

On Thursday 8 November 2007 an open discussion event titled, *In Conversation with the Participants*, was held in the Project Space at East Street Arts as an element of the *Showing: Expectations* exhibition process.

Alongside key-workers, organisers, members of the public, artists and students who attended this event were the following participants:

**Tony Smith**

**Russ Sykes**

**Paul Graystock**

Invited speakers were:

**Paul Digby** (*Art Tutor, St Anne's Resource Centre & Open Learning*)

**Doug Sandle** (*Reader in Visual Studies, Leeds Metropolitan University*)

**Peter Finch** (*Organiser for York, Workers' Educational Association*)

**The following text has been transcribed (verbatim) from an audio recording of the event:**

**Peter Finch:** It's great for me to be involved with something that involves real people, and, er, we thought when we were approached by the group [Leonor, Sue and Ignaz] that it was a fascinating, very unusual project and that was a great opportunity for our learners to be involved, uhm, and just explore what difference that involvement might make with them really.

**Doug Sandle:** Okay, yeah, thanks very much Paul. Well, [got name wrong, laughs] ... don't start ... Peter and Paul, ridiculous 'cos I know Paul very well don't I Paul? ... Peter. I'm definitely Doug. I know I'm Doug. Sorry about that... I work in Leeds Metropolitan University, in the School of Contemporary Art and Graphic Design, er, when I say work there I kind of am running down at the Centre 'cos I'm due to retire at the end of January, so, I'm just trying to finish things off. My background's quite strange because I've worked in kind of art colleges and design and architecture places most of my working life, but I'm a psychologist by background but that shouldn't worry you, so, I should know how to remember names... But I also... been very interested in art therapy, I've settled some schools in Leeds that ran for about twenty years an' I've done some writing in art therapy. Ah, and I also do, creatively I do a bit of poetry, short stories in the past... have written plays, and it's something that I should hope to do more of when I retire. So, er, that's good. So, I've been kind of asked to help facilitate this kind of chat, er, and kind of discussion. I think, I don't know if people from all six centres [community groups] are here?

**Peter Finch:** No, I don't think so...

**Doug Sandle:** But there's some of you from quite a few of 'em. I don't know whether you have met before or this is the first time so...

**Tony Smith:** Some of us 'ave, been coming up here for a few weeks. There's certain people, I know their faces but I can't remember their names. An' some I know from *St. Anne's...*, I've seen you somewhere before actually [directed towards Doug].

**Doug Sandle:** Alright, well if, if, if, umm, I mean this is not a kind of academic discussion or anything like that, I think that we've had that session already, y'know, so we're not gonna be talking about 'what is art?' y'know with a *capital A* an' things like that, so it's a kind of chat y'know, about your experiences, what,

what you think happened to you an' you're objects an' how you responded to other people looking at things y'know an' what were the good things about it, y'know, that you enjoyed doing y'know, maybe helped you to develop or learn something or taught you something about yourself or about other people, and er, also y'know maybe, what were the difficult things, y'know for you personally or for the group, an' what worked well an' what didn't work so well? I'm quite interested, I mean it's great reading all people's accounts of these objects and it may be, since you've put them up an' since times passed... it'd be quite interesting for you to, y'know, say a little bit if you want to about what the object means to you now. Has it changed its significance because it's been in this kind of setting where other people have been looking at it? That, that, that's kind of interesting. So it's just those kind of, y'know, opportunity for people to talk and tell us a little bit more about the experience or, y'know, ask questions or whatever, so it's a chat rather than a discussion. It's not a lecture or a seminar. And, I hope everybody will, everybody who wants to say something will have a chance, and we haven't got... it's a shell isn't it, in that story... *Lord of the Flies* ...an' they passed the shell around, the conch, if anyone wanted to speak. So if you want to speak, we 'avent got a shell but just put your hand up, and, er, I hope everybody will have the opportunity to speak that wants to speak, an', all we apparently do... we've got three facilitators... we'll just sit here and listen, but obviously, maybe if something's interesting, we might try, y'know elaborating a little bit more, or if there's a need to move on we'll kind of help move on, or if someone obviously hasn't... an' we can tell they want to say something we'll invite you to say something. 'Cos, I hope that, y'know, we all treat each other as equals, an' we're all colleagues an' we're all participants, so, there's no airs an' graces on any of us, so, if you wanna call 'a spade a spade' then that's how we'll operate... okay? So, so that's the back... so it's really your discussion, your chat. So if anyone wants, is brave enough to say well, 'I'll tell you what', this is what I got out of it, or, y'know, this worked for me, or whatever. Well, there you are...

**Tony Smith:** I never thought, when I wrote that poem [*Rosy Lee*] ...[unintelligible], yeah, I never thought, that when I wrote that (which was around about Easter last year [2006]), that it would be hanging down from the ceiling [of the Project Space], umm, it shows how things ...[unintelligible]. Interesting, umm, comments on it which was the first thought that come into my 'ead when you said, anything, if we 'ad anything to say about it. The first thing that hit me, umm, yeah, that's all I've got to say about that at the moment, yeah.

**Peter Finch:** Did you, sort of, have any ideas what, sort of people might do with it, did you have any expectations as to...

**Tony Smith:** No, I thought they might stick it on the wall somewhere but I never thought it would be hanging down, what is it... I don't know what they call that stuff [gestures to the fishing wire from which the poem is suspended] some sort of imitation string, I don't know. And, er, I thought they might stick it in the corner somewhere... I don't know. I think it's a good idea though, I mean like, my object what I picked out [curated], 'cos you can't pick your own bits obviously, was ironic. I mean I once got cornered for Health & Safety reasons, of course ...[unintelligible], fair enough, but you know, it's amazing how things are... it's what you can do with just objects, y'know it's, it's been a brilliant idea really. An' I like the ways it kind of, democratises, ...[unintelligible], ... art. That y'know the art, that how many people... I won't, I won't say the common people because that kind of, kinda denigrates them, but y'know, but 'ow many people ...[unintelligible] put on a pedestal ...[unintelligible], 'an y'know, who's a great artist, y'know. I mean, most people I think 'ave got some kind of art in them. I mean, like I always used to think, years

ago, this is really soft, precon... y'know preconcept idea ...[unintelligible], that art an' simply someone who drew pictures (like the pictures up there or whatever ...[unintelligible]) it can be a poet, it can be a photographer, can be a sculptor, y'know, it's, it's that kinda thing which is brilliant y'know. What I'm tryin' to say is that most people 'ave, er, got the artist in them in some shape or form. I mean y'know if someone's telling me that I wouldn't 'ave believed 'em. Now I believe it more and more.

**Paul Digby:** Well, Tony an' I were talking at work [St Anne's Resource Centre & Open Learning] today and I remember mentioning to Doug as well about, how I was reading a book recently by the psychologist Oliver James, an' he was saying that, he felt that part of our emotional distress today... was possibly caused by the fact that we loose the opportunity to play... serious play like a child plays, an', an' I felt that this exhibition in many ways is giving that opportunity back to people, just to play. Er, in a quite constructive, useful and celebratory way. Don't know what anyone else thinks?

**Peter Finch:** I mean, did anyone else sort of find themselves feeling playful, or mischievous or surprising themselves about what they might have done in the space? I wonder how many participants we've actually got [here tonight].

**Sue Wilks:** We haven't got many participants here... it kind of reflects the, the actual process of the project, so, umm, for example, *South Leeds Health for All... The Asian Elders* group have been here regularly, repeatedly, throughout. But the group like to travel together, and not at night, particularly... here. Transportation is a difficulty, umm, an' then working with Travellers' in Leeds... also find it difficult to come here so we went, went to their space, so, it sort of is indicative of the project and how it's evolved, but, but we're very, very grateful tonight to have Russ and Tony and Paul here with us.

**Doug Sandle:** Some, some of you then have been active participants with the organisations [community groups] or have you just come along?

**Audience member 1:** Just come along.

**Audience member 2:** I'm an ex-student.

**Doug Sandle:** So when you say 'just come along' does that... have you seen the exhibition?

**Audience member 1:** Yes, yes, yes... I've been on a few occasions, find it very, very, the whole project is extremely in, int, interesting. Ahm... you talk of the real, and to open one's heart, and then tonight I'm findin' it particularly interestin' because of the psychotherapy side ...[unintelligible] and I just thought it's an interestin' discussion.

**Peter Finch:** I mean, I think it would be interesting to hear, sort of what people make of being... an' of the exhibition, I mean is it... is it as you expected? Is it, umm, an' how different is it, 'cos it's set-up according to very different, sort of principles of organisation an' participation. So, I mean, is it... strange, or familiar, I think 'cos an exhibition, umm...

**Paul Graystock:** I would say strange. I think it's a good thing really... Participants could nominate a piece and decide whether that piece would go in the exhibition space and I think that's a totally different idea.

**Tony Smith:** Rather than simply have one curator who says 'this'll go 'ere, this'll go there'...

**Paul Graystock:** Different people 'ave a different ...[unintelligible].

**Doug Sandle:** So did you take part in... what were you, a participant?

**Paul Graystock:** I'm a participant, yeah, I've got some bits of poetry, which isn't on display but it's on internet... five different pieces. Which has made something, well two of them which were privately... made in t'public domain which is a bit strange.

**Peter Finch:** So, did anyone, as it were, curate or present your poems?

**Paul Graystock:** No. No, I submitted in Week Five and, er, emailed 'em in to the artists... Sort of just left it, which one's they want to choose but they put all five onto internet which...

**Peter Finch:** How d'you feel about that?

**Paul Graystock:** Aww... Shocked at first. But... they're all good, so...

**Doug Sandle:** So, have, have you had them in the public domain before?

**Paul Graystock:** Most of 'em, yeah. It was something I wrote 2005 and... no, 2004 to 2005, and they were just meant to be, jus, just for me, er...

**Peter Finch:** Would you read them to friends or let people read them or...

**Paul Graystock:** Yeah, some people, yeah, some people I know go on t'website an' they read them, some friends ...[unintelligible], good feedback. It was just a bit strange like... everybody reading 'em.

**Peter Finch:** Will you be able to, sort of, is there a way for you to hear or see comments, from the public?

**Paul Graystock:** No.

**Peter Finch:** Would you like that or do you prefer it not to...

**Paul Graystock:** I could actually do that but, er, I 'avent done.

**Peter Finch:** Right.

**Doug Sandle:** Do you think it, knowing that, the work is being seen by the public, would that effect the work that you might write in future, or, will you just keep on doing it the way that you do?

**Paul Graystock:** Yeah... correct me spelling a bit more [laughs]. No, but ...[unintelligible] I don't think I'd change 'owt. If I did anything else again I wouldn't, I don't think I'd 'ave submitted more than ...[unintelligible].

**Peter Finch:** There's a very honourable tradition about misspellings or, or, or individual spellings anyway, hundreds and hundreds of poets have spelt things their own way.

**Paul Digby:** That was one of the lovely things I thought with the text [recorded transcripts], it was... Umm, er...

**Audience:** [General agreement] Yeah, yeah...

**Tony Smith:** Yeah exactly... That first one [Jez Wootton's], it says this [photograph] was 'tooken', spelt t-o-o-k-e-n... brilliant.

**Audience member 3:** Ahhm. I came to the exhibition for the first time yesterday wi' the college an' I wasn't aware that the exhibition was on, but when I got here an' I found that quite a few of my friends... Russ, Tony, Melvyn, Paul... had work displayed here. I thought that was really, really nice, 'cos it's like, 'I know these people, I've known them for a while'. I thought it was cool just to be able to see their work on show.

**Audience member 4:** Um I think it's quite, I mean I've never exhibited art but putting art on show is a little bit like letting a child out into the big, wide world, an' you're letting go of it a little bit and the fact you have some control over how it's going to be seen, that's, that's important, 'cos it's quite a brave thing to do, y'know, from the privacy of your own home or, or your little classroom to suddenly throw it out there to God knows what reception, it, it is brave I mean, I've never really done it, but anyone who's got the nerve to do it, just, just for that alone it's applaudable, but I think as far as, once you take your piece of art an' put it in any gallery space... just the fact it is a gallery gives it some, some credibility. Just, just being in this sort of space gives it a little bit of extra *art*... it is better. What you may feel is okay, suddenly presented nicely... 'cos it gives it some kudos an' it's, it's a good reward for the work if nothing else. Even if no one, not everyone will like what they see, but the fact that it's being seen in a gallery is something to be proud of. Y'know you've made it to another step, you probably didn't anticipate you were gonna reach but, the chance to do it matters as well, just the chance to be able to put your art on show... y'know, a lot of artists don't always get this, y'know, it's a nice idea. Not everyone gets a chance.

**Doug Sandle:** Do you think it might sometimes though, lose some of it's kind of personal feeling by being in the gallery or do the two compliment each other, or...

**Audience member 4:** Well, your relationship to the art and to the public is separate, what you think of the art shouldn't change... Ahh, you can't, you shouldn't let other people's opinions lead your art, you should do what you want to do an' accept people will have their own kind of relationship with it.  
...[unintelligible] If you're a musician you should do the music you like. If it gets you friends, all well an' good, but y'know, compromise is a strange word, I don't think you can compromise your art you've just got to do it an' put it out there, an' just be brave enough to believe in it.

**Paul Digby:** I think that...

**Doug Sandle:** I used to say, when I used to write poetry, much more than I do now, that I write for three reasons. One, for myself. Y'know to express myself 'an to help

me cope with my feelings and emotions and whatever, an' that's the number one reason. An' I used to say the second one is that, for someone who might just be looking over my shoulder and might be able to share that, and the third one was, for posterity, y'know that, that was always the fantasy. But, I think I always have a sense that someone might share it I guess, and it's kind of important.

**Paul Digby:** I think, as a art tutor and because I'm a practicing artist as well... I always think, showing your art is as important as making, and is part of the process so... An' I think the nice thing about this show was that it was a very gradual process... people weren't... there's not that hitting the wall, so to speak, it was kind of gradual how it happened, an' I think it was one of the better things of the show... There was lots of good things, an' that was another one.

**Peter Finch:** Yeah, 'an I think, I mean there are always interestingly complicated tensions between the motives for making a piece of art, or offering something as art and em, as it were, reading it for oneself, having somebody looking over your shoulder and having abstract, remote posterity, then they're three, rather different viewpoints and they never quite look in the same way... and em, it's interesting to sort of let them stand alongside one another and er, an' offer different perspectives. An' it is interesting how doing something for oneself can, can, can stay authentically in that way, em, but also offering it to the public ahm, somehow alters it. Ahm, whether it simply validates it or, or, or, or offers something that's sort of, not fully under your control, and in that way there's an anxiety about letting it go, that sense of er, 'here it is world, make of it what you will'... Em, but I think one of the things that I find really fascinating was the way that the show is structured so it gives everybody an opportunity to experience both sides of that... audience divide, so, I wondered, for you, as you say, there's a weird... offering your poems out into the world. How did you find the responsibility of giving that to somebody else, as it were, curating their object in the space here?

**Paul Graystock:** I haven't actually curated...

**Peter Finch:** Oh you haven't?

**Lara Eggleton (East Street Arts):** Have any of the participants curated that are here? Tony, did you curate something?

**Tony Smith:** Yes, ...[unintelligible], curation, yes.

**Lara Eggleton:** Did you... just, I'm curious about how you feel about that process of taking someone else's work and placin' it in a certain way, did you, did you find elements of that creative as you would ...[unintelligible].

**Tony Smith:** I did actually, 'cos as I said you got to pick an object out, obviously you can't pick your own ...[unintelligible], an' I thought, no, I'll go for the harmonium, and er, it did, because I thought to meself well, even the simple act of picking something and moving it, you're actually doing something, it's actually exhibiting something. Even though, okay, I didn't make that, that's not mine, the thing is, you're putting it somewhere so in a way that is a work of art. It's a work of... showing something. And to put it in a place, even that simple act, is a way of, of, of a work of art to a certain extent y'know... in an exhibition anyway... I mean, I was afraid of, I don't know if anyone else was, ...[unintelligible] vaguely about art in general really, I know a little bit about poetry, a little bit about drama... Art in general, I know very little of, but I must say there's a guy, can't remember his name

but he's a French guy, I think it were nineteenth century, an' he put all sorts... he was a very modern artist for his time, he put things like bike wheels on display and things, an' he said, 'look this is, this is art you buggers', an' I think that's similar. Yknow, you've still a work of art by just simply puttin' something in a place, you know.

**Paul Digby:** How do you respond to that Sue, is this work close to DuChampian? [directed to Tony] it's Marcel DuChamp.

**Tony Smith:** Yeah, that's... yeah.

**Sue Wilks:** Umm...

**Paul Digby:** Sorry, it's sounds a bit vague a question, I couldn't resist that one, having heard you say that, you're not saying that they're all artists but ...[unintelligible] ...where the DuChampion quote that, 'everyone is an artist'...

**Sue Wilks:** Yeah, it was from that perspective of everybody has meaningful experiences, because a life lived is meaningful, um, and unique... completely unique. But because it's also an everyday experience, life, that it's not often valued or reflected upon until it's too late... trauma hits, and you wish you could get time back and redo, and the only sort, what immediately sprung to mind, with a sort of humerous twinkle in my eye, is that what seemed radical at that time and is now celebrated, we've faced similar resistances, in terms of, the way it's perceived, it's challenging, it's radical ...[unintelligible]. It's the act of givin' an' receivin'... the absolute generosity between strangers has struck me very much.

**Paul Digby:** I, I think you an' Leonor are very humble in this, because I think what you've done is hugely altruistic, an' I couldn't get over so, so much time that you've poured into it, a lot of love as well, an' I, I think it really reflects... So I do think, I do think you tend to stand back a lot, which I understand entirely, but at the same time, I think everybody's quite grateful for what you've done as well, in many ways... hmm.

**Sue Wilks:** It's Russ, Tony an' Paul tonight who...

**Paul Digby:** You're doing it again...

**Sue Wilks:** I've learned so much...

**Tony Smith:** But I mean if it hadn't been for you Sue, an' I know this sounds a bit ...[unintelligible] y'know, she said it doesn't 'ave to be a drawing, it could be a poem, photo, I wouldn't 'ave known anything about it... without this... *St. Anne's* as well really, y'know so, I wouldn't be here like saying nowt y'know, saying this. What I really wanted was actually to do a reading of my poem, which I do every so often... I'm not ...[unintelligible], but I did a performance at night ...[unintelligible] people who were in the audience. An' it was brilliant, y'know an' the fact that it works whereas... I mean, ...[unintelligible] we did... every second Sunday in the month, we've got one coming up Sunday afternoon at 'Trash' in Leeds, what better evidence is that ...[unintelligible], I thought are they whistling or what, I was bit nervous but here I was so relaxed I was ...[unintelligible], it's things like that. Y'know I'm knockin' on a bit but it's things like that, make my day y'know I mean, it's, er, words fail me to sort of describe it but y'know that's the great thing about it, that's like the icing on the cake, I came here, I couldn't stay for any longer, was it last

week? There was a talk an' I 'ad to go before they first started actually, but I mean it was interesting an' ...[unintelligible] think, to be part of all this, an' obviously there was more coming... more people comin' from St Anne's [...] but you can't make people come up here, but I wish more would get involved actually, y'know... more exhibits basically y'know.

**Paul Graystock:** I have to admit I was a bit reluctant exhibiting something, and... I think Paul [Digby] pushed me into doing it [laughs].

**Paul Digby:** Yeah, probably.

**Paul Graystock:** But now, something what ...[unintelligible] a private thing, now it's in t'public domain... er, quite glad I submitted it.

**Peter Finch:** I think it's really interesting, I mean what sort of space a gallery space can be... an' it's often a space of reverence and authority, and, y'know, we all feel slightly awed and humbled... when we come in and abase ourselves in front of these sort of edified works of art, but this sort of, this space, because of the way the exhibition has been constructed, and the way that it's very open and mutual, seems to be a very shared, sort of sanctuary type space, where people feel able to make themselves more vulnerable than they would normally, so, it is playful but it's protective as well I think, and sort of sheltered. And it is, I mean I find it very moving what people have contributed, I mean I think Russ' contribution is, for instance, is a really moving act of generosity, that takes bravery as well and, opening oneself. But it seems to be in response, to the way, the structure of the show allows you to be open, because no one's more important than anyone else here, in the way that this works. An' that 'as enabled gestures and actions that maybe otherwise wouldn't be possible, I think that people would find harder to do. So in that sense it's really interesting experiment as to what the white cube of a gallery can be, really.

**Lara Eggleton:** I'd just like to say on behalf of *East Street* that this is not, generally referred to as an, as a, an exhibition space, it's a project space. We do, actually previously to this we did an exhibition, it was called 'Social Club' where we actually converted this space into a social club, so that's really, we ran a series of events where we invited different audiences in and, artwork was taking place with the people themselves, in all kinds of events that we put on and performances... So I think we're quite interested in the possibilities of using the art space to have activity which is in itself artwork, because, I think I'm very interested in this project because for me I see the process and your relationships that you've built with Sue and Leonor as being quite ...[unintelligible] in themselves, like there's something about that kind of, y'know building a relationship that's actually quite creative as well, and involves an exchange. So I think it's interesting because I actually see this show as more about those relationships than the objects ...[unintelligible] because people took things away from that exchange as well, as well as just having the work shown ...[unintelligible], having people see their work. They were also part of the process, an' I think that needs to be seen in terms, of y'know, kind of, the artistic team here, based here working with Leonor and Sue, and how we've all kind of seen the project evolve in different ways, so... It's interesting because, we all have our own expectations for these things... Obviously we are an organisation who puts on exhibitions and events...

**Doug Sandle:** That's interesting. Did anyone, 'cos I don't understand totally the mechanics, did anybody's work not get chosen? I mean, are the exhibits here in a

sense been selected, I know that people curated, chose them, but does that mean that some people's work didn't appear?

**Leonor da Silva:** No.

**Doug Sandle:** No. So everybody had that, right.

**Peter Finch:** No exclusion at all?

**Tony Smith:** No exclusions, no.

**Paul Digby:** Although you did have some limitations in place didn't you, I mean we couldn't come up every week with a different painting. I think Melvyn ...[unintelligible] overwhelming ...[unintelligible] I'm gonna plug him 'cos he's not well, he's done a series of these paintings, 'an they're all of different buildings in Leeds, an' they all look very similar ...[unintelligible]. I think they are brilliant. An' he kept bringing 'em up...

**Tony Smith:** The other interesting thing though is they're like a bit of a history lesson of Leeds, like *Quarry Hill*. A lot of people may, I mean, not necessarily remember it, I mean I remember actually going to stay at somebody's flat there, I mean some old people, y'know a lot don't, an' it's like a good education for people about Leeds. I mean, y'know, ...[unintelligible] the younger lads will not know about it whatsoever y'know that area, there's *The West Yorkshire Playhouse* there full stop y'know.

**Audience member 3:** Yeah I didn't know it used to be blocks of flats.

**Doug Sandle:** The biggest block of flats in Europe I think, I think it was going to be the Headquarters of the Third Reich if Hitler won the invasion.

**Paul Digby:** It did get run down a little bit though.

**Doug Sandle:** It did. *Quarry Hill*, it was an' interesting experiment, didn't quite work.

**Paul Graystock:** A social experiment which went wrong.

**Doug Sandle:** I mean, I'd just go back in terms of the kind of thing about being in a gallery, an' I think that there is, kind of, different kind of ways that you process stuff in galleries, and sometimes you do get kinda overawed by the presentation. What I like about these... little quirky things I quite like y'know... they're very intimate in many ways, an' you actually need to... you engage them an' you look at them an' you think, 'oh, what's that about, why do that?', an' then you begin to understand a little bit, then you read about them, then you come back an' you look again. And they all have, I think, they encapsulate a whole range of hidden feeling and emotion... Some of them are celebrations of life, some of them you know there's a bit of fearfulness around them, an' some are nostalgic an' y'know sad for things that have passed by. An' all those things which artists... y'know, or are, are interested in are... it's great... it's poetry in and of itself all of these little objects an' things isn't it.

**Peter Finch:** It's sort of quite moving an' eloquent, the blankness that surrounds it an, and what struck me about all of the contributions, was they're all, they seem to

me to be about trying to reforge... connection, either with a lost history, a lost place, lost family, lost loved one's, an' I mean some are celebratory, umm, but even the celebrations seem to be surrounded by loss and silence and letting go. In that sense it's quite, I did find it very moving, on a human level, um, about how, how important that impulse to connect and to belong to something else, or other is, and how eloquent it is about the difficulty of maintaining connection and umm, so I think a lot of the contributions are sort of fragments that speak about a lost whole, in a whole variety of ways. An', an', an' a really wide variety of ways that itself, y'know, tells us a lot about, sort of, contemporary society, an' then speaks about Leeds an' the different groupings of peoples an' identities within Leeds and how sort of, composite and fractured that is but how collectively that adds up to, quite a lot in common as well, even if ironically what's common is a sense of not belonging.

**Paul Digby:** Y'know the whole thing of disconnection, umm, is about 'we are still connected' aren't we, that's the whole... that's almost the paradox of the whole situation isn't it. I think this show ...[unintelligible] to offer that to me in many ways.

**Doug Sandle:** Is anyone? Is there anyone who hasn't said anything who wants to say

**Jon Wakeman (East Street Arts):** I was just going to ask I suppose Paul [Digby], and the participants who've taken part... and yourself, how, how you'd like...because this is a one-off kind of thing, how this might or could be replicated/continued, how do you kind of go about dealing with that? Is it something you can do, is it something you've thought about during the process that you've been going through. Is it something that, what kind of happens afterwards?

**Doug Sandle:** And are there expectations?

**Audience [general]:** Yeah?

**Doug Sandle:** Which could be a bad thing as well as a good thing?

**Paul Digby:** We did recently, as well, St Anne's..., we had an exhibition... framed all the work an' we got a catalogue for an exhibition. We're looking again to, to show in a public space. So we are always doing things like that. Within the context of this show, and in, in the way that, umm, Sue an' Leonor have presented everything... I don't know, I don't know if ...[unintelligible], I don't know to be absolutely honest. I'd have to go away and think on it an' I think I will do. That's something like, it will influence my thinking without a doubt, I think it will influence everybody's, it just will, for simply existing, won't it. How? I just don't know yet how it will manifest, I just don't know. Yeah, I mean there's the *Artists In Mind* exhibition as well, so, within this community there are always things going on predominantly, but not within the same contextual framework that Sue an' Leonor have set this up... the contemporary, er, context which is very different in many ways to a lot of community art projects which do become a little twee sometimes, you kind of think, this is not really where I think we should be going. But at the same time... to say there are a lot of good things, exhibitions and so on, as I say like the *Artists In Mind* one which is coming up next year which is, again... s, s, similar, um, similar within this community. And, er, have I gone on?

**Peter Finch:** An' I suppose we all hope that it's, it's an experience that makes an accumulative set of small differences that might lead... we, we all, in untold ways,

and, er, lead onto other things, or maybe will remain as small differences in perception an' self-perception and self confidence, that will y'know, feed into lives really, umm, I mean I think it was interesting to... to become aware of the difficulties that Sue an' Leonor had in actually mounting, well, presenting the exhibition... getting funding for it an' getting institutional support for it, and that is in itself interesting, because there is a way that community projects are often felt to be... there's a certain, I mean there's often a, just a little sense of the patronising about them as in, 'we know what you, as a deprived community, need' and er, this was a genuinely open project, er, in the name of 'widening participation'. An' I mean one of the ironies about widening participation is that it's actually around a very narrow set agenda often. So this was a, a very wide notion of widening participation which caused problems... 'cos it was a challenge to institutional frameworks, precisely because it was very porous about boundaries and frameworks.

**Paul Digby:** Again though to hark on... I just think [directed to Leonor and Sue] you're unpaid, you're artists, you're not paying yourself, you've just done this, an' I think that that in itself needs commending, because I, I so often see artists making artwork for nothing... an' I think that's wrong. I just think that's morally an' ethically wrong, an' we have to be grateful, as artists, for the space that we have. Y'know, you've got a free space, you can ...[unintelligible] y'know I think that's ethically wrong. I think things have to start changing, it's a difficult thing but things just have to start changing over a period of time. So y'know, an' I think it's gradually happening.

**Doug Sandle:** Anyone who hasn't said anything yet who'd like to say something?

**Paul Digby:** I'll throw something at you Doug, how... throughout this evening so far, a lot of em, the idea of the safe environment where people have bought things, how similar is that to an art therapy environment?

**Doug Sandle:** Oh dear... Well it has similarities in the sense that there are interesting issues that apply here that also apply in art therapy... whether people are actually producing the work as a piece of artwork or whether it's simply as a part of the therapeutic process, and, an' how should we look at it, because often therapeutic art is actually quite interesting and quite moving an' people want to exhibit it. And yet it's purpose isn't really for that. But, creating a safe place... I mean the best kind of art therapy group ...[unintelligible] the role of the art therapist is to create a safe place y'know that, that, that will allow y'know not only expression... I mean it's slightly different because not only is the artwork done but the artwork leads onto other things and becomes the trigger y'know for probing and discussion an' for people, y'know, learning about themselves y'know to do their work. And, an', an' could become, there's quite an emotional thing that you have to do, there's obviously emotion gone in to some of these works, I mean we don't know, the boundaries are very different but it's very private, we don't know what people experienced in trying to make a decision about what object... or did that object touch certain things within a person? ...[unintelligible], an' those things in some ways are outside the boundary of this show.

**Paul Digby:** It is isn't it, it really is art... yeah.

**Peter Finch:** Yeah, I mean it reminds me of a famous passage in a William Blake letter... he talks about wanting to produce an art, whether it be poetry or image, that rouses the faculties to act, an', an' I think one of the things this space does, is, is it allows everybody to engage their faculties and to discover they might have more

faculties than they realised. Er, just, er, yeah, an' it is often playful er, protected creativity that can... an' people realise y'know, there's stuff inside that has been overlooked or, has been silenced. Umm, an' we can all participate in those, er, sort of activities, and, er, events... and we can all be roused I think.

**Audience member 5:** In days of old we made our own entertainment... now it's made for us an' we passively watch it, it's just laid on, an' it's not that ...[unintelligible], I think that if you do art you suddenly take charge of a part of your life anyway, an' that's gotta be a good, healthy thing, it's, it's... I think personally, television... turn it off, write a poem. I, y'know, if you watch television for the rest of your life, like the only thing you can guarantee is that you'll be watching television for the rest of your life. If you wrote a poem ...[unintelligible], you do a painting, it might get you out of the house and a place... y'know some of the places you actually see on television. Yes there's a risk you might ...[unintelligible] but it, it, it should tap into some passion inside. I think in many ways the people who do the art, probably have more to gain than just, people like me who just go and look at the art. Ahh, it's better than watching television. If, if there's any pleasure to be had in making the art, that belongs to the artist ...[unintelligible] I hope it does for them I hope anyone here who's done art can take some comfort from the fact, they have... wrestled a part of their life back an' made it their own... and been kind enough to share it with us. It, it's quite inspirational and they've been brave enough, some of the people here that I know... as I say, putting some art up, it's, it's made me a little more keen to get some of my art up and out there... out of the house an' into the world.

**Audience member 6:** Can, can I just say, you said out of the house, and this space does remind me a little bit of a 'going to friends houses' almost, and, er, I am taking away a sense of, Ooo, if I go again to a friends house, I will actually look at things in their house in a very different way, you know, a more considered way. And because of the kind of objects chosen and placed, an' you go to all the friends houses an' you see that and it, it is a lot of food for thought and also... reflection and why do they have these things and that sort of thing, but mostly, you know, what they are and why they've chosen it... and the relationship they have with those things, all the things in fact that are in this exhibition really, but, so, in a way, this thing... this thing is gonna continue on isn't it... y'know as a forum?

**Paul Digby:** Yeah, 'cos it challenges the way we see ...[unintelligible].

**Peter Finch:** That's right. It does show expectations and it does raise expectations about showing, and, er, I think alerts us all to the sort of um, the, the, the endless potential for the aesthetic, y'know, that anything can become aesthetically engaging, and that's one of the ways in which our faculties are, are aroused, anyway, it's not, I mean y'know, it's as much to do with us as the object in that sense.

**Tony Smith:** I think people deal with it themselves in a different way, coming 'ere, looking at the objects ...[unintelligible] instead of going to *Leeds Art Gallery* ...[unintelligible].

**Paul Digby:** Although I do feel that, the longevity of this work that you have, perhaps you'll transfer it to a modern gallery environment... Do you think that would ever happen?

**Sue Wilks:** No. It's, this...[unintelligible] We never had any set outcomes or aims to reach, y'know, everyone was really open to ...[unintelligible]. We just had a strong belief that's not, it's, it's, grounded in reality and the experience that things will happen and continue... unknown things in people's thoughts and minds, that we can't measure, or, take to funders and say 'see that change' ...[unintelligible], nothing like that but multiple, real things to do with people and their lives an' experiences. Things are ...[unintelligible] so exciting an' there's so many possibilities for continuing to work with the people, an' the groups that we've now made connection with... they maybe feel more able to trust us than when we first met an', but, so we, there is an awful lot of potential that isn't measuring or anything... it will come as it's meant to come when it's meant to come, but it's not an airy kind of belief it's grounded in reality it's a... a firm belief... This is how it will work out because it's genuine, and that was the only requirement from anybody... to be genuine, and offer meaningful... an' we'd respect that an' treat it accordingly, an' return it accordingly as such. An' that's the thing about protection... the protection it's non-negotiable, there is no compromise, anyone that opened up to us and trusted us, we will do everything that we possibly can to prevent appropriation or reduction. Or... things that are not... integrity, but are based on other issues. So it's protective in that we absolutely care about people's work ...[unintelligible], an' it was interesting when Tim Brennan came, what I really liked about what he said was, he came in here an' he didn't know who was a participant, who was a so-called professional artist, or who was a key-worker, we were all really just working together, er, last um, Wednesday when the *Workers' Educational Association* group came in, because it was non hierarchical we meet as human beings an' that's the only requirement.

**Leonor da Silva:** Just, can I just make a point... earlier on a point that was made, well, a question that was asked in this project being repeated, I mean, I just wanted to address that. I mean this project can be repeated as much as, you know, a painting can be copied. Because you know the project couldn't be repeated, because the experience that we 'ad, we had, with the communities that we 'ad... the encounters that we ad, so, you could repeat the format, but you know the same way you can copy text from a newspaper that is that, the point is, what is the point of doing so... so, y'know it's not... I don't think that comes into account, anyway, it's a good, it's a good point because, yeah, It would be the same, as I say it would be the same as... you know you could do a line drawing y'know with architects paper ...[unintelligible] that would be a copy, it's valid but it's not the same... it's a different project.

**Paul Digby:** I just see the concept as, y'know the idea of it being able to travel, an', an' I just wondered y'know, will you travel?

**Leonor da Silva:** No, no, no I got your point ...[unintelligible].

**Peter Finch:** It would, it would be interesting to see what happened with the concept, the structure being repeated, but obviously, as I say everything would be different about it, other than that surrounding structure. And it would be fascinating to see what happened in the space with a different mix. But the space would be different, and what surrounded the space would be different, it would be in a different location, a sort of a different authority, a different institution, a different history, er, that bit would be interesting, to see what those differences... what differences those differences would make.

**Leonor da Silva:** Absolutely. It 'as occurred to me. But, er, y'know, point is... I think it would be a different project. Although, y'know it could 'ave the same rules but...

**Paul Digby:** I kind of felt that if you did go to a gallery it would probably challenge the hierarchies much more than probably this space possibly does. So...

**Leonor da Silva:** Yeah. Absolutely, yeah.

**Peter Finch:** Getting a gallery to agree, I think is one of the problems.

**Doug Sandle:** On the other hand, in one sense, I mean I don't know whether you mean do the same kind of project elsewhere, or even take this project to other places... I kinda think, I don't know why, but there's a lot of intensity encapsulated in these objects an' y'know, they speak of the process an' y'know, the here, there's lots of kinda, y'know undercurrents around. And I kind of think that if you take them an' put them somewhere else that becomes diluted a bit. Y'know 'cos, 'cos it gets diluted out of the context which I think has been very, y'know, the objects are not just the objects, there's the process as well, y'know what's happened, what, y'know the kind of interventions that have been made... getting communities involved, an', and they're all here in a very strong way. An' I kind of think that in another context, putting them ...[unintelligible], maybe you'd move away from that a little bit. An', an' it's done now, an', an', an' the next thing is y'know returning the objects to the owners, which, which, they will have changed and the owners will have changed. And that's it, you know, maybe the circle ends there... And if you both do this kind of thing, you start again, you know with different people and different objects. Have we got a time limit?

**Peter Finch:** Till 7pm I think.

**Doug Sandle:** About six minutes... don't have to be strict about it. Does anyone else want to say anything? I'm not sure why, y'know, some people are here for different reasons, but I mean, y'know if anyone wants to make a comment this is your opportunity...

**Audience member 5:** I think mention was made earlier that artists should be paid, and I see some of the artists are here, non of 'em, none of 'em are rich, but I mean if someone was prepared to buy the art and give them that reward as well, ...[unintelligible] y'did say artists should be paid...

**Paul Digby:** Yep.

**Audience member 5:** Y'know, I don't think ...[unintelligible].

**Tony Smith:** I'm actually charging ten pounds for me services [laughs].

**Audience member 5:** ...[unintelligible] somebody else's hands an' ...[unintelligible] can't force it, I'm not planning you should do it but lets not forget, it's a perfectly valid thing to say, it's a very honest thing to say so... If anyone's got deep pockets...

**Peter Finch:** It's an interesting thing to add to the mix isn't it, an' it would change things quite a lot in fact, an' that in itself is quite revealing.

**Jon Wakeman:** Just want to ask if people would want to sell some of those things?

**Peter Finch:** Well, yeah, yeah exactly...

**Jon Wakeman:** ...[unintelligible] artwork that's special to the people ...[unintelligible] special objects.

**Lara Eggleton:** It's interesting because it reveals, er, kind of some of the differences, because we also provide workspace for artists here ...[unintelligible], we, we're also looking at professional development ...[unintelligible] want to sell their work. It's not so different actually, working with artists who don't ...[unintelligible] it is our job an' it's a part of our remit as an organisation to empower, an' support, an' so it's interesting because it isn't ...[unintelligible].

**Peter Finch:** But it's interesting what difference it makes, whether it's, as it were, y'know, if somebody would buy it... it's a sort of validation but it alters the gesture as well, so it is revealing that a lot of things here, wouldn't be here if they were for sale because people wouldn't offer them in that way. Y'know, so, so what's being made an' presented in a market is rather different to what's being made an' presented in a space like this, which is a much more shared, egalitarian sort of space where... everybody has the same amount of vote.

**Lara Eggleton:** In the way that DuChamp would have taken *Urinal*... kind of put that on display... sold it for a great deal of money ...[unintelligible], I think that's very different from ...[unintelligible] something that's meaningful and putting that on display ...[unintelligible] the outcome of someone offering a lot of money for that would be very different.

**Paul Digby:** Although I do think the parallels with his work in particular are part of the presentation in some way. Y'know an' how that seems to ...[unintelligible] art history, particularly, artists... how they present work today.

**Peter Finch:** I think so, an' y'know it makes this possible I suppose, because actually, although, although sort of with different values.

**Doug Sandle:** ...[unintelligible] something that comes into, to the art game with a capital A is about value, an', what's good an' what's bad, an', and I haven't, y'know looking at these objects you don't make those kind of... Some things you find really interesting, or, or, or... I particularly like the dog's [Katherine's *Furry Friends*] for different reasons, I think, blow them up an' they'd be Jeff Koons', y'know, in, in, interesting but y'know your not kind of, saying this is better than that y'know, you're treating each one individually. That's a different kind of, y'know you're not comparing work with other... things like that.

**Paul Graystock:** Personally I think it gives people an introduction into art as well. Er, er, into art exhibitions in general. Somebody might've exhibited some work in here an' it might just give 'em...

**Paul Digby:** This is far away from the art world, that's what I'm really talking about here.

**Audience member 3:** Yeah, there's also the *Art Library* that y'can exhibit in as well.

**Paul Digby:** I mean the art world being the business world. The one of buying and selling art... totally different to what's going on here, which I like more in many

ways. 'Cos you don't have, don't have that pressure if you like. Although I stand by what I said earlier... an artist should be paid.

**Sue Wilks:** That kind of pressure generates a competitiveness that would prevent people from putting things here... and not looking around thinking what's someone else doing, When people look around an' think what's someone else is doing [in this context] it's because they're genuinely interested in what that person's contributed, not in terms of trying to be better than them, which is so important to this.

**Audience member 3:** Mmm... I know. There, there is in some way ...[unintelligible] construct that genuine feeling ...[unintelligible]. ...[unintelligible] art it was done with so much passion is just, it's just a commodity, it', it's, just, it's like a cheque locked away in a vault which is a terrible thing ...[unintelligible]. Yet, all this art's really competing for is just, y'know, attention, it wants no more than that. It's about competition ...[unintelligible], it's just purely ...[unintelligible] for arts sake, y'know just because it is.

**Paul Digby:** Yeah it is. ...[unintelligible] art for arts sake... but you still should get paid.

**Doug Sandle:** Okay. Well, it's gone, gone Seven O' Clock... We could, I mean people don't have to go, they can talk informally among themselves, but thank you very much everybody and, an' Sue an' Leonor particularly, y'know for organising it, and, er, giving us the opportunity to y'know think about it an' talk about it, an' I'm sure we'll continue to think about it. Certainly some of these objects I shall remember, you know, for a long time.

**Peter Finch:** Yes, and hopefully, y'know, participants will remember the experience for a long time, an' so it would be interesting to think of what happens when the objects are returned to them, what difference, y'know, having allowed your object to enter the wide world and then come back to you, will have made.