsing at ten. We already have a very, very clear idea of the entropic effect on climate change. In the words of Martin Reese, we have to decide the human project has to decide whether or not we want to contribute to the evolution of life on this planet. We haven't been here for very long, we could be out of the door in quite a short time so the bigger, I mean, the bigger issue in all of this is to ask questions about what our nature is and is human nature to be discovered in nature or have we now immersed ourselves so much in our own meta-languages, both in terms of our environment and our dependency, on the urban grid and indeed in Euclidian architecture all the Euclidian principles of the architecture that we surround ourselves with that we can no longer recognise our responsibility and dependency on the elemental world. So there's a, you know, habitat was an attempt in a highly exploitative city Anchorage has no, well, it doesn't really have architecture. There are one or two buildings and it's a statement in a way about a very particular moment in human history. We've got the trans-Alaskan pipeline, we've got a continuing fur and seal trade but anyway Alaska is still a pioneer exploitative system. And in the context of this the repatriation of artefacts that represent a symbiotic and balanced hunter gatherer economy I just wanted to make a work that in some way ... asked that question where does the human being belong and what do we need? Anyway that was Alaska. Alaska.

I'm thinking of asking a closing question now about the One & Other project and I just wonder whether you think it has changed you in any way, if at all, or your career, or you as a person, you know, on a very personal level?

It's strange. I am, I think, quite a private person. I mean, in other words if given the choice between going into a room full of people and staying on my own I'll probably

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stay on my own. And this project has exposed me to, I suppose, the media to a kind of ... yes, becoming collectively owned or identified in a way that I find slightly scary. I had to do it and maybe I'll have to do it again if there are things worth doing that uses a similar model of working directly with the collective body to make any [?] of the collective body. I think it's reinforced a feeling about the absolutely central importance of art or of creativity in our lives and that in the failure of politics to be a real arena for human potential, because politics has been so compromised by its association with the media or its dependency on economics, that the space of art is a critical space that needs to be, in a way, collectively owned and collectively engaged with and I think we've been very, very ... well, we've been sold an image of art principally ... exclusive about ... in a sense an object of high exchange value that lives in museums or the houses of the rich.

One & Other is completely and utterly based on the principle that art belongs to everyone and that the distinction between what I might say to you as an individual, any kind of individual, in talking about my day yesterday I'm offering you, in my conversation, in a sense, a recreation of my own experience which, hopefully, makes your world bigger richer, maybe more detailed. Anyway it gives it some new dimension that it wouldn't otherwise have had if we not shared the time to have this conversation. Well I think that art is exactly the same and I think we all are creative beings and we have to acknowledge the fact that we are all making a world for each other and art is a way in which that can become very, very clear and the degree to which One & Other, you know, both supported by and in engaged in by a hugely wide public I find incredibly encouraging.

Is there anything else you'd like to add that you feel we haven't covered?

No, I'm sure there are a million things but I think we've done very well.

Yes, we're coming up to the end of the time we set but we could always do it again?

I think this is enough. I don't know where this will belong or find a home but I think it's enough [?] to contextualise for other contributions.

Thank you very much.