

Reuben Henry

Conversation Exchange, 25 May 2005

The public are invited for a one-to-one conversation with the artist Reuben Henry. The conversation becomes the form of the work; this begins as a potential blank canvas, yet echoes the white space of the gallery and is always tainted with the atmosphere and meaning of the institution. Reuben Henry will record and edit the conversation as a slickly multi-shot video, in which he and the public will take turns to repeat each others words. Taking ownership of his knowledge, the public will reverse their stereotypical role in the art institution, taking the stance of one who tells the artist what the work is about. Ironically, this is a situation of free expression which art in the institution aspires to, where an un-intimidated public express their views on the work.

The logical outcome is that constructive conversation will be encouraged, whereby the artist and the public work together to attain new knowledge, as this should be the ideal aim of dialogue within art institutions.

I.D.E.A.London is a continuously evolving project open to new ideas and collaborators. To join the mailing list and receive details of events, please email idealondon@gold.ac.uk.

I.D.E.A.London

Week 2: 16th - 22nd May 2005

Hi all,

Monday's meeting at the ICA was really interesting and has moved me enough to want to write this email.

Efficiency felt like a hotly contested factor at our meet: What is it to be efficient; what results are we looking for and indeed how efficiently are we exploring them. It's worth returning to what Darrel was saying: 'you can never be doing nothing'. Decisions are always being made, and it is very much in this sense that we are working. This may not feel true when we are concerned with end results, but I personally see this as detrimental to practice. So with that in mind, I wanted to write a little of what I see happening...

I'm intrigued in how you (the 1st years) have effectively dropped into this kind of practice - Tom pointed out last night that we (the 3rd years) have been working together for quite some time now and we should remain sensitive to this (how can we support this?). It's really exciting to see how we both are attempting to organise ourselves, with your suggestion of taking roles around projects, and trying to find ways of connecting ourselves better. The blindfolds served as an interesting, if (personally) slightly uncomfortable, way of focusing our attention back on the groups. I'm still a little unclear of Monday's meet: was it to participate in an open 'experiential' discussion, was it an update on progress on other projects, was it a performance, or was it an attempt to make our working more transparent?

So having made some observations I have a couple of questions, primarily they are directed at the 1st years but I don't see why anyone else can't answer.

- Do these kind of observations interest you, or are they just elaborate distractions?
- Should we refine our organisation to exploring how it's structuring itself (and its practices within I.D.E.A.London) or should we be attempting to answer what I.D.E.A.London asked 'What should the ICA be doing?'
- How can we (the 3rd years) better support this organisation? Should we be more present at meetings/activities?
- Are you (the 1st years) happy working as a collective, or would you suggest a different model?

We are meeting with David Coates from management consultancy firm Innovaro tomorrow (Thursday) at 2.30pm. It would be great if you could all join us, particularly to talk through your involvement in our organisational practices.

Best regards,
Ian

E-mail from Ian Drysdale to his collaborators at Chelsea College of Art and I.D.E.A.London.

Sarah Andrew

A Short History of Land Use in London.

These images document Sarah Andrew's ongoing engagement in the use and ownership of land in London. The works, commissioned by I.D.E.A.London for the ICA, demonstrate a preoccupation with the nature of public space and the rules imposed upon it. These overtly political works entwine a statement about the social power structures and bureaucracies in London and a careful gaze that highlights the penetration of observation and security into every corner of contemporary life. They are not a reactive addressing of a flash in the pan trend.

Sarah Andrew's concerns with social space and the urban environment relate directly to those expressed in the work of Martha Rosler, exemplified by *The Bowery* in two inadequate descriptive systems (1974-75). This series of black-and-white photographs of an area of Manhattan notorious in the 1970's for its use by homeless people, was paired with photographs of poetry-like lists of descriptive text. Like *The Bowery* the sites depicted in *A Short History of Land Use in London* are in flux.

Rosler's title suggests that no single descriptive model can adequately portray the complex dynamics, which create pockets of urban privation, of the sort represented by the Bowery in the 1970's. Sarah Andrew's images recall this struggle for a language, yet their title exposes their situation as documents. They embody a frustrated, cynical exposure of the systems that block an alternative community - eviction with a weeks notice, and a building left empty for years.

Why can't the empty spaces of galleries and redundant buildings be utilised in their times of emptiness? Are the systems in place stifling rather than nurturing a city bursting with creative potential? What are the negotiations necessary to show work in a place where a space is available, but contested?

Can a conceptual squat make its way into the reality of the gallery?

Week 3 Events

Alex Zika: *Placebo (Fast Relief)*

With the context sensitive intervention *Placebo (Fast Relief)*, Alex Zika will exemplify how public art institutions like the ICA retain and facilitate a self critical attitude and also establish a caring and responsible yet challenging relationship with the public.

During *Placebo (Fast Relief)* a person will carry a tray with pills and water around the galleries. If approached by a visitor he/she will inquire about any complaint or apprehension, offer a pill to the person and if asked, outline the working of the placebo effect. Taking its impetus from the literal meaning of the word placebo (I shall please) this work not only emphasises the dilemmas art institutions are confronted with (alternating between serving, informing, challenging and empowering the audience) but also by establishing an interpersonal contact, which formally questions the degree of empathy exchanged between individuals.

Thomas Kratz

Delivered Flowers: Begins Monday 22nd May 2005

Contemporary art seems to be tainted by an ideological anaesthesia. Is it possible to awaken it through standard ideas and gestures? How revolutionary or how simple should they be, in order to peel off the deceptive layers of this decadence? Poetry can be the answer, as its essence is to keep the echo between real and imaginary, familiar and unknown, routine and risk. *Delivered Flowers* by Thomas Kratz is an exercise of exclusive feelings and endless views.

Each week the artist will send a bouquet of flowers, to the ICA exhibition director's office, as invitation to a complete experience. Given that reality is the best appearance of contemporary art, as art has begun to produce life itself, ad nauseam, is it still possible to distinguish them? How can one negotiate between two almost identical spaces, which lost their differentia specifica? The flowers offer the necessary silence for these interrogations to have an echo.