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Index 2003  
36 Typed Index Cards ea.  
127 Å~ 75mm

1

When taking photographs you have to decide whether to choose a subject and then look for it or to go out open minded and allow-subjects to make themselves apparent.

1a

If you choose the subject beforehand you might well end up trying to find examples of the subject and then arrive at a typology that will be hard to value in anything other than documentary terms.

1aI

You might well think that by persisting with the documentary approach you will bypass it; as if taking it to ludicrous extremes would turn it into something else. The risk is that this won't happen and that your work will become increasingly entrenched and inescapable.

1b

If you don't choose the subject beforehand and leave it to reveal itself, you might feel that you are giving excessive priority to your taste or vague things like your 'eye'. You might also wonder whether you have any criteria for your work or whether it's just about chance.

1bI

So you accept that and let yourself go with it, thinking that the problem is really with you, that you're maybe too uptight about things and that it's a question of the work loosening your critical parameters. It might, but if it doesn't you could look quite foolish.

1a & bII

You might consider captioning your photographs or showing them in such a way – through framing or sequential presentation with a slide projector – that the value of the work is not seen to reside in the quality or the specifics of the photograph but in its relation to another whole. But this opens up the problems of making objects and staging installations of things that are not in themselves the work.

2

When doing a show somewhere you have to decide whether you're going to engage with the context or use it as a space to house your work.

2a

If you engage with the context you will probably end up with a work that will be meaningless in any other place. You will also run the risk of appearing to be aggrandising what might be quite a shallow and instrumental understanding of any given place.

2aI

Perhaps you think that by dealing with enough contexts you will develop a looseness and fluidity in relation to contexts, a lightness of touch which might lead to the work disappearing and becoming a kind of tuning or focusing of the context. But it might be the case that your work does actually disappear.

2b

If you just use the space to house the work then the installation might feel a bit like window dressing. You might also feel that what you consider to be the particularities of your own work are unable to survive those of the context in which they're placed. It will be hard to deal with the inevitable shifts in meaning and even harder to claim them.

2bII

But you could claim that these inflections of context interest you, at least until your obvious lack of concern leads you to make an enormous blunder. Fine if you can keep faith in your work in isolation and deal with it not appearing in any context.

2a & bII

Go to 6

3

When you start a painting you should know whether you're going to insist on the image you start with or whether

you're going to allow the image to change and be transformed into something you hadn't imagined.

3a

Insist on the image and you could find yourself slavishly depicting something even when you have lost confidence in its meaning. You might find that you ask yourself whether other processes wouldn't be more appropriate.

3aI

Plenty of arguments you could make as to why it was appropriate to paint the image rather than to make it in any other way. But you might not want to keep on having to argue yourself into a tenable position, you might think that you want it to seem less defensive.

3aII

It might be wise to accept that your work will only be supported in a limited world where your concerns will not be questioned. But it will be a very conservative world and it might destroy your motivation.

3b

If you allow the image to change you might wonder whether the effects that emerge are pure chance. You might make something fantastic but from which you feel completely alienated – as if you had somehow cheated.

3bI

You could perhaps carry it off though, develop for yourself a persona full of mystique, as if your intuitive judgments and chance discoveries were somehow unique and special. Your on suspicion that they might not be is hard to take.

3bII

Wise as it may be to begin now to engage with the physicality of the work – depth of stretcher, type and density of paint, weave of backing... – you have to bear the possibility of seeing yourself as a demonstrator in an art material shop.

4

You might start with an idea of what you want your video to be, and you can establish the way to shoot it to achieve this end. You can never though be certain that you won't engage with the editing process to a significant extent.

4a

If you start with a very fixed idea you will feel stuck if the piece doesn't work because your principles will tell you that it must be good even when you're noticing that it's rubbish.

4aI

You might decide that this might be remedied by securing appropriate viewing conditions – a huge projection

in a sound-insulated room perhaps. But this might make you feel that you are straying too far from your idea and engaging in a process almost as arbitrary as editing.

4b

If you understand from the beginning that you will be doing a lot of editing then your filming might seem random and purposeless to you – as if you might as well be using any material and just putting it together nicely.

4bI

So you tell yourself that there's more to it than that. That you are engaging with your own informed and sensitised intuition, that every small decision contains in-depth analysis of film and video history – the critique, you tell yourself, is implicit. You may though find it difficult to discuss your work.

5

You might start a piece of writing imagining it to be a way of avoiding the formal and aesthetic decisions that frustrate you about more material kinds of work. But you will find that at some stage the same problems will surface.

5a

Avoid formalising it and you end up with loads of endless rambling texts, which you will not know what to do with.

5aI

You can convince yourself that you are engaged in a pure form of writing that will one day be discovered and published. More likely though is that you start to see yourself as one of the many who have a novel in them but are incapable of maintaining the discipline to complete it.

5b

Formalise them into novels, short stories or poems and find yourself without criteria by which to judge them. You might then have to look at them in relation to other formalised examples of writing only to discover that you are beginning with the same problems again.

5bI

So you enter the literary world, thinking that with your fresh perspective you will take it by storm. Your letters go unanswered, you find that you don't have the history or knowledge to engage in meaningful discussion. Then you meet a novelist who thinks that really he might be an artist – he shows you his work.

5a & bII

You turn to the short story as a form that seems less ponderous and weighed down. You wonder whether you should write about art, about the art-world or whether to try to come up with a story

about something else that might or might not have some metaphorical link to the worlds of art.

5a & bIIa

Choose art as your subject and you accept a certain ghettoisation of your work. You could also risk making rather glib commentary on a field that will only care for you as long as you entertain it. This could be a very brief moment, and once they abandon you, you will have no-one else.

5a & bIIb

However beautiful your stories and metaphors you might find that your audience will need some catch to tell them why they should be interested in this thing you're telling them about. It might be that in doing something that you may consider to have broad relevance you may be alienating yourself from the only audience to which have any access.

6

You might come to the conclusion that being an artist is not for you, and that you would rather get involved with being a curator or a critic. These activities are likely to leave you feeling equally despondent.

6 a

If you try to go to the limits of the activity you might begin to wonder why you are not

making the work that you  
are enabling or writing about  
yourself.

6aI

So you return to being an  
artist, but people resent  
the influence you may have  
garnered as a critic or curator  
and imagine that whatever  
success you have is tainted.  
Other critics and curators will  
also be eager to see you fail  
and will therefore not help  
you with their activities. This  
is not to mention all the other  
inherent problems of trying to  
be an artist.

6b

Adhere to the discipline of the  
activity and begin to feel as if  
you are becoming something  
which you do not recognise or  
want to be.