

**Dec 21, 2014**

Marilyn

Quick transcript of scribbled notes reads:

A very slow gift, and not one that necessarily reveals itself while we are present, no matter how long we sit in the room. It becomes clear when we are away from the performance that it has a kind of difficult gravity which draws us back... not to watch what happens, because we rarely see anything happen (only what has happened before we enter and what might happen after we leave) but to be in the room where something as slowly mutable as geology is somehow displayed. Or its implications are displayed, or its name is somehow uttered.

Our presence in the room becomes less and less about watching Marilyn and more about simply knowing that she is there. In fact it becomes a room in which to consider other things, in which to gather our own presence about us. It has become a kind of anti-chamber in which we are neither welcomed nor registered nor prepared for anything, but in which our presence, our density, is somehow weighed on some implausible scale. In which we are challenged to do nothing in the presence of the almost nothing that is taking place. In which we are offered a possibility of emptying, of re-calibrating our relationship to time.

A lot of people come back to this room. A lot of people are writing or sorting things or in one way or another drawing current from whatever is taking place. Maybe they aren't sure why they are there.

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Make of that what you will. Thanks for the work.

Regards  
James

**February 15, 2015**

I had thought to write to you again to add a couple of additional notes. Partly because you showed some interest in the Venice response and partly for my own sake as there were a couple of things in your project that I was interested to leverage other ideas against.

I ended the last email by mentioning that I sometimes struggle with the terms of engagement. There are often familiar expectations that surround even shocking or unpredictable work. Assumptions about the artist / viewer relationship, about history and form and critical theory, assumptions that can in fact be really useful in facilitating an active dialogue, but assumptions never the less. What was

refreshing about the work you presented was how unclear the terms of engagement were.

The duration of the piece was important to what it was able to achieve of course and it was fascinating to watch as certain of these assumptions seemed to slowly form and then to dissipate as the uncertainty (or perhaps in fact the unsettling certainty) of your position evolved. I was interested that you asked me originally to email you those notes because you find it useful / helpful.. "to understand what I do". To suggest that you are to some degree both the author of and an observer within the work, is interesting and candid... it is in fact the unexpected space *within* the work that became so intriguing. Inside the structural armature of the performance, the constancy of your presence, the aching slowness, the assertiveness / benevolence of the figure, the impossible narrative, all seemed to create an interior within the larger scope of the piece where the watcher could set up camp... or even engage in some parallel action (internalized or actual) that was nourished by the geological momentum of the host. The question arises: where does the performance reside. Is it constituted by the surface of your actions, or by the sustained fact of your presence, or by this interior component that allows us to contain further ideas within the experienced work. The describable and the difficult to describe. Are you acting on the world or is the world acting upon you.

In respect of the idea of TIME (which you reference lightly in the programme note) it seemed that at times you were making the stuff, grinding it out on some implausible mill, just enough to allow you to move forward like one of those steaming, ponderous machines that lays bitumen roadway ahead of itself as it creeps.

The aesthetics of the work evolved also (I am often encumbered by aesthetics)... chairs, but after some time it simply didn't matter. And then, after a very long time, the astonishing surprise of the stones. All of a sudden they were there and I hadn't seen where they came from. Hard, perfect, dirty, they drew me into an unexpected level of the piece. In an instant there are a thousand stories attached to it... bones, flesh, aspirations, faith, I hadn't expected that. And yet they are such a strong signifier of the impossibility (or ridiculousness) of our engagement with time.

Anyway I'll stop there. Just wanted to send these few other notes while I was still thinking about the piece. It's nice to see work that is resilient enough to strike some sparks off.

Thanks.

James

**May 17, 2015**

Dear Marilyn

Somehow I don't mind the gaps. It's not an urgent dialogue but a dialogue I have enjoyed.

Thanks for taking the time to reply with this degree of clarity regarding your project. Interesting that this long form work is new, it certainly felt like it was quite settled in you and the level of subtle complexity generated in the work could never have been achieved in a shorter framework, so what a bit of good fortune. Perhaps one of the reasons things worked well over the extended period was the time it took us to adjust to this recalibrated time. Not to observe it but to actually adjust to being in it... for time on the inside to move at the same speed as time on the outside (of the observer). A temporal equilibrium is reached after a certain period which adjusts our experience of the work. I was interested also that you spent time within the work internally addressing the nature of the work and your personal relationship to time. It interested me because (as I mentioned earlier) I found that same kind of interior space available within the performance, as the viewer (participant). Space in which to install other ideas either generated by the work or drawn from elsewhere into the cognitive vacuum created by the elongation of perceived time.

I have a couple of fond examples of condensed and elongated time that I have always referenced with regard to these adjusted levels of perception and concentration. The much observed peak perception during something like a traffic accident, where every nuance of every movement is absorbed with such acute intensity that the moment we are in seems to stretch before us with alarming and languorous clarity. It's only happened to me a couple of times and if you can come out of it without injury it's fascinating. The other is watching John Huston's final film (The Dead), a film I've never dared watch a second time because of the strange sense I had that the entire content of the narrative felt like preparation for some larger and more profound action... and just when this seems imminent, the film ends. I was in the cinema on my own and had the sense I had been watching for 15-20mins when it had been an hour and a half.

Not a great deal happens and it happens in a single room (mostly at a table), but what takes place is so densely charged with suppressed tension and emotion that it concentrates our attention to the point of distorting perception. I've never watched it again in case it isn't a repeatable experience. In case there were other things at play.

It's a complex field, I love it. Thanks for drawing me into the conversation and for discussing your processes. The Heathfield book sounds interesting, I haven't read it but I think my friend has a copy so I'll do something about that.

Yes... I knew the rocks were there (that something was there). I knew that all the information was contained in a closed system. but still I was so surprised, so delighted it was rocks.

Thanks again

Yours

James.