

IntegrART SYMPOSIUM 2013

Vom Abfall zur Avantgarde - Schöne Aussichten!

Volkshaus Basel, 27. Mai 2013

The changing Art of Life in the age of Facebook and YouTube! Are you RE(a)D or DEAD

von James O'Shea

Hi,

Why am I here?

Well partly to ask lots of questions

Like

Was Art ever only something you go to a museum to appreciate? Is it something that you can just 'like'?

Why are you here?

The first question, why am I here can be answered simply by saying a few words but can it ever be answered fully?

I doubt I have the time and I guess you don't have the inclination to follow my longwinded attempt to explain my comprehension.

Once upon a time I was asked to talk to the audience as if I were a cheesy Ballard pop star and I was between songs mid show.

Yes this is an odd and disjointed opening to a talk about fighting dehumanising values but there it was. Anyway, my talk is not really just about fighting dehumanising values; it's more about supporting the values that make us humans. And I don't expect the talk to get any less disjointed, hopefully it will be like listening to a drunken Irishman in a pub who rambles on and entertains you, but in the end you might just get something good from it...

Anyway, there I was talking as if I were the performer of my own songs imagining I am in a stadium just about to sing to a packed crowd and to my fans at home watching it on dvd.

I was pretending to interact with the crowd as a star who is talking to an audience of thousands; then this question came to my mind, why does anyone ever do anything else!!!

So I guess one aspect of my talk today is that for me anything that gives you a sense of self-empowerment, self-fulfilment and self-accomplishment is a sign that you have just triumphed over the dehumanising values of society and in my mind this is a part of being an artist of in living your daily life.

But I am not here to talk Tony Robins like (cheesy grin) about how to be the best you can be.

Back to the dance studio, I was rehearsing by visualising the future audience in the theatre we were to perform in and then imagining myself pretending to be at a gig talking to a huge audience and not at a dance show talking at about 100 contemporary dance connoisseurs.

Another question, since when has dance only been found on a stage in a theatre? I guess never, but for some reason the funding of it as an art seems to be focussed on this aspect of it.

Back again to the studio, the creative process seemed strange enough to accommodate the idea of pretending to be a corny superstar singer, and it may have had some value in our performance if it was developed, but in the end it got cut from the piece as the choreographer was convinced to change it by the dramaturge.

However it was valuable for me personally in a few ways. And yes I am getting to a point

Firstly it led me recognise that choreography is too linked to the feudal hierarchical past to be relevant to the art world which is trying to reflect and shape the modern world.

Essentially the king, (choreographer) was being influenced by the recognised counsellor, and the piece took shape from the court of the king. However the dancers (peasants) had no real influence at all. Perhaps this is how people think it should be. I disagree!

Individualisation is a core of our current human values and thus anything with a king like leader role goes against this grain. If you really want to create art it has to be as collaboration with like-minded souls or you have to go it alone.

And so that is what I did!

No not in the show

Ok so a bit of a story now but really there is another point coming soon

The rehearsal process involved me singing some lines from my mind and that led me to write and record my own song. The whole creative process was led by me, I wrote the lyrics, I had the tune in my mind. I didn't need anyone to help me because with a laptop and a microphone you can make music. But I have some musician friends and we got quite drunk and we had a really fun afternoon laying down drum beats, bass line, rhythm and lead guitars and vocals on a home recording studio.

And as I look back upon that day, and the process that had led up to it. This one afternoon of fun co-creative activity really created a change my life

When I eventually listened to the final version I decided that it wasn't as good as I had hoped it would turn out, mostly because of my singing, but that could be played around with. But that is not the point. The point is from the moment I heard the track as a finished article it was clear to me that with a few bits and pieces of technology and some good people to help you along the way you can create something from very little, actually for a long time I had suspected that life the universe and everything are all examples of this but anyway, that does not matter so much right now, my life is about what fills me up, and I was fulfilled and felt whole being the co-creator of my song.

So from that moment on I was sure I would keep as much influence and control over my creative activities as possible. What's more I wanted to always do it in an easy enjoyable way with people I like, so everything can flow naturally without hierarchies and egos and agendas getting in the way. I am sure that all artists and individuals in their living their life so do the same.

So why am I here?

Partly because...

I was invited to come

It is the first time I have been honoured with having a voice, a platform on which I can preach like a pastor to a flock, and I like to say yes to life, so invite me somewhere and you're probably going to have me as a guest eventually.

But also I am here because since that day recording my song I set myself free to only engage in creative opportunities that gives me an outlet for self-expression, self-empowerment, self-fulfilment and self-accomplishment!

That may seem odd from a speaker who was invited mostly because I swum in the Paralympics. And although swimming training is mind numbingly boring, minor improvements give you a sense of accomplishment. Swimming is also an amazing experience of the mid body connection, a constant learning of how water works and also gives me an insight as to how bones function inside the body, but anyway

My real goal however, was to appear on live international TV and say something from my heart about how much better it is to have an event that brings all nations of the world together peacefully, and that the more the world has such events the less likely we will have wars!

The reason I go anywhere and do anything is firstly because it seems to make sense to do it

And I hope I am here for a reason beyond all the smaller functional and quirky personal aspects

I hope I am here on this planet for a purpose

And I think many many people think and feel and hope the same way, and they live their life in the way they do to express their own self-worth and appreciation of other people's worth, or other animals. Or other objects. Both Biologists and Geologists rock in my mind. We are all artists of our own life!

So back to the situation of the dance show. Well eventually it died, I was invited to do more but since I had gotten a taste of being a driving force of my own creative output, I was not willing to go back to being a peasant in a feudal society,. I said that all the dancers seemed to want more from the piece in terms of creative output and to be part of something co-creative not dictated. This killed the show but I know 2 of the dancers have gone on to create their own pieces.

In the end I got so frustrated with the lack of opportunity for expanding the process and thus the piece I said that traditional choreography is akin to the political hierarchical oppression the world over and soon we will see a change on the political scene and it will sweep through society in general, 9 months later the Arab spring sprang. Now the economic crisis is facing revolt.

But back to this symposium, to here and now.

I initially was asked to give a talk about carrying the torch or something like that. With the implied desire for me to be championing disabled peoples struggle in some way.

I am not here to touch specifically on any aspect of social problems or struggles or the need for change for one particular group. I want to help people to zoom out and take a look at the bigger picture. And also to inspire people to zoom in and take more control over their output

The times they are a changing

As part of my presentation I will be showing a short video highlighting some of the people and movements that interest me which show people collaborating, pushing back boundaries to possibilities faster by being a collective force of individuals learning from each other without any leadership. Did you know that in the world of circus tricks the staff workers have an online community, and what once was considered a jedi movement, twirling the staff behind your back, is now a beginner's move, all because people are sharing their knowledge and learning from each other and pushing back the boundaries of the art.

I once heard a joke that to analyse a joke is like dissecting a frog, you don't learn much, and it's not funny but also in the end subject dies! So don't worry, I won't be analysing art.

I hope that this presentation will be entertaining and informative as well as being a part of the push to reshape our world in the way we want to see it. And since I believe that the internet is an expression of humans shifting desire for more co-creative relationships. I will post this presentation and the video online and interact with all who wish to communicate and collaborate. I hope that what I do show will grow and

grow with me and other people making it something much more than it is now, a thing constantly growing to help inspire people to grow and share

So a quick pause, take a breath, and now to another question

Can you really 'share' art on-line or are you limiting your audience too much if it is offline?

And now for another change of direction.

I thirst for knowledge, but only for it to be useful and I do like to talk but only to help myself get to grips with the truth in an open conversation. And since I am expected to present to you, I don't expect to be able to converse, so here is a brief ramble

Music, Dance, Art. All were originally expressions of tribal interpretations of the big mystery and grandiose Majesty of Life.

As 'Modern' (Wo)Man moved from the Savannah to the Plain then into Urban settings and now Slums. Art changed its shapes as society and technology and economies changed.

But what is art now???

Art remains the way we make sense of the world we Live, and how we project our heart and mind out for the world to see.

But what Culture or Tribe shapes the Art in our world of interconnected but alienated Souls?

Art is an expression of human culture and it is all part of the process, the great unfolding of our striving to shape the world according to our wishes, but so are technology and economics and politics. Is there really much difference between an artist, a con artist, a banker, a salesman, an athlete.

The current economic crisis is a mould breaking factor in the world of art, just look at the budget cuts. And the reaction against them! The reaction in Spain to taxes on tickets was to sell carrots! Genius! The technological revolution that lets me make a simple movie or a piece of music and share it around the world. And the technological and economic changes we will see will go on changing the way we experience and interact with art and each other.

Time for another question! Is art really breaking the mould in the world of economics or politics?

Well perhaps it has, in my mind as I zoom out from looking at one system and gaze at the gestalt of human interaction on this planet then I see parallels, zeitgeists if you like that seem to have always seen a correspondence between the realities in everyday life and the artistic representations of life

From the wide hipped potbellied clay models of the fertility goddess showing how important it was that women gave birth and that the fertile earth supported early humans, to punk rock expressing the rage on the streets of an emboldened youth culture when free love and peace had not led to anything much but high unemployment and brutal policing.

I studied history and politics, and I remember Karl Marx wrote something about people being alienated from what they produce by the mechanised conveyer-belt construction line are devoid of self-determination and will only have power in sex food and consumption.

How you dress your body, decorate your home and what you post on Facebook tells people what you want to share. How you dress your Mind with stories of why, how and what you are going to do it is one part of your art of living everyday life.

But these examples are self-expression borne amidst a culture that focusses on individuality, but it insults your freedom to be truly unique at every turn. Be cool, go with the flow but don't be a freak!

Fashion and celebrity gossip are mere distractions keeping you in the mind-set of the 'Cult'ure. And if you buy clothes or a magazine or a movie you get taxed and advertisers get paid so you end up working to pay for your own or someone else's mental slavery!

The bombardment of images from advertisers fetishising objects and bodies are a form of brain washing.

So is the medias glorification of star performers of the passive entertainment industry. An industry that exists to constantly manufacture endless forms of false happiness!

Keep calm and carry on shopping.

Shopping is now a competitive sport as much as it is a function of life.

In such a time of Cult like behaviour with fashions and memes, the fee media supported mainstream Cults allow Anti-Cults to establish themselves, but are there really any free-willed people in our 'developed'-world with a way to fight back against the dehumanising values that are handed down as control icons!

By dehumanising values I mean a lot of things, I heard it first from Terrence McKenna and my interpretation of it is all aspects of social engineering that take you out of self-empowerment.

In the midst of this soulless world. The one that the mainstream media presents. There are really amazing co-creative endeavours and mould breaking aspects that can lead to a better world.

So. Who and what have and are breaking the mould, building on the past and forging the future.

How do modern humans seek and develop self-expression, deepen self-knowledge and inspire others to do the same.

Has anyone here not watched YouTube?

Are there any funders of art or beneficiaries of art budgets in the room today?

Please show your hands if you are in any way related to such an endeavour

Now what is the largest audience you have ever reached?

Would you consider 1 million hits on YouTube as a success?

I think my point has been made

Moving on quickly

Have any of you not heard of crowd funding?

Who would not like to help a cool project get off the ground?

As a side note I would like to mention game of thrones. For those in the dark it is a book in 5 parts that is being turned into a 5 seasoned TV and internet sensation as it is currently the proud owner of the most pirated and illegally downloaded file so far.

Ahhh haaa harr me hearties we do so love a pirate party

There are many little lines that stick in my mind from the show and now as I think upon the people who are supposed to be funding the artists of our semi geriatric capitalistic post post modern society. with online tech savvy kids and wireless less grandparents, I think about Tyrion Lanister meeting the commander of the Gold Cloaks (the capital city guards) and having just cast a minor insult he follows it up by saying something like, it's not that I am questioning your honour, I am denying its existence

It's not like I am questioning the need for people to funnel money from the state and corporate sponsors to fund small numbers of artists considered worthy.

I am denying the need for the existence of the people on both sides of the equation. At least in the way it currently manifests.

Yes strong words indeed, but I am expecting that there will be a dramatic shift in the art world's bureaucracy to reflect the dramatic shift in the activities of society. I look forward to a future soon, where the holders of the budgets will be able to fund many projects and have huge numbers of participants, simply by getting in sync with the social and technological shifts.

So there it is ladies, gentlemen and disabled, I have a dream that the more the technological advancement progresses, so will social and economic improvements take us to a much better world. Then we will see a focus on the human participation side of art. Art for all by all.

Come writers and critics who prophesise with your pen,

My video shows people like Muhammad Ali, Bruce Lee, Martin Luther king, J.F.K. Jesse Owen, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, Charlie Chaplin, Gandhi and others who all somehow said no to being controlled and said yes to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of self-fulfilment. And In doing so they broke the mould. Bruce Lee not only inspired many people to look to China for a wealth of knowledge but also constantly said, don't follow a doctrine, discover how to do things in the best way you can. This he annoyed the established hierarchy of Chinese martial artists. And probably many more people, well good on him I say

Whether inspired by cultural icons of freedom or simply tuning into to their own desire for self-fulfilment and being inspired by those around them, myriads of people are trying to either break the mould and, or share their passions.

So why am I here?

I want to see if I can influence the world in the way I hope it to become and hope that I live through it.

Thanks for listening

Enjoy your life

I hope you enjoy my little video about breaking the mould!

I'd like to give a lake of beer to God.

I'd love the heavenly

Host to be tippling there

For all eternity.

I'd love the men of Heaven to live with me,

To dance and sing.

If they wanted, I'd put at their disposal

Vats of suffering.

White cups of love I'd give them

With a heart and a half;

Sweet pitchers of mercy I'd offer

To every man.

I'd make Heaven a cheerful spot

Because the happy heart is true.

I'd make the men contented for their own sake.

I'd like Jesus to love me too.

I'd like the people of heaven to gather

From all the parishes around.

I'd give a special welcome to the women,

The three Marys of great renown.

I'd sit with the men, the women and God

There by the lake of beer.

We'd be drinking good health forever

And every drop would be a prayer.

James O'Shea (GB) studierte Geschichte und Politologie, als er in Folge eines Zugunglücks beide Beine verlor. "This shamanic journey marked the birth of my spirits journey to freedom and the slow death of my social programming." O'Shea arbeitete in zwei Produktionen der Candoco Dance Company mit und trat in zwei eigenen Stücken als Freelance Performer auf (Choreographien von Adam Benjamin und Anna Röthlisberger). Unter professioneller Anleitung begann er mit einem seriösen Schwimmtraining und nahm 2012 an den Paralympics in London teil, wo er im 100m-Brustschwimmen den 4. Rang erreichte.

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W WILDWUCHS FESTIVAL
W WIR STÖREN!
24. MAI BIS 2. JUNI 2013

Konzept und
Realisation

MIGROS
kulturprozent