
Art & The Political Seminar: Part 1

Group discussion

Summing up (Craig Richardson)

Shall I attempt a summing up? Okay.

Justin Carter talked about ‘solutions’ and defined the artist as responsible for their environment, either in defining a project through an examination of an oversight (explored using a multiplicity of representations including maps, photographs etc) or for greater care in their individual actions. His work provides models which use personal economic gain to affect environmental gains.

Dominic Hislop discussed some of the social issues arising within a transforming social order, in this case Budapest, but showing similar problems experienced within other European capitals. I thought we might be seeing ‘Eco-art’ in this case it’s ‘Economic art’. In his work he analyses the insidious role of commercial activity upheld by their easy access to public space or the public displays of aggressive political parties. These powerful messages are then diluted by his interventions, rather than intercepted or negated. To conclude, his work amounts to an identification of a ruling authority and takes the form of an adjustment, amelioration, or a moderation of that message.

Chad McCail makes work in which Utopia is imagined, but says ‘I’m not a Utopian.’ His works are a visualisation of an ideal world, and depict elements of non-conformity presented as delightful, unthreatening and uncomplicated. I looked for an element of cynicism within the works, but, and this is a cheesy comment, found the works dealt with society’s cynicism for just such a pursuit.

Oliver Ressler continued with his presentation at the GFT this morning. How can it be summed up? I can find no better way than to describe the works presented as a renewal of socialist ideals. They advocate new political power structures and alternatives to the economic models we live with. It included many representations of the individuals within these realities, and furthermore activates the power of such dreams, such as in plans for a dystopic privatised prison, or in the real world, through new constitutions, such as now in Venezuela.

Do we have a question for our speakers?

Klaus Jung: Can I start with something, I mean just an observation that actually comes from when you spoke, summing it up, I don’t know if it’s true, I feel that all the four presentations in the end have - I don’t mean it in a bad way, it’s interesting - Chad was speaking about propaganda and asking about propaganda, but it’s not an

upfront propaganda like, I mean, the right-wing imagery, you know, which is really up into your face. There's nearly a kind of poetic quality here, and just linking that back to this question that you raised in the beginning, you know, about effectiveness of this kind of work. Is it actually more effective through this kind of poetical touch in it, or is it actually less effective through it?

Craig Richardson: Sorry, I'm gonna ask you a question about your question.

KJ: (Laughing.) Go ahead.

CR: Do you mean by that, that the alternative to this kind of political approach is a much more documentary approach – is that what you mean?

KJ: A documentary approach, a more drastic statement, you know? Let's, I mean, just sort of thinking about the interviews with the workers in Venezuela, you know, although it has this, you know, happiness and social justice and things like this, but it comes across in a completely different way than I was used to, you know, what political propaganda could be, but I'm still wondering about this question – is it effective, is it more effective through that?

Ross Sinclair: I suppose though, to further ask a question about your question before. (Laughing.) Just to sort of clarify this notion of 'effective' – effecting what?

KJ: ... Political change.

RS: ... Political change, or a personal change with somebody who might see the work, or a social change in a sort of broader sense which, perhaps, Oliver was kind of pointing at? ... Which, I suppose, goes back to an idea of what, you know, what's the purpose of a political art and it's sort of like, you then go back to what's the purpose of art, generally? You know, so what's the purpose of a *political* art? But sorry, that's sort of digressing, but just to try and define that question, 'cause I think it's important.

KJ: Hmm.

RS: I've just made it more complicated, so. (Laughing.)

KJ: Naturally, most helpful.

CR: I mean, I think that's a good question to ask the four artists who have spoken and perhaps if they can each give us an answer? I mean, again, it's a big question, it's a big subject to do and you've dealt with it very well, so in a way it would be interesting to hear the response to Klaus's question.

Chad McCail: Well you try and change people's minds, don't you? I mean you don't try and change a society's mind, you try to change a series of individuals... I'm less inclined, now, to make billboard art. I sat and watched people looking, or not looking at things that I'd put up in the street, and I felt, as well, that they, when you put things up in the street, it's kind of, I don't know, you're kind of, I don't know, I think it's hard to make work that works outside. I think that, I mean I used to think that you had to, that really, it was much better to make everything public and in the street and not

to use the gallery at all and the gallery was a really elitist audience and then it didn't work that well. I'm not sure – now I'm less certain about that kind of, I'm not sure whether people really look at things closely. They see them quickly in the street, but I'm not sure whether they give them any thought. But then you can only do something very quick in the street. You can't do anything that has a lot of depth, and maybe that it's actually depth that you want.

Ken Neil: Well I think Dominic's very subtle and poetic intervention with the tampering of the distances on those signs, to have what could be seen as a very conventional encounter with that individual chancing across it, almost asking the question in one's head, 'is this just for me?' Looking around, is this right? You kind of point at a deep the relationship with that because of the element of surprise, which could have a poetic significance on the level of personal politics. I think that's one thing that stands out, for me today, the difference between that kind of political interest and, perhaps, Oliver's more expansive revelation of high level political corruption and deviance and so on. So one, perhaps, appears to a wide range of people with big impact, and the other one individuals; subtle, powerful poetics. So maybe to answer Klaus's question indirectly, *effectiveness* could be of a similar magnitude, but personal, just as it could be, mass.

Dominic Hislop: I think, also, political change comes through different fields. I'm not sure that can be a realistic ambition of an artwork – to change society. Perhaps it can just show solidarity with other movements working towards some social change. Maybe the art functions more just as a kind of solidarity.

RS: But I suppose that goes back to an idea, is that actual or metaphoric or poetic? As Chad sort of mentioned. Maybe with that work with the distances one, it's, there's something about that in, I suppose in a metaphoric way, indicates this sort of individual voice in close proximity with this, you know, trans-national corporation. You have this certain way you describe it, you discuss it, there's the evidence of this individual, you know, making this alteration and having a dialogue, in a sense, with this beast sort of thing, there's something about that that's quite interesting, which kind of comes out of the form of it somehow, and the ridiculous sort of exactitude you sort of placed on it, you know. Plus the sort of predictable illustration that most of the distances are like three times less than they really are sort of thing, but, again, just to sort of keep chasing that question of what's the thing that's... making somebody think differently, or, I don't know, what's the value somehow, or how can we identify that more? I mean, I sense maybe Oliver - I'm sorry I didn't see it this morning, so I'm only looking at this one – but what's kind of interesting in looking at the bits that I saw was that it's almost like you take this sort of classic sort of left strategy of, you know, exposing through the various means, what's really going on, let's say, but to do that now, it's almost become completely out of, you know, vogue, nobody seems to be interested in that anymore, artists and sort of cultural workers, let's say. It's almost a strategy from the past, but when you kind of employ it now, in these situations, it really kind of refocuses how there's not been a really radical change in those relations over thirty years, since let's say, the late 60s – it's still really the same, you know? In terms of what mediated channels of information are kinda 'telling us', you know, against what's actually happened, you know, as you kind of illustrate with the film.

CR: Justin, you know, the question was about effectiveness of political art.

Justin Carter: It's something that I was actually gonna talk about if I had had more time, and made a few notes on, but I think it does come down to the way in which you kind of, how you measure it. Kind of in the same way that Ross was talking about, but also, you know, the measuring could be done in the short term or the long term, as well. I mean, the idea of, coming back to Oliver's work, the idea that, in a way, he wasn't perhaps set up in order to put the kind of counter argument down in a short term way, the work was more produced in a long term manner, and maybe in that sense, has more of a long term effect. And, in a way, at what point do you measure it? You know, I mean, I always ask myself the question when I'm making something, are the means gonna justify the ends? Is the use of paint or plastic or wood gonna, you know, am I gonna counterbalance that in what the work says or what the work might do? So I think part of the question, or part of the answer, for me is, being an artist, you don't, or perhaps you shouldn't know what the outcome is gonna be. You don't exactly know what work you're gonna make and what effect it's gonna have. I think, perhaps, there are ways and strategies that you can develop which are maybe more simple or more understood from the point of the idea to the inception of the work. You know what's gonna happen and you know what the outcome might be, but I think it's not particularly the way I work. There's an element of surprise and uncertainty.

CR: Dominic, in a sense I think you responded to Klaus.

DH: Well just maybe to talk about that particular work, the *Distance Correction* that someone mentioned, like, the intention of it was not to make a direct statement and it was to be received as something quite confusing. I didn't want it to be easily defined as this is a defacement of an existing billboard, and I didn't want it to be seen as like advertising or art. So I felt it operated best being that indefinable position, and therefore, the viewer would go away without being able to categorise it and maybe think about it a bit more and sort of just, if that was the question? (Laughing.)

KN: I think that's very interesting – so, in a sense, you could see it as sort of doubly defiant? It defies conventional categories of art making somehow, and it also tells the individual who is lucky enough to meet it, that they too can be defiant in a sense, and they too own some things which most people just leave alone. So you can take possession somehow. In that way, that very subtle work is surprisingly liberating, and maybe some of Oliver's revelations are perhaps cementing cynicism. Yes, power corrupts, but what next? Maybe yours is subtly dealing with the kind of a double strategy of defiance. I'm struck by that work, needless to say.

Oliver Ressler: I think I can only revise the question of effectiveness in relation to specific projects, sorry, I'm not able to answer it in general. You mentioned the Venezuela works – I think this is a situation because the Venezuelan people who appear in the videos are already so politicised, which is completely incomparable to any other country in the world. In Venezuela you can almost ask anyone, for example something about the constitution or a certain laws or political programs and the people will start to talk in a reflective way about it which is completely unimaginable in other states. So there is already an existing discourse on a high level, and when I as an European artist travel there, then I am not in the position to deliver them something or try to provoke them in a way, but I think it makes more sense to listen to people

and record the amazing changes. It is important to make these experiences available in different formats, so that other people can maybe learn from it. The effectiveness, maybe can be seen then on how it is functioning to make this special knowledge available. But I have different strategies with other projects – one project I did not present in the morning was a project about a detention centre in Vienna – it's a collaborative project with Martin Krenn which already goes back to 1997 and brings into focus something such as detention centres for asylum seekers in Austria which are actually located in the inner city of Vienna, but nevertheless almost invisible from the public gaze. They are hidden behind nice, newly renovated facades of historical houses. But behind these facades there are prisons for people who are only there because they tried to migrate to the European Union, and at this time, 1997, I tried to intervene in a way that this issue becomes visible, that it comes in media from certain perspectives, which are usually not being discussed in the media. In this case, there are really two levels of foreigners – the tourists on the one hand, and the asylum seekers and migrants who have no rights on the other hand. And this system of exclusion can be described as a kind of state racism. Through the term of state racism, or institutional racism, we tried to bring in another aspect into this discussion, which is usually “only” focusing on human rights violation. In order to bring it back to a visibility we installed a kind of cube in front of the Viennese State Opera, where it was visible for two months, addressing the issue of state racism on the top of an image from the façade of the detention centre. So in this case effectiveness was to bring certain aspects into public discourse. But if you were to do the same work next year or so, it would not make a lot of sense to do the same thing again, because the political discourse about this issue also changed. So I would be forced to find a complete new artistic strategy to deal with this situation and issue. Effectiveness depends on the context of the sphere of society in which you try to intervene. There is an Austrian group, I don't know if it is known here in Great Britain, which is called Wochenklausur, and they have a very precise definition of effectiveness. I do not really agree with it, but if the argument comes to effectiveness in Austria, it is almost impossible to avoid discussing Wochenklausur. For those people who don't know Wochenklausur, they did and do different interventions, one of them was, for example, to create a kind of hotel for prostitutes in Zurich in Switzerland. So the effectiveness in this case was to reach an aim they precisely defined from the very beginning of the project on, which consisted in creating a space for seven or eight women. That's good for the women of course, but it's maybe also a very limited approach and only intervenes in a micro-cosmos, without radically questioning the political system, which creates problems (for these women for example). Also effectiveness lies in creating a structure which should actually be provided by the state, but what it is lacking to provide. I think it does not make sense that art fills the gaps neoliberal capitalism creates, for me it makes more sense to criticize or work on projects which may contribute to political awareness and change.

CR: I mean, it sounds, from all four responses, that you know, there's an intent to adjust certain things within the actual environment that the artists decided to work within, and that, sorry that's as far as I can go. There might be some, you know, moderation of the viewer's opinion, you know, from viewing the experience, but that's not really measurable – so how would we ever know the effectiveness? But, you know, presumably the artists then are working with this optimistic outlook which is that one of these will have an impact, but we just don't know and perhaps that's how creative people live anyway – you know, that we can't really measure

effectiveness. And anyway, what would you use to measure it? I mean, I don't know what tool you would use.

Monika Vykoukal: I think it's kind of, I mean, I think I agree, maybe coming from a different perspective from Oliver, with the sort of wariness of the term 'effectiveness' because working for an arts organisation you think of all those forms to send to the government to say how many one-armed, black, pregnant people have used the facilities. And to me, it always seems like it's totally disrespectful to everyone involved in those sorts of exchanges, and so by extension, the idea of the political the work would have, if you made an artwork and the idea of effectiveness was that the masses shall rise, or whatever, it shows, I mean the relationship then is kind of propaganda in a sense that if you use it as this form of manipulation, almost, maybe? So it's kind of, you have this view of the world and then you make it real, but then everyone will say "Yes, that's what we want", but I guess the idea is more just out of, and one that I mention is coming out of the desire to make this work whatever, and videos saying this is what's happening, I think it's not right, or playing around with it or whatever happens in that creative process, and then the outcome is more open, so the effectiveness is sort of nebulous really.

CR: Although, maybe you could argue that, in that sense, perhaps if you refer to Chad, I mean maybe there's a sense in which by proposing this unrealistically optimistic utopian situation, you know, it gives some idea of the distance between where one is at the moment and where the situation is and in that space is a sort of interesting moment for reflection about those relative distances, so I think there's, it's hard to sort of pin down. Tanya...

Tanya Eccleston: I think you've got fictive and imaginal and factual ways of using the language of representation to make ideas public in some way, but I think what it does is it opens up a kind of plausibility gap, so it allows us, it's about degrees of believability, about possibility around futures and ways of being. And I think that's a kind of recurrent theme amongst all four. It's not actually about just the point view – but it's all related to how the work becomes public. To me, that ability of Oliver to work across television and within an art and display context, is part of how he is able, then, to open up the plausibility through just making visible what exists already. And yet, others like Chad is completely imaginal, but actually plausible because it's there, and you can picture it, you can visualise it. So I think it might have to do with plausibility and believability. Allowing a kind of credulity to happen in our political imagination that can become real.

KJ: To add to that, I mean, when I asked about effectiveness, actually, you know, I regret that I used the word anyhow. (Laughing) I didn't mean effectivity as, you know, kind of the value to it, I just you know wanted to aim for something different, and I think in what Tanya said and from my clarity of what I actually really meant – thinking about just the last Salzburg piece by Oliver. I mean, what did strike me looking at it, it was so anti-spectacular, the way it was presented, which is completely opposite to what we usually see on CNN or on any kind of news station, so there is this distant way of dealing with things which I, you know then, try to call poetic, which makes me actually think more than just, you know, having this up front presentation on whatever news program it is. On this one, I find it, actually, it has more *effect* in it. Now I've used the word again, shit. (Laughing.)

TE: Surely you mean 'affect', Klaus, don't you think?

KJ: Maybe I mean 'affect.' (Laughing.)

Ranjana Thapalyal: Doesn't that depend on who's watching those, and depend on the audience? Because one of the things that's happening in Oliver's work is that the audience is including people who might not watch it as a documentary in the news. And also, I think there's a question of intention, which relates to everything that's been said so far. And then the government forms that you had to fill in for your exhibition in your gallery, the intention is to catch out those galleries that are leaving out their one-armed, black, pregnant people that you mentioned, and being a two-armed, black, British person, I think it's one of the things that it's a reality for me, that is probably not a reality for many other people in this room that people will consider all those layers of accommodation when they confront my work, for example, I forgot to say I'm an artist also, but all of these questions, I think, in a way, go back to one that's been playing on mind since the very beginning of this, which is why is a statement, a positive statement or an intention of a possibility of a positive outcome, so often seen as unsubtle? Why is that seen as propaganda and why is cynicism, in a sense, which I know has very many healthy aspects, and necessary aspects, why is that less subtle?

KN: I think that's a really good question to ask, and I think Oliver fielded it well when you were asked this morning, or this afternoon, about whether or not you felt your work was propagandist, and you said quite straightforwardly, I'm not embarrassed about focussing on particular kinds of protagonists, for example the factory workers, and here they are. And that, I think reading between your lines Ranjana, is quite uncommon, because very often artists want to stop short of drawing attention to one particular kind of political interest, and maybe feel a pressure to represent in a holistic way, which could be pretty toothless in terms of art as politics.

RS: That kind of also implies a sort of, something again that's sort of in the air, but not really being addressed, that implicit in almost everything everyone has said – and Craig sort of alluded to it at the beginning but, you know, there's an implicit aspect in all the work that it's coming from a basically, kind of libertarian, left of centre sort of position... Well it's always a question, you know?... But you know, what if there's a right wing student, you know, making political work which comes out of that sort of situation, you know? Could that be good political art, you know, from that? Is this a moral judgement attached to it, or can we look at it, kind of, in a cooler way? You know, I mean it's just kind of throwing that one up in the air but

CR: Or even worse a Liberal Democrat... (Laughing.)

Minty Donald: Justin used the term 'thinking about whether the ends justifies the means' and you were talking, specifically about, you know, do the materials I use justify the means – but it's been a question more about ethics than politics. But to turn it over to Oliver, because I was really picking up on this morning's talk on the pieces you showed because you obviously showed a range of different pieces and you had different relationships with the people you filmed and interviewed and talked about the piece that we all found incredibly funny that these sort of, what you call it,

outward bound course, the last piece, and you said that, you'd obviously hadn't, you'd sold them *a* concept rather than *the* concept, so there's a question about the ethics of that, and them not being sort of party to what you were doing with the material, in the same way that maybe the people that you invited to talk in *Alternative Economies*, *Alternative Societies* were. They were also allowed to see the finished piece, I think you said, and likewise, the Venezuelan piece, you said for practical reasons you couldn't let the people see it, so it's really a question about ends justifying the means, I suppose.

OR: Yeah, I completely understand your question. I am hesitating to answer because everything is taped, here.

[Tape 2]

OR: I needed half a year to get one of the several businesses I approached to agree to the shooting of such survival training course. During this half year I tried out emails with different strategies. When the business AKE agreed, they thought about me being rather a technician carrying out a job for a museum exhibition on labour in the 21st century than being an artist, I assume. It was the same with the people on the course... Usually, when I work with protagonists of social movements, of course I explain what I am going to do and what my intentions are, but in the case of the video *The Fittest Survive* it had to be different in order to get the piece done.

DH: When they find out who you were they're gonna include how to survive infiltration by artists. (Laughter)

OR: If you just google AKE and my web page is already number two or so, so they will find out about the piece pretty soon I think (Laughing.)

CR: I wonder if we side-stepped Ranjana's question? I think we did, didn't we, a little bit? I know you're probably feeling that right now, but you asked a very straightforward, big question about what's so wrong about positive outcomes, I'm paraphrasing that a bit, you know, what's so wrong with artists trying to achieve something that actually effects substantial change, I guess that's what you're saying.

RT: Well even just the statement of 'socialism means happiness', why is that considered naff, I think is my question?

Alan Currall: Well I think, perhaps, it may have something to do with the unease which some people, artists might have with the idea that, by its definition, work that has a political agenda, and if it is so direct as that, it can appear to be dogmatic, which kind of puts to one side this idea of subjective interpretation and giving the audience some kind of, empowering the audience with some kind of freedom to use their imagination with the art and not just be kind of passive receivers of the message of the artist.

Sue Brind: Mm, but taking that to an extreme, the downside of it, potentially, is that the artist doesn't have to take any position at all. I mean, within the space of critique about a student's work, you know, I totally agree with me that one would try to, perhaps, dissuade a student from making didactic work because it's only going in on

one level and one level alone, but I mean something I've noticed increasingly over the years, is that students are often very reticent to adopt a position. And it's said, under the auspices of trying to leave space for the viewer, but of course, what that allows the producer to do is to slip and slide anywhere they like within the territory that they're trying to work in.

AC: So they are the two kind of cardinal points of this spectrum of subjectivity and objectivity.

CMcC: Well the other is to take the 'socialism is happiness' to it's extreme as well, and fill it out so widely that the person has to adopt an imaginative position in relation to it.

MV: I think it's also not necessarily naff if the person really means it, then they'll come across as being, you know, it depends on whether it's done with irony or not and a lot of the art I'm interested in which I think is political is not really institution-based and not like the work which I've seen here at all, and it's kind of embedded in more straightforwardly political groups, and sort of a form of creative pranks and thinking of, like the people around the *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* do interventions and actions in a more or less anarchist spectrum. But they have ambition of politically effect, and then it can be called art or not, but that's not their main goal – so they have a clear position in that. Then for me, the sort of idea of effectiveness and what I like about it or not is more based on the relationships between people and the making of it and relationship to the viewer they assume, which is coming from my personal viewpoint.

Chris Freemantle: I was trying to get back to grips with Foucault, and particularly his work on madness, and in that, in a sense the argument is that he's not proposing that madness is an effective counter to the enlightenment. In a sense, in the end, it's perhaps that error is an effective counter to enlightenment, and it seems to be that the fundamental problem with the utopian idea is that there's really actually no error taking place in it at all. The utopian is, in effect, perfect – and therefore, there are no mistakes, and what I liked, in a way, about what it seemed to me that Chad's work was maybe doing, was almost proposing error. You know, the statements are mistaken statements in a way within common sense, so that they're sort of errors being offered out as a challenge to people, like burning money. Nobody would, I mean well, a few people have done it, but in a sense that actually, the act is to offer up an error and that doesn't mean you have to be offering up a solution that everybody has to buy into, but you're offering up an error that helps people to think about the situation differently. It's like, in a sense, you're focused, maybe, I don't know, but it seemed to be there's a fact that you highlighted all of those cobble stones were perfectly clean, in a sense was very suggestive to me that, that you know, just focussing in on the cleanliness of the cobble stones, maybe it seemed slightly implausible that they'd been dug up and thrown the day before, unless the police had vigorously got out and scrubbed them of all evidence of having been thrown is erased.

OR: You know, to appear on TV, maybe they cleaned it before.

RS: But that's funny that that's the most aesthetic image in the whole film. (Laughing.) The most aesthetic image is the way they placed them. (Laughing). Like Ulrich Ruckriem or something, you know.

OR: Yes, like an art piece. Carl André, before the installation. (Laughing.)

CR: I think we've got one more, a few more minutes for one more question.

Ross Birrell: I just wanted to make a comment about Justin's 'the packing case is part of the work'. Where do you stop? In that, I suppose, self-criticism that somebody like Althusser promoted in relationship to Marxism, that it must go through self-criticism. And it seemed to that was underpinning that very gentle and sensitive work, in a lot of ways – there was a kind of rigorous, self-criticism undertaken throughout the thing, and where do you choose to stop? Because I thought the next slide you were gonna show us was a packing case and solar power was it gonna be a boat-shaped packing case (Laughing) and it was gonna power it's own journey to the Expo, and I thought this is gonna be amazing – that's a beautiful image, you know, this little slow boat to Japan. (Laughing.) But also, a very poignant kind of metaphor, I'm just wondering if you'd actually considered making it a boat as well and, you know, 'cause you didn't want it to go by ship, and I mean, it's a joke as well.

JC: The budget didn't extend that far. (Laughing.)

CMcC: I don't know, when you start to seal it up like that, there's something tiresome about it. There's something when you lose it.

RB: But it's kind of like lost at sea.

JC: But it's that thing about, you know, I guess within the kind of green movement, within green politics, that whole thing about having to, in a way, do everything perfectly so you set yourself up as a perfect example of everything, it just, I think I find it, personally, problematic in a way and it's largely distanced me from a lot of that kind of direct action kind of involvement. The whole idea of, a lot of the time, the way in which groups operate through consensus kind of agreement, I don't entirely kind of buy into, for example. And I find it kind of, in a way, takes away certain kind of freedoms, particularly within the creative decision making, but interestingly enough, I was just kind of thinking, myself, about this idea of, in a way, how, coming back to what Sue was talking about, this idea of sort of sitting on the fence or kind of moving the goal posts as an artist, 'cause for a while, I've been kind of, in a way, playing with this idea of what ecological art is, what it could be, and in a way, thinking about artists who I think are great examples of ecological artists, who wouldn't necessarily call themselves ecological artists. In a way, they're kind of run a million miles away from the 'eco-artists' label. I mean, I think, you know, it conjures up ideas of Simon Starling's work. I think he's, for me, an ecological artist because it's all about that kind of rejoining, reconnecting, considering the relationships between different things, materials, places, people, politics – and, in a way, it draws together all those things which I think, within a globalised kind of world, get separated. And I think, in a way, that's, to a large extent, the root cause of a lot, within ecology, a root cause of a lot of the separateness from cause and effect which, in a way, opens up a lot of problems.

RT: There's another kind of stream of thought on that, which is also that the powers that, whatever, we're all benefiting from globalisation, we're all living here – but people who are actively wanting to push towards some of the economic systems that a lot of us find problematic, or it bothers us, makes us conscious, you know, of things we want to change. One of the ways in which that is affected is through art, which is really interesting, as well. 'Cause I went to hear Vandana Shiva speak recently, who was the environmentalist based in India, speaking at actually the launch of the radical book fair in Edinburgh, that was mentioned this morning, but she was talking about Monsanto's use of the images of deities in south India because amongst the earliest, most outspoken, most organised groups of people resisting the whole Monsanto project of enforcing certain seeds, the ones that don't generate new seed. Farmers have resisted it throughout, and one of the things that went on early on was small documentaries about their own traditions of saving grain and how pesticides were avoided and all the kind of naturally organic solutions that they had found and that had worked, but what Monsanto has done very well is used its ability to research – the great academic tradition – and to interact. All those grass roots things that the left has been doing are always adopted by organisations that are going to profit from them. So they are very, not only do they have a very sound grasp of Hinduism, but they also go about packaging their seeds with the correct deity for the correct region. I just find that really interesting, and then Vandana Shiva comes up with really extraordinary statistics, such as – not long ago, there were 8000 grains that we used to consume, as human beings, and now there are five because of multi-national companies. And it just seemed to be, there were so many things, bells ringing in my head, listening to Oliver's work being described and the things we're talking about, but it always seems as though large corporations are so much further ahead in this?

RS: But in a sense, that's the classic, I mean, that's, in itself it's this sort of big mushroom cloud over everything – that's this sort of idea of, well we used to call it late capitalism but maybe it's globalisation now. You know, this incredible ability to assimilate any kind of critique or criticism or opposition and to draw that into it and kind of turn it, face it round, you know, against, let's say any kind of critique and to, you know, an extremely kind of insidious and complex and entertaining ways, and in a sense, maybe, you know, there's something in the back of my mind that I can't quite focus, but you know, the idea of like, even like, globalisation used to be a good thing, or that, maybe that's just semantics, you know, 'think global, act local' let's say. You know, that's all changed now – maybe that is just a semantic shift. But the idea of you saying, Justin, about worrying about painting the side of something and you're kind of carbon footprint or whatever, broadly speaking, you know, when did it turn out that, you know, let's say sixty, seventy, eighty years of, you know, billion dollar profits by petrochemical companies, you know, producing all these fuels, it's incredible in the UK, in the last sort of year, eighteen months, it's really shifted round that it's really kind of reflected back onto us as individuals that it's our responsibility to change that now. You know, it's not all these companies that have spent fifty years doing that and making the profits, but it's now our responsibility to change our light bulbs and to reduce the carbon footprint and for you to worry about sending something to Japan, and I just kind of worry – it's so complex and so subtle.

CR: And curiously that's been present from the state. I mean, the state's been increasingly, in our lifetime, saying to us things like we have to be more responsible

for our pensions and things like that. I mean, increasingly the individual levels of responsibility is just enormous now, and it seems to have moved into that other area.

RS: It's kind of our fault.

CMcC: Having said that, the responsibility's been removed from other areas.

TE: Authority has been removed from other areas, where I think responsibility increases, or autonomy...

RS: So maybe, in a sense, just go back to that have the simple statement, like the 'socialism is freedom' thing, in a sense, you could argue that it's so glib that it's just another facet of what's in that kind of machine already, that it's absolutely accommodated to say that, and, you know, does political art have to be something that's kind of underneath that and kind of off the radar as maybe someone there was suggesting. Or something that can tap into a certain part of our brains that have become totally immune to all these images and spectacular life and all the rest of it. I just wonder where that could be, where that, you know, it doesn't seem that that's, you know, everything is assimilated – you know, there's lots of political art goes on and all these big art festivals all over Europe and broader, you know, and, and it's the sort of lapdog of kind of what's in vogue at the moment, or maybe in ten years it'll be something else, it'll be, you know, and it's almost just serves, one could argue, it serves as a justification for the rest of it all just continuing in exactly the same way, you know? And bankers in Switzerland buying Chad's work and you know I've been there as well in different works and things, and you know, the classic is the Hans Haacke piece, you know, the Ludwig, big critique of the Chocolatemeister, whatever it's called, and then Ludwig buys it and puts it in his museum, you know in the 80s, but sorry that's just a bit of a negative point. (Laughing.) But I just wonder where there's some organic, another structure, different kind of ways of kind of re-imagining it that, you know, somehow that engagement with people, with an audience, with individuals to this kind of social structure, somehow.

CR: I think we should leave that point hanging there. (Laughing.) And we also owe all of our speakers a great thank you this afternoon, it's been a really productive afternoon, an informative and Ross Birrell was concerned that we weren't presented as this kind of gender block, Susan Phillipsz couldn't be here and neither could Shauna McMullan, they both sent their apologies, so obviously we'd have had contributions from them. We might maybe get their papers on the second issue of the journal. Thanks very much for inviting me, I've had a great afternoon. I'm looking forward to moving our collective authority over to the Fruitmarket gallery, buying a drink there and so on.