

**UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE
EXPLORING THE DIGITAL CITY
SECOND 1-2**

MAN: ... spectacle and how we basically conspire through our technologies to disconnect ourselves from each other so we are spending time staring into our television sets, our computer screens, recording events like our marriages, making them, choreographing the actual event, making it look good on video, spending more and more time with I-Pod stuff in our ears, not talking to one another on the Tube as we stare and this he puts down to the kind of fragmenting notion of capitalism and commodity. And so I am very seduced by that idea because I don't see connection in the world going on as much as it should do when we talk about it and our machines because our machines are like my work, paradoxical. We are scared of the machines, the users, because they leap up with CCTVs and get into all those issues of surveillance and we also concurrently are in love with the machines because they allow us to get any image in the world on our screens right there printed out. So this idea of spatial embroidery, which is what the project does, I kind of see as a small contribution for linking things together, and I think architecture has been so debased by everything being quantifiable in it and the rise of the quantity surveyor who will eventually disappear very quickly because we can now do it all by computer by pressing your micro-station button and linking in to the suppliers website so that's kind of funny and paradoxical, this idea that the person who has propagated this idea that everything is quantifiable will be the first to go.

So yes, I don't see much ... people come to me and say oh I'm in London for a couple of days, are there some buildings I ought to see that have been built since, oh, 1985? So I suppose I'm angry about that, I am angry about the fact that my profession is being so controlled, money grabbing and decadent I think. So that is one of the good things about this project, yes.

Q MAN: I might be on the wrong tack here but the last part of what you said I found particularly interesting but can I ask you about something you said earlier on about enigma and how you liked things to be enigmatic. I certainly found your drawings to be enigmatic and liked that but there is a tension for me between making the unseeable seeable and making the invisible visible and celebration of the enigma because they actually pull in different directions. There is a line of argument about the growth of the surveillance society and the making of everything transparent and clear, that if we can't avoid that what we can do is confuse it, we can confuse the people that watch us and that's why the enigma appeals to me, things that aren't immediately made sense of. You, in a sense, seem to – crudely put – be getting the best of both worlds because you want to kind of reveal and expose but at the same time you want to hide things as well, to make things not obvious. So I wonder?

MAN: Yes, I agree, I think that's part of the, that's a by-product of the creative process where you can't always know what you are doing all the time in a way so there are bits of it that I don't know why they are there and in fact I have started calling the bits that I don't know why they're there, tolerances because they are the bits that I may be able to use later, to link, to rewire them in a sense, to make them have different ... the relationships I just told you about may not be all persuasive all the time and so I like the bits, the kind of elbow bits, the bits that I don't quite know what they are because creatively they become, some of them may become clear to me and force me down creative thoughts that I wouldn't have done otherwise so I am also re-working the work and yes, the work is exceptionally paradoxical on all sorts of levels.

Q MAN: The other thing that came to mind, looking at some of your drawings was encryption, you're encrypting things in your drawings and one of the ways I would like, the qualities of what you do, is the need to encrypt our lives in a surveillance age, to encrypt information by ourselves so that it is less accessible to people who don't want to have it.

MAN: Yes, yes, I do make clues in the drawings about stuff that I'm not explicit about.

Q MAN: In a sense you are having to explain them to us.

MAN: Yes, but I only explain the bits I want to.

Q MAN: We could have been there for hours trying to work out what it was and I think that issue about facilitating encryption in an age of mass surveillance is an interesting point.

MAN: Yes, that is very interesting and I've not thought about it explicitly in those terms but I am interested by that. Yes, there are things in it, there are other things that are kind of stylistic as well, things come in threes a lot of the time like London buses and the spike, the crucifix shape, they're all in there and they can all be followed right through to my earlier works on proportion that I showed you earlier, so all those creative protocols I suppose are all there somehow and I'm not happy with something as I'm designing it unless I can see a few of them there again so they are kind of like graphic security blankets. You will quite often find within the work what I call the ubiquitous spiky gooseberry which has been in the work for over 25 years now, it comes and it goes, there is one there sitting up above the bread.

LORENS: Can I just ask, in terms of what you just said about creative protocols, how much does ritual fit in to the process of creation, if at all, and how much is it germane to the landscape you are producing? This landscape that shows the visible, that makes the invisible visible? Is there some connection to ritual activity?

MAN: I often talk about the creative act as a kind of dance, a sort of mental dance. I can't enter into ... this is the place I go when I'm feeling happy, if you know what I mean, makes me happy to build on it, to work, and my architectural space has always been the way that I, places that I go make me happy but if I'm kind of stressed or have got things that are bugging me, I can't go there because nothing nice is going to happen. But there is a feeling, it is like a shamanistic process, there is a feeling when something is going well that you start to get a certain, one starts to get a certain ecstatic feeling in the head.

Q MAN: So a [inaudible] sensation of driving them on.

MAN: Yes, very much so. I mean they are not things I talk about much, I have written about it in terms of a sort of alchemic process, a constant distillation of reaching towards something that is essentially probably unobtainable. At the time the drawing is done it is never finished until I have talked about it for the first time in a situation like this as well, it always feels kind of half ... I don't know if this is true of other people but I know when I see something that kind of inspires me, I am like a jackdaw, I may pick it up and it might be ten, fifteen years before it blurts back out again. There are three more, well a couple of stages after this that in the machine but there are three more stages I am currently working on and one of them involves bringing back the hot desk, the nano kind of scribing desk into the work because it is over ten years ago that I did that and I wanted to get a narrative back into this process again. So there is, things do reoccur, there is a kind of shamanistic ecstasy and elation when it is going well and there is a kind of disappointment when it's finished in a way. But yes, I know when something, I know when I am properly creating on a level that I want to create on, I feel different in my head, this kind of shamanistic dance sort of thing, following the drum.

MAN: It looks like it's tea time doesn't it? Thank you.

[Applause]

END OF SESSION

12 minutes