

One & Other Project

[Interview conducted Skype to Skype without video]

My name is Verusca Calabria and I'm interviewing Mark Jordan today on the 6th of March 2010 at about 8.38 a.m. using Skype on behalf of Random House Group as part of the One & Other project, so Mark can you tell me where you are at the moment?

At the moment I'm in a friend's house in Belfast in Northern Ireland in the city centre.

Okay, so I wanted to ask you a few questions about the time you stood on the plinth.

Okay.

And it's very much to unravel some of the things that you told us in the pre plinth interview.

Yes.

Unusually you were interviewed after you went on the plinth as you told me already yesterday that for some reason you had run out of time so rather than asking what it was like after you came off how about just before and during, could you explain if you can remember?

Yes I can remember quite vividly in the sort the were several hours before I was staying in a hotel in London a mile or two from the plinth. So I had to get up very early, my plinth slot I think was about 6 a.m. so I had to get up about half 4 / half 5 and make my way across London and I decided to just to walk because I didn't want to rely on public transport or on taxis in case they let me down because it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. So I had my girlfriend with me and the two of us headed over to the little hut at the plinth and I was, I had a mixture of feelings going on I was excited and I was nervous and one level I was a little bit frightened because my project was a bit out there it was a bit extreme and it's very difficult to get a judgment in my own head whether it was too much or whether it would be sort of frowned upon or thought to be stupid or just a bit over the top. So I had a whole ... but I was also very excited. I had a very clear understanding of what my intentions for that project were so as I arrived at the plinth I was kind of looking for reactions for the plinth staff to see if I could sort of pick up any reactions from them that would indicate to me just what people were feeling about that sort of weird little project that I had designed so excited and nervous I guess is the answer.

Okay, thank you for that and how about when you were on the plinth, how did you feel like when you first got on the plinth?

Similar sort of feelings, when I got on the plinth the first sort of thing that I noticed was how cold it was. It was very cold and I was very cold and I was wearing very little clothes and by the time I got soaked in the blood and the fake blood mixture I was trembling with the cold and emotionally how I was feeling, I felt really grateful for the opportunity. I love the feeling of gratitude, I love feeling grateful for stuff it's a beautiful feeling and I knew my friends and family and the people who had contributed their blood and their portrait to me I knew that they would be watching and I was excited about that do you know the project had finally come to fruition and I

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was also a bit nervous in case technically it went wrong in case the sound didn't work or the camera had failed or in case I guess I was a bit worried that I would be too nervous to read out the poetry or maybe shake noticeably I didn't really want that I didn't mind so much but preferred that not to have happened but the overwhelming feeling was one of excitement and privilege to be part of such a big national art project, I really enjoyed it.

I understand thank you, so just to unravel that a little bit. About the online audience which you mentioned included your family and friends, what sort of response did you get from them when you returned?

I have a very close friend called Arthur McGillian we've been like brothers for twenty years and he was the first person I had contact with when I came back and he was very, very positive about it. He said that he felt the whole project had presence and that it was handled with a sort of dignity and decorum which I was quite pleased about because I had visions that I look like some sort of maniac, some sort of nervous maniac on that plinth, you know, and the feedback I got from everyone else was particularly all the people that I'm very close gave me very positive feedback. But I had Laura who was one that gave me some of her blood, she's a good friend as well and I went to her house after that and she fed back very positively but her mother is a bit older and a very conservative religious woman and she just could not see the point of it. She basically said you are sick in a sort of joking way but I knew she actually meant that, she just could not see the art in it, she could not see the message. But that didn't bother me at all because I absolutely predicted that response from her you know. She is a good friend of mine and I thought it was funny she thought that so I know because of the nature of the project the responses were going to be mixed; some people who would really admire the courage that it takes to do something so odd you know and something that may open me up to ridicule and there was little bits of that response but the overwhelming response was one of support and love which is kind of what the old project was about. But that response existed before the plinth anyway in that all these people agreed to let me take their blood and they also agreed to write a poem for me to read out so that's what the whole project was about for me it wasn't actually the bit on the plinth that was just the visible part the tip of the iceberg but the actual project for me the fun and the excitement of approaching people and telling them 'look can I have some of your blood and will you write me a poem because I want to bathe on them publicly' and watching their response and watching them step into that level of commitment do you know?

Yes.

Every person I asked except for one agreed to do it and the one who didn't agree to do it was my brother and the reason he couldn't do it is because he is a doctor and it would be ethically wrong for him to allow me to take his blood as a non professional these people are right, I had to look it up on the internet and ask people to how to take blood safely and how do you make it absolutely bullet proof safe to do this and I wanted at one point to just employ a professional a nurse or someone that works in the blood transfusion service or a doctor and initially I asked my brother the doctor but he said he couldn't ethically speaking and I decided I'm going to do it myself which would be much more impact full and I did it.

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Yes you talked about it in the previous interview, just to bring you back on the time on the plinth in terms of your impact on the audience I wonder about any communication or feedback you may have got from people in the square at the time of your performance, do you remember?

There wasn't, there were very few people in the square at the time because it was a 6 a.m. slot so there was just the odd stranger passing by. On one level I was quite glad about that because it took the pressure off, on another level I was a bit disappointed about it because I would like people to have seen it live just for the impact that I was hoping it would make the people who were there, there were people checking me out and giving me the thumb up cars going by and pumping their horn there was one guy taking a series of photographs actually two different people came along and started taking lots of photographs of me and asking me to pose I think they asked me to do a couple of poses, but more importantly for me in terms of the physical audience on the day I had my girlfriend there who I love and it was just nice to share that do you know that sort of moment this is mad and this is ridiculous and smiling at each other knowing what was about to happen as I went up on that little lift thing and knowing that she was there full of love and support for me and made the journey with me and taken time off work you know that was really sweet.

Wonderful, how about the website, I noticed reading your profile on the One & Other website that you set up a website called www.thedignityoflove.com which is no longer available at the moment.

No.

I couldn't see it so I wanted to ask you about it came about, what was the content and the impact?

How it came about was I really do realise how short life is and I have this absolute burning urge to cram as much experience into life as I can so each time I get an opportunity to shine or each time I get an opportunity to participate on something I like to try and think well what is the maximum pleasure and what is the maximum life experience that I can extract from this and it is always about pushing it to the limits and getting other people involved and in this particular project the most important thing I have learnt in life I've had a rough life, it's been very, very chequered and what I've learnt on that journey is to me the only thing that is of any real value in this world is love and friendship and to me that is of paramount importance it is everything so I think I am very supportive and loyal to my friends and my family the people I love my children as they are to me and it took me years, years and years to learn that lesson that is the only thing that is important and that's where I should focus my life on so when I was given the opportunity to make a little art installation I thought that's the message I want to get out to people I want certain people to 'look there isn't anything more important than love, there isn't anything more important than friendship and so I built the website as an extension of that project knowing that and put links in it to the One & Other site knowing that people would come along and look at it and maybe hopefully be impacted even to a small degree hopefully it would have made people think that love and friendship is of paramount importance do you know and that was the main reason for building the website and I also put a little piece on where if people wanted they could send me poems that reflected love and

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friendships in their lives and I got a few, I actually was going to compile a book and see if I could get it published or else publish it for free on the internet which I have another book that I published free on the internet and give away, it's a stop smoking book it was very, very successful we had like 50.000 downloads and I thought maybe I could do the same with this sort of spread that message out you know about love and friendship is very, very important and in the end I only got a couple of dozens poems from people who had seen the stuff and read the website and that was beautiful it was a life enhancing experience to know that people has seen this stuff and a couple of dozens had been affected to the point where they wrote their own poems and sent it to me and that was very sweet so I know that at the very least I've made a tiny impact on somebody's life and that's kind of what life is all about.

Why did you take the website down now?

Basically I live on benefits, I'm really quite poor and I couldn't afford to maintain it any longer I had to cut back on things you know because that project had finished I just had to let it go which kind of saddened me but it's the reality of life.

Sure and then you also mentioned in your pre plinth interview that you had thought of making a scrap book with the poems, did you say you also took photographs of people that you took the blood from?

Yes I have those photographs.

Have you made the scrapbook then?

No I absolutely forgot that I said I was going to do that and now that you mention it I thought 'oh my god I completely forgot about it I wish I had' you know but I still have their poems probably somewhere I don't even know that I do actually but I will now look that out and maybe I have a dozens photographs and it's like I have those photographs on my phone and I like looking at them every now and again my mother is 74 and there's this photograph of her sitting on her sofa with me with a needle and a tube coming out with blood coming out of her arm in a little cup and I confess that is just absolutely reflective of the message that I was trying to get across do you know that people will step in and do that stuff for people they care about and I wish I had compiled that scrapbook but I completely forgot I was going to do it I have a head like a sieve.

Well you could do it now.

I might, I might well do it.

Okay so did anything else come of the project after that?

No, it's just sort of faded out over months I had this sort of big response where frequently for days after everywhere I went and meeting friends that I hadn't seen for a while people had seen it on the net and there was a little piece on sky art where every week they were voting someone was asking their studios to vote the top five and I came in four for that week amongst 60 odd so I was very pleased about that someone somewhere decided they understand that and they liked it that was like a little aftershock after that I enjoyed and I enjoyed when people came to me and say

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'look I've seen your stuff on the plinth' and listening to their reactions about that but with time weeks and months passed by it sort of faded out into the background of one of those really curious interesting and enjoyable life experiences.

Okay did you get any media attention after you came down from the plinth?

Let me think, no not at all.

You were worried that you may be portrayed in a negative way, did you find that at all on the web or any social networking sites?

No, I'm quite surprised that it didn't. I think had I been more exposed had I had one of those slots in the UK at a time when people weren't in bed I suspect there would have been some negative reactions but because it wasn't viewed by so many people because it was 6 a.m. and there weren't many people then it wasn't viewed very widely apart from my family and friends and stuff but because of the nature of that project bathing in other people's blood I did expect but also allowed for the possibility of the press picking up on it and call me some sort of maniac do you know and making vampire poems and stupid things like that but I really agreed that was a price to pay because I understood what it was about and for me it wasn't at all gory or macabre just an absolute expression of gratitude for the love that I have in my life.

Okay thank you, so I wanted to ask you in terms of the choices of self-representation, why did you choose blood?

Why did I choose blood? I chose blood because first of all it's probably the most intimate thing outside sex in fact possibly including sex it's probably the most intimate thing that I could have chosen I mean and because it involved a risk, it involved people putting themselves on the line and allowing me an untrained person to stick a needle into their veins and suck some blood out of them some of the people I've done that with were very, very nervous but they were given absolute free choice and understanding there's not pressure whatsoever absolutely none do you know and if they choose to step out of it I fully understood and I full understand because I have one friend from a very, very long time ago and he is needle phobic when I asked him to do it I knew he was needle phobic he avoids hospitals and doctors he would get really ill rather than risk someone putting a needle in him it's a real extreme fear he has so when I asked 'can I do this' he said he would love to but he couldn't find a way to get over his fear and I said that's ok there's no problem at all I understand and he said well what about one of those little finger prick things rather than stick a needle in his veins that you get in the blood donation section when they prick your thumb and one little drop of blood comes out he says 'will it be ok with that?' I said that I would be delighted with that I went and found one of those finger prick devices and stuck it under his thumb and got one drip of blood from him.

Okay thank you, I guess the next session of our interview is very much to explore your background which you did do with Kate.

Yes.

During your pre plinth interview, you mentioned about your illness quite a few times during the previous interview I wonder whether you'd like to tell us how you became

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ill with Crohn's disease, which we didn't capture in the previous interview?

Basically my brother had Crohn's disease for many years but at that time we were a disjointed family and I didn't know my brother that well. We had our separate ways years ago and he got unwell and I wasn't really sure what it was. He went into hospital and he was in intensive care and life support and I found later he had Crohn's disease, so about twelve, fourteen, maybe fifteen years ago ... I kind of don't even remember how long I've had this now, I was always sort of in the pink of health I ran lots of marathons and would do 200 or 300 miles cycles and swims and I woke up one morning and I had violent cramps in my stomach and my intestines. I went to the loo, I lost a lot of blood and I felt immediately I have got cancer and I went for tests and apparently I had Crohn's disease and it got very severe and I was bed ridden for quite a long time. But then they got all of these drugs and treatments and they have been modified in the last fifteen years to the extent that it's not completely debilitating. I still have several days where I can't really function outside the house, I'm confined to the house for a day or two at a time when I would go on a course of steroids and that would clear it up. But they have their own side effects and things but basically with Crohn's disease I would be in pain every single day to some degree but the remarkable thing is if you are in pain what I've discovered if you are in pain long enough and sort of permanently enough the pain doesn't bother you anymore because I find myself in situations now where I would be maybe walking up the street chatting to a friend and I would be hit with such a violent pain and cramps that I would fall to my knees. But because I'm so used to that it's like weekly or daily sometimes once a month I carry out my conversations as normal, it's just a normal part of my life now and generally doesn't bother me do you know. Sometimes when you can't really leave the house because it's one of those days but after I got it my daughter contracted it and my mother contracted it three years ago and I have an auntie with it and an uncle with it and of course my brother I've told you about they tell us it's not hereditary but my own family is absolutely riddled with it do you know.

How are you feeling at the moment?

I have a few cramps but I always have a few cramps, low level at the moment which I don't really even mind it's just the way it is life will deal people bad hands sometimes and this is one of the hands I've been held and I just got to get on with it and live with it.

Okay thanks for sharing that with me, you also mentioned in the previous interview about the kidnapping.

Oh yes.

Yes, I think of course we don't want to know the details, the names or anything like that because we would like to protect you. Would you be comfortable to tell me what happened, how old you were, the circumstances without mentioning places or names?

Oh let me think about that [chuckles] I start talking to you as it comes out, basically when I was young I was a bit of a [inaudible] I was out of control and I used to [pause] I ended up doing training schools [inaudible] and prison in my early days and for the last twenty years I've lived as a spiritual man, I tried to counteract for the

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disruption that I put into the world in those days but I was out of control as a teenager do you know. Even from, I started drinking and doing drugs as an eleven year old and by the time I was fourteen I was locked up and I got repeatedly locked up and ended up in institutions doing several years, in assessment centres and training schools, hostels and prison and during that period of my life Northern Ireland was in the midst of what's known as the troubles. And there was a lot of paramilitary activity, a lot of gangster activity and the estate I lived in was controlled by a really violent paramilitary group called 'the red hand command' which sounds like the name of a comic book but these guys were insane and they sort of murder people willy-nilly on a whim do you know.

And I hated them with a passion because they controlled everything in our estate and they tried to get me to join as a child and into the junior wing and I had no interest whatsoever. I thought there is no way I'm going to be taking orders from these monkeys do you know. I really, really didn't like them but at one point they had warned me what they describe as anti-social behaviour and they had a really weird system that if you were involved in anti-social behaviour if they decided they wanted to punish you for it what they would do, they would send a runner round to your house around to where you hang out and there'd be some young fellow and they would come and say to me 'hey Mark'... I don't want to say the name 'big X want you around at his house at six o'clock for a punishment beating' which is like quite bizarre when I look back and it seemed normal at the time so at six o'clock that evening you would have to go by appointment to this guy's house to get beaten up do you know. And that happened to me but it also came with a warning and the warning was always the same, I had this two or three times they'd say if you are involved in any more anti-social behaviour or if you cross any of their members in any shape or form or do anything against that organisation or particularly the worst thing you do is being an informer which is instant death sentence.

But basically they say if you get involved with that again you will be killed so I had the warning a few times and at one point me and my friend got chatting to one of these guys and he was the guy that controlled their arms and ammunitions and we deliberately gotten him drunk and got him to tell us where their little stash of guns were and as soon as they told us we abandoned him and went and stole a couple of their guns and this was when we were already under threat of death if we crossed them again. So it didn't take them too long working out that a couple of their guns went and we were only children, we were fifteen or sixteen years old and we had an old derelict garage at the back of the block of sort of awful flats and it was where we hung out and we were sitting there one night and the doors got kicked open and these guys with masks and guns comes in and they were wearing masks but we knew who they were because they were all local guys. They were all older than us, we were sitting on milk crates and we had, I can't remember, one or two of their hand guns underneath the milk crates and I thought 'oh my god if they kick these milk crates and see the guns we are dead' and of course they kicked the crates over and saw their guns that we had stolen from them and they said more or less 'that's it, you are going to be executed.' And they put bags over our heads and put us in a car, kidnapped us, took us to this forest; actually they took me separately. I can't remember where they took the other guy they took me separately to this forest and in this forest where a guy who lived around the corner from me literally around the corner like a stones throw away a year or two before had been executed by these

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guys and he was only sixteen and they had shot him in the head and killed him because they thought he was an informer. So they took me to this place where this guy I knew well had been murdered a few years ago and they told me they were going to kill me and I cried and pleaded and begged for mercy and in the end they just beat me up and they said the only thing that was saving my life was because I was like fifteen years old. But the next time they let me off with a beating and they thought they said next time it didn't matter what age I was that I would be killed and that was what really ... I made my own way home from that spot but of course you don't report things to the police otherwise you get killed, not worth the risk.

Wow, that's quite something.

I had lots of run ins, actually what happened ... because I was out of control I don't know whether I should say this or not because I was so out of control and I could not stand even tough. I was like a child, I could not stand people having that level of power over me and even though this guy was wearing a mask I knew who he was, he lived two streets from me. I went around to his house and caved all his windows in with a brick and then I had to hide and six months later I had to hide because I thought I would be killed for this and six months later at two o'clock in the morning my door rocked and I opened the door and it was that guy and I looked at him and he punched me in the face and my bottom teeth went through my lips. I had to unhook my lip from my teeth and he dragged me out, put me in a car. He was drunk he said, he was on his own. It wasn't an order from the mob he was just drunk looking for some entertainment. He says 'look you and me are going to go out and do a robbery' he wanted to prise a cigarette machine that they had in those days he wanted to prise that off a wall in this little village near our town and throw it at the back of his car and he decided I was going to be his accomplice against my will so he threw me in his car to help him steal this cigarette machine but in the end it never happened. Actually we became friends, which is a bit bizarre, we started hanging out with each other.

I see, I wanted to ask you about another part of your life that most likely relates to what you just talked about. You talked with Kate about specialising in addiction when you were at university.

Yes.

Which then became part of your activist work in the community.

Yes.

Can you tell me more about the reason why you chose this specialisation?

Yes, when I was at university I was doing youth and community work and we had an opportunity to specialise in one area for our thesis and I chose alcoholism because I came from a family where alcoholism was rife. And unbeknownst to me at the time as I'm writing this thesis on alcoholism I was alcoholic do you know and it was a couple of years after that I got sober. But I kind of seen the impact of alcoholism and drug addiction had on the communities and particularly had on my family and on me and I kind of felt this need to do something about it and so when the topics come up and we were freely able to choose what area of social need to concentrate in that

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was a natural choice for me and I found it absolutely fascinating and I learnt lots and lots about addiction and when I graduated from university I had this opportunity to build a charity for recovering drug addicts and I was quite a heavy drug user at this time myself. And at one point I quit the alcohol [inaudible]; I had a serious alcohol problem but I just transferred my addiction on to drugs and it ended up, I ended up in this bizarre situation where I was ... I had built and was running a charity for recovering drug addicts but I was a using drug addict and trying to keep that secret and of course that was never going to work and our charity had been initially founded by members in the local rehab.

They decided they needed to do something in terms of aftercare so my bosses were a voluntary management committee made up from the rehab and at one point I had to go and give a chat to the patients in this hospital about what my organisation could do for him in terms of recovery but this was the absolute end of my old life, this was twenty years ago and I felt such a fraud. I felt that I was living such a lie that I couldn't cope anymore you know and I phoned up my boss and it was a Saturday morning and I had to go around and chat to these patients and I phoned up the hospital and said 'look I can't make this chat' and I had walked very, very close to the hospital but I didn't have any self-esteem left. I didn't have the courage and I couldn't look people in their eyes; I knew my life was such a sham you know and by coincidence it was one of my bosses on the management committee who answered the phone and she said 'that's okay Mark, reschedule' and I burst out crying and I said 'you don't understand I'm a drug addict I'm using drugs and I can't go on anymore.' And she admitted me that day as a patient in the rehab where I was supposed to be giving a chat which was professionally humiliating of course but it saved my life and they kept my job for me so I'd done six weeks in this rehab and when I came back, when I got out, they held this job open for me because I had sort of built this charity from ... they had had an idea and they employed me to turn the idea into a reality and it turned into this striving community and really, really successful. We raised money and bought our own building and turned it into a really big three storey social club for everyone trying to stay in recovery and it had done remarkably well and it was remarkably successful. So they held my job for me and I continued, I stayed clean. I went to narcotics anonymous and I still go to this day and they held my job for me and I ran that charity for years and years until the Crohn's disease took over and I had to let it go.

Thank you for sharing that, I guess I'd like to ask you something you mentioned earlier in the interview recognising that you have had a difficult time and you became more and more aware of the importance of love and friendship.

Yes.

Becoming the most important thing in fact for you, when would you say this realisation came about in your life?

By far the biggest and single most important influence in my life has been being on a twelve-step programme for the last nearly twenty years and I still go regularly to narcotics anonymous and when I went there they suggested that I live as a spiritual man. I was a broken man, I had a nervous breakdown when I went in that rehab and I had thirty-one years of living this life of institutions and drug addiction and all that

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pain and violence and coming from that background it was an awful, awful life where I'd achieve nothing do you know. When I got into narcotics anonymous they basically taught me there is a much better way to live your life and still live your life in love, live your life with constant thought of others to live your life as a supportive man never taking away from anyone and constantly trying to add to everyone's life and what a gift that has been, it has been remarkable, it allowed me to absolutely alter my personality from being a drain on society and a criminal and a very nasty man by all accounts, even though internally I knew there was the capability to be loving and kind and generous and tolerant and forgiving. I absolutely try to live those values every day now, every day, but when I was having that mad life they were just something that was very deep inside me so nearly twenty years and I have a lot of people that I talk to, every day I would talk to other addicts and share my experience and still every single day ... today I would get a phone call from someone who is in distress or someone who needs support or a bit of advice about how to live their lives and this helps them to stay clean do you know. And that has just opened my eyes to the amount of pain and discomfort there is in the world and it has opened my eyes to what my responsibility is in terms of my response to that, it is an absolute duty not to hurt anyone, it's very, very important to me because I understand just how difficult life is not just for me, not just for drug addicts not just for people who live that mad life, but all drug addicts. I'll be fifty next year and the older I get, the more I see that life appears to be a struggle for everyone do you know.

Relationships break down, houses get burgled, people you love die, we get old, we get ill and life is a constant struggle for just about everybody. So for me it's about trying first of all to ensure that I don't make life any more difficult for anyone and that means taking care of all the wee things but never negatively criticise anybody. It's about respecting people's choices, about respecting people's lifestyles, about absolutely live and let live and knowing that if I had their lives I would be doing what they'd done do you know, and knowing that people even if they are behaving in negative and destructive ways. They absolutely have the power if they get the opportunity to change and they are beautiful caring loving human beings because that's what I've done and I still can't believe that I've had that transformation do you know and I'm not perfect by any stretch of the imagination do you know. But when I do make mistakes these days if I get snappy with someone for instance which is quite rare these days but if that does happen or I'm having a bad day and I snap at someone I've learnt immediately just clean that up and say 'do you know what I'm really sorry it wasn't my intention to hurt you this wasn't my stuff. I acted out of ego or out of showing off or out of trying to impress you or because I felt threatened or lonely or anxious but either way this is my stuff and I apologise and in what way can I make it up to you?' and I find it is a wonderful way to live because in the twenty years I've been in recovery I have been able to live and grow and do wonderful things. I've had a book published and make films and do this art project and just do lots and lots of things, do you know? I've learnt to golf, paint build sculptures and put them in [inaudible] and just in live life in love, do you know.

Thank you, tell me about this book you published?

Oh basically a short while ago I told you that at one point I had written, as part of this decision to live life, by adding to the world instead of taking away from it I thought what can I do, what skills and recourses and knowledge do I have that would allow

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me to make a big impact if at all possible in the world? And I thought what I know best is addiction because I've been immersed in the field for so long. So I thought why not write a book on how to stop smoking and give it away free on the internet? So I wrote this book; the idea was I would put it on the internet and give it away free for a month or two and see if I could get two hundred downloads and ask for feedback so I could improve the book and so I put it online and it ran away with itself do you know. I started getting these emails from these people saying I had a little counter on various sites that I had and the offshoot is there is now 50,000 downloads and hundreds and hundreds of emails which thank me 'look I've stopped smoking, my family stopped smoking as a result of your book and blah, blah, blah and I got a publisher contacting me saying they would like to publish the book in Ireland and I said go ahead and publish it and they did but one of the conditions was that I took down the free book from the internet because it would affect their sales obviously and I thought 'well I'm not prepared to do that' so they thought 'ok we'll publish it anyway' so both books exist now there's a book in all the bookshops in Ireland the physical book and then there is this free book which has a different title on the internet.

How can we find this book if we look on the internet?

Oh the free book? Just go to download.com and type in *Stop smoking and break the chains* and the physical book is available on Amazon.

Has it got the same title?

No it's called the *Stop smoking secret* it has a different title it's been up obviously it's a lot more polished you know for the publishers it's highly edited and tuned in it's got pictures and things where the free book hasn't got any pictures just basic information on how to stop smoking but it was a kind of project that I was absolutely delighted with because in my head I wanted to give away to 200 people and maybe a few of them would stop smoking so and that would have been great so I kind of really can't believe that 50000 copies are out there and still increasing daily and it's spread across hundreds of download sites and I don't really know what the total is it's probably closer to a hundred thousand and as a result of that I got a little grant from a project called Unlimited to make a film, a stop smoking DVD and that now it's been distributed in America at a rate of about 1600 per month.

That's fantastic.

Yes I'm proud about that.

So the final part of the interview is really about asking you of any impact that came from the experience, did you feel it changed you in any way to stand on the plinth?

Yes, not in any big significant way but in that sometimes I'm a bit nervous about public stuff still do you know and I don't like public speaking and blah, blah, blah, that was quite a thing to get on that plinth particularly with such a weird project and it allows me I keep on trying to overcome I'm still full of a lot of fears and anxieties about everything and I feel that day inhibited me it usually doesn't stop me but sometimes it does stop me from pursuing big or outrageous goals that I might be criticised or made to look foolish you know I don't like that fear stop me and being on

One & Other Project

that plinth was a bit of a, a bit intimidating for me and overcoming that and getting on the plinth do you know what just keep stabbing at it because I'm doing all this stuff for the right reasons there isn't anything to fear really and that success helps me to step into the future projects you know it gives me a real sense of identity and purpose feeling part of moving forward into other projects where I think 'do you know what it's ok, feel the fear and do it anyway' do you know, I really do like stepping into fear and trying to overcome it and that was another one, I've done that lots of times and the plinth was another little run up on to that ladder where I feel that I have more power in my life yes, the short answer is yes it empowered me.

Fantastic, how about the impact on your friends and family, did it change them at all do you think?

It's difficult to tell but I try to think what would it be like if one of my friends came to me and said 'Mark you are really, really important part of my life and I love you and I have this project but it involves me taking some of your blood and it involves you writing a poem and being broadcast publicly, would you be prepared to do that?' and I thought if I was asked that I would feel closer to that person and I would feel endeared to them I would feel they are a special part of my life and these people that I asked are special part of my life so I think it cannot have helped but bond the love and friendship that we already have, all those people that have done this for me are very, very loving and supportive of people and a lot of them have had hard lives themselves do you know and came through and we are all trying to live this life of love and support and I think the One & Other project for me has helped me to move even deeper into that and helped to cement those relationships even further.

Thank you very much Mark, how has it been being interviewed today?

Again being a sort of nervous person I was a bit worried about it do you know I have an awful, awful memory as well I was thinking I'm not going to remember why I've done this project or why I went on the plinth but once I started talking about it, it all came back and it's quite once I get going obviously it's not that difficult to extract information from me I can talk when I start but it does make me a bit nervous but I'm quite glad that I've had the opportunity to revisit the project and to be reminded of just important that stuff is for me do you know I would go out in the world today a happier person and more determined refreshed and reminded that this is the way I live my life and why it is so important do you know.

Thank you very much.

You are welcomed.

END OF RECORDING