

GI Symposium: Painting As A New Medium

Round Table: Ross Sinclair, Tom Lawson, Barry Schwabsky, David Batchelor

Chair: John Calcutt

John Calcutt: Ok. Welcome back to perhaps the most important part of the day, we're going to open up to discussion immediately. And if you could ask questions through microphone please and as much as possible if you can try and keep the questions focused upon what the speakers have individually been dealing with.

Question: This may be slightly old fashioned, but in terms of the question that came up earlier in the discussions with Francis and Ross, and the idea of amateur works and the idea of bringing in everyday the way Rauschenberg does and in the context of opening up different mediums and not thinking specifically in terms of painting.¹ How do you think you begin and do we even need to bother addressing the issue of quality?

David Batchelor: Is that addressed to anyone in particular?

Question: No, no it's not.

David Batchelor: I don't mind trying to say something, not I mean it's a good question and every artist is concerned that the work's got to be good enough to leave the studio. How you measure that it is very hard to say. And it's interesting what was said at the end of Ross talk about amateurism in his work, which was said about his work rather than by him, I try to change the materials I work with fairly regularly so that you don't become too slick, painting bottles or something, you've gotta keep learning apart from anything else, and I've always tried to, you know, in a way to reinvent the work, at least the material fabric of the work fairly regularly, while at the same time trying to keep some sense of subject which holds it together. But how do you judge if it's any good? I don't know. I mean my answer to that is a very practical

¹ The reference here is to Moira Jeffrey's article on Glasgow International, 'Portrait of a Rock Star as artist', *The Herald* (April 21, 2006) which unfavourably referred to Sinclair as an 'amatuer painter'.

one, in that if you come back the next day and it doesn't embarrass you then it might be ok. And if you come back the day after and it still makes you think a bit then maybe it's got something going for it. I don't know how else... It's got to keep me interested. That would be the first condition I would say at least.

Barry Schwabsky: I think that any quality that you can name can be good or it can be boring, but to some extent, that sort of positional, if you know what I mean, if everything around you seems very professional, then that starts to get boring and then maybe something being amateur seems really good. If everything looks amateur, then maybe something which is really slick and professional might start to look good to you. Then, you know that's, that's kind of on one phase of evaluation. Then, then there is a kind of when you've gone through a cycle like that a few times you begin to realise well, maybe there's more to it than that and then you step back and you start trying to sift out other kinds of qualities. But I think in terms of the more direct part of your question about amateurism, to kind of make that a positive quality doesn't on the face of it seem to say, 'oh well, then there's no more judgement of quality'.

Thomas Lawson: I think also something happens as that is the longer in terms of years that you're working with something the more you become concerned about the issues of how it's put together. Not exactly the quality thing because I think Barry's right that the context often dictates how you approach something I don't, but I'm certainly much more conscious of sort of working out and thinking through how something is put together than I was when I was when I was a mere slip of a lad like Ross for instance. [Laughter]

Ross Sinclair: Well I mean I was just gonna say that I mean I quite consciously actually celebrated the idea of the amateur in quite a lot of my work over the years. And in a sense, I think tried to claim that as something quite positive. But often perhaps contextualise that within a sort of working process where it's not simply the production of something amateurish but maybe in a broader sense the work takes in, in terms of an engagement with an audience, that idea that they're witnessing to some degree a kind of example, let's say of one person or one individual sort of going

through a certain route or a certain, you know, interacting with a certain group of situations or whatever, so it's in there, but it's quite self consciously modulated maybe. But maybe that stands for something that has the possibility of a more intimate connection with an audience, I found in some works. Not particularly I think with this but...

TL: Wouldn't you say it's all about 'accessibility' in a way, I mean by laying yourself open to 'here I am making this in front of you' kind of thing, you're inviting the public into the process?

RS: Yeah, definitely, in terms of the sort of dialogue which I know I, I'm always kind of interested in, it's definitely on levels of entry into things... and also I like the idea that it can be something that's not mediated by or less mediated perhaps than kinds of languages maybe aesthetic languages, maybe actual languages, whatever, it could be more of an easy connection.

DB: I've got an example of the problem of getting too good at something which is really just sad for me because it was seeing one of the William Kentridge films yesterday. Now again I love that work, that body of work is fantastic you know, but the recent film, the single screen projection, the drawing on that now was so unbelievably professional in a way, that somehow I thought the work lost something. It made me really nostalgic about those quite early collage-based animations Kentridge made... It's too good.

RS: I mean that is interesting. That whole body of work often is so interesting because there's a feeling I think, it's not so much the amateur thing, but there's a feeling of here's somebody who normally does this, doing this. And it's really quite interesting because it's informed by a whole different kind of raft of experience but channelled into another kind of medium that, in fact, reinvigorates it and explores something in it that maybe those who are more used to working in that way have kind of lost sight of.

JC: I think, as I understand it, one of the things that interested Francis McKee in framing the discussion today was this sense that in a post-media age, if we are in such, it's painting that's maintained its medium-specific demands; so it doesn't seem to be problematic for an artist to make a video, for example, whereas to move into painting, if that's not what they normally do, seems to be somehow more difficult to deal with. I just wondered in terms of this idea of accessibility, again, that it is with some idea of a sense of a confidence the audience might have in terms of what they think the artist is doing in relation to painting. I don't know if that's the case or not and I suppose one can never tell.

Question: I can't remember which one of you said it, but you were saying that when you go to [Art] school, you start off as a painter and then you go on to something else. Do you ever find it's the other way around, like people start off as a sculptor and go into painting? Can you talk about that?

DB: That's never happened in the history of western art. [Laughter] I know of many, many people, myself included, from my generation at least, I can't speak beyond that, for whom painting, and drawing obviously, was what you did and somehow you stumbled out doing something else. As for the reverse, I don't know.

BS: I have a story about that actually because my wife is an artist and she went to college actually not for art, but she studied economics and philosophy and then after working in the real world for a number of years she realised she couldn't bear that and she started making art and she went to art school and got an MFA. And she studied performance and video and she got her degree in that and she never learned anything about painting. And from performance and video she got into making sculpture and that's when I met her, when she was making sculpture and then, eventually, she started to make some paintings. And I thought I would help her out because she was very busy and so I started stretching canvases for her and she was very happy about that and one day I said to her, well do you want me to gesso the canvases for you? And she said: 'Oh no, I, I like to gesso them myself because it helps me get in touch with the canvas.' I thought, oh god, you know, they become mystics just by using the

materials, they don't even have to be taught it. So anyway but that's one who went the other way.

RS: And I can probably say in a sense with this project of mine I've kind of done that to a certain extent. Not coming out of a painting tradition and, in fact, always working in an extremely wide range of formal kind of media. To such an extent that actually, over the last few months, it's been an extreme relief to say to taxi drivers when they say: 'Oh, so what do you mate, eh?' 'Eh, I'm an artist.' 'Oh what's, what do you do then?' 'Well it's kind of big scale installations. And sometimes I'm performing and sometimes I do music in them as well.' 'What!?' But this time I can say: 'Oh, painting. I'm doing a painting show.' 'Painter, yeah?' So that was kind of different.

JC: As I was saying earlier, it does seem me its kind of interesting or it's quite difficult, it seems to me, to talk about painting without somehow its kind of history and position coming in tow. But I don't know whether it's possible to answer this Ross but whether in that sense when you are working on those pieces, do you feel a kind of responsibility to painting in the abstract, in the general?

RS: Not responsibility, but I mean a definite attempt to try to better understand the immense power and force of the kind of canon of works which, interestingly, everyone has broadly been kind of touching on today. And I suppose in general and in my own work perhaps as I mentioned earlier, as youthful desires to change the world change into middle aged spread or something, a sort of reappraisal for me of well here's a strategy that I've been trying for a decade or two decades or whatever and I'd really like to think about could another way to do it [exist] that could be much simpler or, or just different to look at the properties and in that sense, the I mean there is incredible allure to the works mentioned, you know broadly speaking circa late 50s or whatever, into the 60s where, I mean, for me, the certainty and the confidence and the sheer thinking knowing-your-rightness of them all at that point is in a sense again a sort of broadly discussed, you could say after that point, it's the sort of squelching sideways a bit and it's the no longer linear progressing, it's everything bubbling up in

a big sort of cloud rather than in any kind of line. So in a sense, going back to just before the cloud and at the end of the road sort of thing and seeing what the shape of that was somehow and to see at that moment when those things changed of like probably say a hundred years of modernism into something else and where nothing was so certain again. So I don't know that's sort of a bit of a rambling reply.

BS: Here's my question for you... In order for it to be a good work of art, does it have to be a good painting? Or can it be good work without having to be good painting?

RS: It's a good question. I think in terms of the painting part of that, perhaps I can't answer that. For the other part of it, I think it can have a certain,... it can do quite a lot of the things I hoped it would do, but as to the other part, the good painting part, that's more difficult, I don't really have an answer for that yet maybe.

TL: I want to actually get back to three questions ago or something, but continue answering off all of them. Because I think that the majority of art students as they come into art school do think of painting as being their primary activity, I mean there's always gonna be some who have a three-dimensional imagination, but the majority of them think of painting. And then what happens at art school is that their eyes are opened to this history, certainly since the 60s, of a visual culture and an art practice that puts a great deal of pressure on that idea of painting as central and, you know, they kind of see a history develop of all these sort of gestural activities aimed at reframing the argument, pointing to different possibilities, opening up the field, all that kind of stuff. And of course, that gets much more interesting so you begin making other kinds of art work. Once you're doing that, then I think it's possible to make fairly sort of abrupt, non-complex paintings as gestural statement in terms of its larger argument about what art is. And those paintings can be good enough to make the point, so that would be 'good paintings'. And that's sufficient as long as you're interested in having that argument about the broader field of art, but then what I find is that after a time, you're no longer interested in that gestural statement and you develop a more coherent and complex body of work or see someone do that. Then the danger oddly enough is something that you [DB] pointed to where you become too

craft-oriented or something and lose touch with the live wire that animated it so I mean it's a tremendously complicated thing. I'm in a bit of jet-lag fog, I think it was in *The Guardian* or *The Independent* review two days ago, about Werner Herzog shooting a film [*Rescue Dawn*, 2006] on the Thai border and he's been financed by Hollywood who have provided him with a full on Hollywood staff and he and his small cadre of film-makers, who he has always worked with, are at war with this huge group of Hollywood specialists. He's doing a fictional version of a film he's already made – a documentary - and he just wanted to keep the truth and kind of 'in-the-moment' really and the Hollywood guys well just can't deal with the fact that he's not willing to have big explosions and frame it that way, and so it was a real example of that tension between high craft and idea.

DB: Which is also a tension which animates the whole idea of modern art...

TL: Yeah.

DB: ... Academic skills and sort of virtuoso technique to no obvious end at all other than to show off its own virtuosity. I mean that's Manet and everything. And, in a way, somehow, in some strange form I think it is still with us.

BS: When you bring up the Hollywood thing it also brings up the economic aspects as well, and, you know, what you might have to kind of trade in to get certain kinds of means, you know, at your disposal. And that maybe is a way for me to segue to something that I wanted to ask about is a generalisation that we haven't talked about and I was wondering whether it had come up and in this whole question about what the relation of the market is to painting or painting is to the art market. I mean can we sort of generalise and say that there is kind of two there's two economic structures, more or less, in the art world that are complimentary but are semi-distinguished, there is a market economic structure and the institutional structure; if you make installations you're working for the institutional economical structure, and if you make paintings you're working for the market economic structure - if you have any economic

structure at all, which most artist don't, then you have a teaching job. What do we think about that I guess is what I want to know? Does it mean anything?

TL: Well it does mean something and also its complex and contradictory because those two structures tend to have different meanings.

BS: But they always meet eventually.

TL: They meet but in some ways it can be difficult. I mean certain bodies of work get misunderstood because they're thought to belong to one system when in fact they are the other somehow, or not seen as part of something it is.

JC: It is complicated but I was thinking when Ross was showing work from *Real Life*, the market stall piece, I was thinking about this question which has run through the day to an extent, about the studio and the gallery and the museum, and the way in which certainly I suppose, traditionally, historically the museum has tended to encourage a particular form of contemplation-relationship with the work which is somehow at times transcendent, whatever, but is always I guess fighting against those other kinds of experiences everyday. I'm thinking about an essay by Homi Bhaba where he makes the distinction between aura and the agora of the market place, the work having to negotiate those two incommensurable pulls upon it.

Question: Can I ask a question? I would like to make a comment, I would like to congratulate David on acknowledging the contribution of women in the field and making direct reference to two of them, so thank you. And what I'm about to say circles back to the argument of mastery and whether having mastery maybe means of perhaps a quite limited practice I guess and that's also in reference that he said this morning about the constrains of the studio and what's implied by working in the studio. Without being too general little girls you know how to sit down and be good and that's partly by their nature and partly by their nurture and boys have and some girls have a tendency to learn better kinesthetically through their cognitive set-up, also hormonally, and through their socialisation

as well. Some boys and girls though, aren't that good at sitting still and they need to move and be better prepared with tactile things and they learn with their body and they interpret and understand the world by their lived experience, rather than what's said through a book or by a teacher. Now, these people are a little bit different because they're in the minority, or they're not in the majority, and these days it's been problematized through to A.D.D.. But that sort of artist, that sort of person may grow up to be an artist and they may not be able to settle into a small studio space or to a studio practice and may be better making interactive or civic art that invites people through their lived experience to understand and to learn and to grow up and in that way one might change the world, not through a single brush stroke, but through someone else's single brush stroke when they have been inviting to participate in the art making experience, or though they might not understand religious experience but understand they might understand the lived experience of spirituality through singing a song. And yeah sure, I mean I think of my work on the walls and they might be taken seriously but, and I can paint but I'm not sure whether that's the only way to be accepted and the only way to be running with the big boys, cos we're a long time dead, I guess. And I don't know if you need to be a master painter to have mastery of art practice.

RS: I mean I think generally to just respond to that I mean when I, when I talk to the students that I work with, one of the things that sometimes I try to discuss with them is that I feel that one of the I mean in a sense it's just generally speaking, being an artist is generally quite a tough sort of gig and you know for everybody at any level anywhere, and you know nobody asks you to be an artist, nobody particularly wants you to be an artist and everyday you have to get up and sort of make that decision again, particularly if you use kind of different medium and maybe don't have that you know, mastery of one particular thing where you just go back to that again and again. And I think that you know the incredibly exciting thing about being a visual artist, I feel personally, is that one can access all manner of different formal media, and yeah you could say 'jack of all trades master of none' - and I'd probably hold my hands up

for that to a certain extent - but the fact that you can use two dimensional things, painting three dimensional sculpture, work with spaces, use sound, light, all these things are in, available in the talent let's say, and it just seems to me there are, there isn't really another kind of contemporary medium you know even theatre whatever, where that sort of that possibilities are available to somebody to, you know express themselves most broadly. So, you know I think that's, you know it's tough every morning you have to get up and invent it all again, but you know, there's the level of freedom there I think potentially also where you know all this stuff is out there and I think it's extremely important that artists keep being artists because it seems to me in the contemporary world today let's face it, the idea of one voice having something to contribute is incredibly valuable. And you know to keep that at as a sort of cherished thing I think is very important. I'm just kind of responding really to what you're saying.

Question: Yeah sorry it's on a completely different subject but it's really if you could talk about good painting made me think of *Animal Farm* or something like that, but I was wondering if each of the panel could in less than 50 words give an example of a good painting and why?

DB: I'd like to convert that into my favourite painting. I don't know I mean that, again one of the, one of the things that keeps me artist is so rich and so complex a subject, that you can keep coming back and there's nothing in the world, apart from some private things and music perhaps, that I've found I can go back to every day of my life and found out something new from it, even if I'm looking at the same thing. I mean last week I saw a Zurbarán still life, absolutely blew me away.² It's four or five simple jars on a shelf with a blank background. There's almost nothing there, and yet, actually to quote, oddly, Greenberg 'there's a world of experience in there'. And I couldn't actually say how that was the case, but I know that it was the case. And because you can't actually explain it to yourself, that's why you do get up in the morning, as Ross was saying and start it all over again the next day. A Zurbarán still life for me, but that's just today.

² Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664), *Still Life with Pottery Jars*. Oil on Canvas; 46 x 84 cm; Museo del Prado, Madrid.

JC: I know in my case it's almost as if you don't have one particular consistent set of values. I mean there are certain works for example I mean, in my case, that I like, but I don't think are very good and there are other ones I think are good, but I don't particularly like. We were just talking, as it turns out, about Jasper Johns. I think Jasper Johns is good, but I don't particularly like. Well maybe then it's in part just to do with this question of quality, where quality resides. Are we looking broadly at some kind of intellectual quality of some kind of sensual aesthetic quality. One of the things that I suppose we were saying about Johns is I can appreciate what I think is happening in those paintings but there is something about it which is a bit somehow programmatic - it's a bit painting by numbers, or as David was saying, it's kind of painting for art historians.

TL: It's such a complex question because you keep seeing different things. There's a painting by Laura Owens, it's a large painting, bisected by a tree branch in winter. And on the ground there are spring flowers, in the tree there's an owl, in the background there's a monkey and there are some other sort of displaced objects all around it.³ The painting looks very casual, it's done in oils and enamel paints. It has this tremendously spontaneous, childlike feeling to it. It's actually very, very heavily worked and considered and altered; there's a whole series of studies that lead up to it, which when you see, you realise how complex it is. I think any favourite painting or any good painting, or any good work of art has this sort of complex layering of strategies of thinking about what is going on in the work before it gets finished and then the finished product elicits a similar series of complex responses in return.

BS: I should also admit, this is not like my favourite painting or anything, the question about is good painting good art that I asked, actually goes back to a conversation I had with an art historian/art theorist called Thierry De Duve and it was about the painting *Tu m'* by Duchamp; he said that it was a bad painting, but a great work...

³ Laura Owens, *Untitled*, 2004. Oil and acrylic on linen 11' x 9'3". 335 x 282 cm.

TL: ... I just saw it on Saturday and he's right. It's a terrible painting.

BS: ... And I said, I don't know if I can accept that. If it's a great art work and it's a painting, then somehow or other, it must be a good painting too, even though I may not be able to see why. So I don't know about that, you know, you're probably right really...

DB: He is.

BS: ... But I can't quite fathom it in my mind. If the same thing is a painting and an art work, then if it's good as one then I want it to be good as the other. If it's bad as one, I want it to be bad as the other. But maybe I can't have it that way... My favourite painting is definitely *Jupiter and Io* by Correggio in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and I think it's because really I'm very, very interested in physical, sensual pleasure and to me that's the painting that captures what that is about in its most ungraspable essence.⁴ Because you know if you know the painting, you know the subject, you know that's it's a painting about a woman who's having sex with a cloud and so she's kind of having this incredible orgasm or, but you can't see what's giving her that feeling but the painting kind of makes you feel like you know why she's having the feeling, even though you can't see what that is. And so it kind of turns physicality inside out in a very moving way.

JC: I think part of the difficulty with the question is that there's a Tom Stoppard play, I think it might be called *Professional Foul*, where there's a philosopher talking to his wife and it's something like... He says: 'Good day Mary. How are you?' And she says: 'Good'. And he says: 'You're a good woman, and you're a good cook.' Good means so many different things that it's very difficult to argue.

Question: I was wondering, really thinking about your paintings Ross, how you were saying that in oil painting it never felt the sublime for yourself and also when you were sort of making work sort of churches and coming from that sort

⁴ Antonio Allegri Correggio (1489-1534), *Jupiter and Io* (1531-32). Oil on canvas, 163.5 x 70.5 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

of atheist background. And I think I was wondering where you feel the sort of importance or power lies in those works when you are accessing things which you don't personally subscribe to and what room is left in making works like that for aesthetics?

RS: Well to respond to the first part, I mean the very reason that I don't believe in God, let's say, is the very reason that I want to kind of try to find out where that power resides in the formal accumulation of things like hymns, for example. These words in relation to the melody or whatever that are so powerful formally that they could almost induce me to have faith but the intellect is always too strong. But nevertheless, I can see that they're so powerful that I really want to explore and find out and almost try to be converted, let's say, or to expose myself as much as possible. And really when I'm, for example in these works, when I'm singing these songs let's say or making a video when I'm singing these songs, I mean it's not like a show or an act or something, I've really kind of spent a long time, you know, researching and looking at it, and learning them and reading them and immersing myself in it quite truly. I'm not kind of kidding on, it's not ironic, let's say, which is often what some people sort of throw at me. And, also I would say similarly with this show it's not ironic, from my perspective anyway. In terms of aesthetics, I don't know, I mean I suppose basically I come from a tradition of work which is ideas driven as was discussed a moment ago, I think Tom touched on it, so I tend to, you know, try to find the tools in the tool box that best..., they can allow me to you know build whatever it is I want to try to construct. And with the idea of the sublime as well, maybe it's not that I don't, I don't accept it or don't like it or anything, I just, I feel kind of personally at a kind of loss because I..., I don't get it, I don't feel it. I mean a couple of years ago, I went to the Rothko Chapel in Houston and I was really kind of open to be really moved and everything, and I just kind of wasn't really. And I could see it, and I could put all the bits of it together and I could sort of respond to a lot of it, but the magic moment didn't kind of happen, the sort of Road to Damascus moment. And although I haven't really thought about it that much, I mean it could be that that experience actually for me, informed a bit of this, 'cos I've been thinking about this project for a few years, and I have developed it in different ways, I've tried out

different things. So I'm not, or I don't want to be dismissive, I feel I'm trying to find it for myself. I'm trying to see where that moment could be, or revelation, or change, but I just always feel that the my mind is, for me anyway too, not too strong, but I can't overcome the kind of mechanics of thinking about it in a way. But maybe that's my loss [mock tears].

Question: I'm not really sure how to ask this question, but I'm wondering if it would be possible to talk a bit about what appears to be the proliferation of representational painting at the moment or the relatively small amount of abstraction being made at the moment, or do you think that's even, now, at the moment, a useful distinction to be making - or a useful thing to talk about?

DB: It's not a distinction I make when I'm looking at a painting or any art. But I know a man who does. I know, for example, someone like Nick Serota, or maybe someone like John Latham, seems to divide the world between figurative painting and abstract painting and everything sort of divides along that fault line. It just doesn't for me because of so much work which seems indifferent to those divisions. And there doesn't seem to be anything, for me, at stake in that division now, but there clearly was for other generations of critics and artists.

Question: If it doesn't for you, when did it stop. Was it because at the certain point it stopped being possible or interesting to make that distinction?

DB: I mean I love abstract art, I really do and I'm enormously looking forward to the Kenneth Noland show that's coming up at Tate Liverpool because he's clearly still the most unfashionable artist in the universe I think. And it always feels slightly old fashioned to say that I love abstract art. Very quickly I want to withdraw my Zurbarán thing from before otherwise you'll think I'm just into bottles. Instead I'm going on an Eva Hesse drawing for my 'take home' work for today because there's almost, almost nothing there.

JC: Yeah, Barry do you have a response to Louise [Hopkin]'s question?

BS: Yeah,... my thought, as I've tried to give an indication before, is I think these days, which is different from what I thought for a long time. You know before I kind of thought more or less like what he said, you know, it doesn't matter anymore, that, you know, there are too many kind of grey areas and hybrids in between and there's no, no divide. And I still think that there's no divide. But I also have come around to the idea that to talk about the distinction between abstract and representation isn't quite right, because actually representation isn't even it, representation to me belongs to a historical era that's kind of closed. And it means something very different to me to say image, than to say representation. And I think that for a while it did somehow seem important to a lot of people to deal with images, and that's something that I sort of want to try and get to understand better. I don't have, you know, a kind of set position on it, this is kind of project of mine I want to look into. Whereas before I thought that, well, today representational painting is already really abstract anyway. Now I think today, abstract paintings are really already images. So it's sort of switched over.

TL: I would add just some sort of local - different locality but local... Amongst the painters who are pretty visible at the moment in Los Angeles, quite a number of them work within an abstract-looking mode which is in fact sort of tightly woven with image and representation and language, and, you know, someone like Monique Prieto switches back and forth, Ingrid Calame looks like abstraction but they're really heavily constructed images. I don't think you can say there's a divide exactly.

DB: That does bring up something that I'm often reminded of... Monique Prieto, Ingrid Calame was mentioned, also Linda Besemer and Polly Apfelbaum, a lot of those artists are people working in the States. And there is a curious thing that whereas traditionally abstract art was seen as the preserve of men, it seems very prominently an art engaged in by women, and it has been for the last ten or so years. I don't have any explanation for that at all.

JC: Do, do we have any more questions?

Question: I just wanna pick up on that a little bit, I mean there are probably two, three themes that, you know, at least I have picked up from today from all those presentations that we had. And I think you know take the last one, like when abstraction and representation actually fall together because it was part of, I think you called it, the image reality anyhow. Somehow I feel this is probably the end to something like a struggle which has driven or which was the motor for a lot of discourse going on among artists and in the art world. And then there is another theme, both Ross and Tom mentioned that actually, saying I think something like: 'I use painting as a strategy'. Is there actually all of a sudden a need to have a strategy in order to, well, feel you are allowed to paint?

TL: I think actually my position is I think that was the case, but I'm not so sure it is anymore. That I think we've passed the period of strategizing and entered some other area.

BS: Is the 'we' there a generational 'we' or is there more to 'we'.

TL: Probably generational, but I'm reluctant to speak for a generation. And I certainly can't speak for more than that.

DB: You can't even speak for yourself. [Laughter]

RS: I think for me it probably is still a strategy which sounds bad because you've moved on from that [Laughter]. But again, for me it's about some idea of communication, dialogue, engaging and I'm still personally always really thinking about an audience and again, it was touched I'm not sure by whom, the sort of expectations and the ways of entering into works and in a sense, you know, I've, again I'm only speaking for myself, but never taken an easy route formally in terms of making things which would be generally pleasing to people, let's say, to kind of - even as a strategy - to, you know, reel them in a bit you know. So maybe for me it is still somewhere operating on that level. Because I think actually for me everything's

a strategy really, because I'm so interested in at least an aspiration to this sort of dialogue, I'm always trying to think around everything, the whole shape of it, maybe too much.

BS: You can't do anything without a device. You can lean to love the device. But it's not a question about painting, really, it's about just doing anything.

JC: Do we have what will probably be the final question?

Question: It's a question concerning a phrase that you used earlier Barry that was a Borges term about the aesthetics of philosophy. And I guess my question is, is there some kind of intellectual evolution and absorption via the information that we all take in general through visual culture and media culture, is there some sort of kind of fusion that really traditional aesthetic experience of beauty and rapture and sensuousness combining with some sort of aesthetic experience of ideas and philosophies and intellectual concepts that is kind of informing what, if there is such a thing as an avant-garde right now and if that is being played out through painting. Is that idea of some type of new avant-garde relevant to painting and is that idea of the aesthetics of philosophy - I don't know exactly much about - how does that factor in I guess, or maybe could you even just expand on that a bit.

BS: Yeah, I don't know. I think there's a couple of parts to what you've asked and I'm not exactly sure how they relate. I mean there is one question about the idea of an avant-garde and I have to say that that's not a concept that I think has a lot of relevance to our current situation, even though I have a great love for much of what was done by the avant-gardes of the time when I can see why it made sense to want to be avant-garde. But I think that our situation is just too different now to kind of share that. Right that's the one part, then the other part is about looking about philosophical students aesthetically vis-à-vis Borges and I guess I'm not sure exactly what your question was about that.

RS: Can I just say, I was just thinking as you were asking that it made me think that at first I thought you were just sort of describing quite a straightforward model of modern art, kind of thing, with these two, you know, let's say the formal and the intellectual sort of thing, broadly speaking. But what it made me just think of really when you related it to painting, that I feel it's important that painting shouldn't simply assume it has a privileged position in that sort of canon anymore. And part, I suppose again for me, part of the reason for doing this show really was to try to test that to see if it could still earn its crust in some way, or could it be a conceptual tool, and you know these are just questions for me obviously that come out of my own practice. But I think that's important to consider, you've got to make it work and whether I do in the show or not is another question, but generally speaking, I think it should be interrogated and tested and not just assumed to do anything really just as it shouldn't be assumed now by sticking it in the white cube then, you know, it makes it art, let's say, or does all the things you're implying.

BS: Look, if I go to Venice and I look at the Bellini painting of 'The Virgin and Child' then whatever it is I take from the painting, I don't have to take on board the theology that Bellini was sort of promoting through painting the painting, even though I have a general sense about what that is and I use that as part of my interpretive material, so to speak, but when I have an aesthetic experience with the Bellini painting I'm not having an experience of Catholicism. And when I go to the Museum of Modern Art and look at a Mondrian painting...

DB: You don't become an amateur theosophist.

BS: ... I become neither a theosophist nor whatever it was that he became maybe later on in his life. And I understand his ideas about the relationship of art and society and all that, but I don't have to accept them in order to appreciate the paintings even though the more I know about them the more I understand the paintings. And I think the same thing is true when I appreciate the work of a conceptual artist. There are ideas that that person has about what the work is and about why they're doing it, and it's a whole philosophy and ideology that they have around how they've arrived at

doing just, whether it's Joseph Kosuth or whoever it is, and my appreciation of the work doesn't entail me taking on board his ideology. Even though the work hardly seems to be made of anything else but that, you know, strangely enough. And I guess that's sort of related to what I mean in my reference to Borges. In the same sense whether Ross' work you wanna see as these paintings here and are they good paintings, or if you wanna see it as a broader project in which the paintings are devices that are just part of the project, in either case somehow I have to come to terms with the in cognisance of his sort of philosophy about why he's doing what he's doing, but somehow the work kind of gets clear of that too I think.

Question: It needs you to participate.

BS: Well it needs somebody, yeah. Yeah it needs the other person and that's why it needs the public situation that it has.

JC: Could I maybe perhaps ask a final question I think it is, is the very long, intense, fascinating day, but there is a question I would like to ask each of the panel members. If it turns out to be too broad, too vague, too difficult just say so and we'll just finish it there [Laughter], but I suppose my question is, throughout the day you've been thinking about, talking about, considering the, I suppose the testing and the problematizing of painting, and I suppose my question is whether that testing and problematizing has had such a qualitative effect, if you like, that when we speak of painting today we are speaking of something which is kind of different, that is to say that we are talking about painting as a new art?

TL: Substitute the word art for painting and I think I can go along. It is difficult to say. On the face of it is absurd to say that painting's a new medium,... so it's a little difficult. But I think it is true that it is now commonplace that everything is up for questioning and examination and interrogation as to why it exists and that's why it should be considered in an art context as in some other. And so within that everything is up for grabs. Therefore older versions of art making which were once thought to be in the past are potentially viable again because they are part of that question.

DB: I've got a slightly simple way of answering, or referring to your question not answering it. I think in a way I guess that every time you go to the studio you have to reinvent the medium at some level. And yet the extraordinary thing about painting is that every time you do that you've got 500 years *at least* of the practice of painting breathing down your neck. And it's a very strange relationship to try and do something which is at one level new and at the other level ludicrously ancient.

RS: That's true,... can I say what my favourite paintings were, I never got to say [laughter]. I was going to slightly cheat actually, I want two; because while I was sort of thinking about this for the last... *years* actually I sort of imagined this sort of room with two paintings in it - Robert Ryman and Ad Reinhardt - all white and all black. But, of course, the key thing about them which just makes it work is imagining the space between them but, of course, one is neither all white and the other it's, it's not all black but it's in that space that I wanted to place my head, sort of, while I was thinking about all these things.

DB: Bravo.

BS: Bravo.

TL: Thank you all for coming.

JC: I will not attempt to summarize. All I will do is ask you please to join me in thanking our panel: Ross Sinclair, Thomas Lawson, Barry Schwabsky, David Batchelor.

[Applause]

END