

**Excerpts selected from an interview with the artists conducted by John Reardon at Goldsmiths, University of London on 30 May 2009.**

JR: So I'm a bit... erm ... uncertain about what this is and I think that's why I was wanting to talk about it, 'cos my feeling is that there's a lot of uncertainty about it. For good and bad. Which is the thing that makes it interesting as well. I think. Possibly. Erm... so I wanted ask you just generally first... erm ... I suppose how you got involved. And what you think you gotten involved in? ALL: [Laughter] //

CB: Me, I got involved 'cos I just liked the sound of the set up. I'm not sure where it's going -

JR: What's the set up, from what you understand?

CB: From what I understand, erm... I think there's gonna be... er... certain... let's call us the criminal fraternity have put in a certain number of pictures each. I call us that because she wrote it on the flyer; something about our background coming from drug using, alcoholism and the criminal justice system. And, erm, I've forgotten what I was saying now...

JR: Just what you understand you were kind of getting in to...

CB: What I understand about it, yeh... and I don't know where it's going. These people.. We were putting work in and then other artists around were gonna work from that... //

JR: Who's looking after the outcome then? Who takes care of the outcome, do you think? Or whose responsible for that, or what would it be?

CB: Well, I dunno, what would that be? That would be what it is. I don't suppose anyone knows where it's going. Hopefully it's gonna be, um, some success for the painters, maybe anything could happen, couldn't it? We could get commissions coming out of it, who knows. Personally I'm not looking for those things. //

JR: So if I come in to this, say, if I come to Stephen Lawrence Gallery and if I don't know anything about you or you, or anyone here should that energy somehow be reflected in what I encounter and if so, if that's what's important you think, how might that be reflected, I suppose I'm wondering. //

CB: Well, it would be reflected I should imagine in, in the way it makes you feel and I can't pre-judge your reaction to it...

JR: But if I'm just a member of the public, just a, a kind of, maybe what I just see is a bunch of paintings, a bunch of stuff in a gallery, not unlike any other gallery you see a bunch of stuff in.

JR: Um, I'm not so sure it's different than another one, it's very small, and it's very isolated, and you have to be looking for it to find it, unless of course it's just accidental finding. Umm, I dunno, er, I don't pre-suppose anyone's reaction to anything really. Um, it would be nice if they couldn't differentiate between the works, that would be something I'd like, rather than pin a label back on the painters, saying isn't that good for a criminal, and good for someone, for junkie, or for a drunk or...

JR: Well in the art world there's a tradition of what we call outsider art, which are autodidacts, self trained, all the rest of it, there's a long tradition of this, that but somehow we make, there's a distinction made

CB: Yes but there actually isn't one, really, inherently there isn't one

JR: Is there a danger that it becomes a guessing game, for people that come into the gallery?

CB: If they wanna play that game then they can play that guessing game.

JR: Would that be alright?

CB: Yeah, do what you like. Be free. So long as you get a reaction, then that's good, you can work with something. I have a little philosophical attitude that I fall back on, is that you can't steer something that's not moving, so, so long as it's moving, whatever - positive, negative, you can change it.

JR: Yeah, you can do something with it.

CB: Yeah. //

JR: John, could I ask you where you think the work starts and stops? What...

John Wood: You mean, this particular show?

JR: Yeah.

JW: Because I have to confess I haven't seen it, so I'm at a big disadvantage here.

JR: So what's your involvement?

JW: Hannah asked me, like you, er to get involved. Erm, and so I thought I would find out, and I thought you'd be the expert.

JR: It becomes like an Agatha Christie doesn't it...?! Somebody's gonna die here.

All: [Laughter]

JR: The lights are gonna go out in a moment. [Laughter]

JW: It's strange that Hannah's not here, isn't it?

JR: That's a clue. //

Oliver MacDonald: I believe Hannah's whole ethos for this project is a kind of personal concern that these supposed amateur artists or 'outsider' artists which yes, they would fall into that bracket, erm, somehow get the opportunity to shed the clothes that are that connection with what Colin was saying about the, you know, criminal background, drugs, alcohol, just trying to relieve these... I would say we are all artists, of course we are, but those who have not been through the schooling, art schooling, to help give an opportunity for them to realise themselves as artists and erm...

JR: Well what does that.. why would that be of any benefit to anyone?

OM: I think, erm, there's a couple of people, erm, there's a couple of artists who I've talked to on the Open Book Project who have had certain, perhaps yourself Peter, maybe you're one of the ones who, or at least one of the artists Hannah's talked about, who've actually had some, quite good success erm but, and Simon, Simon's another, who's had a lot of work kind of published in the Big Issue, and it's kind of very much about his life history, less about him as an artist or about where he's come from and erm it's definitely a concern of Hannah's that somehow possibilities of release that erm you know

JR: But there's almost a contradiction in terms isn't there because erm, why I asked the question where the work starts and stops is erm is the work of the so called outsider artist involved in the exhibition, what does the work consist of, because it seems to be clear that the motivation you bring to the work maybe is quite different to the motivations you'd bring if you were art school trained. There are differences.

CB: Oh definitely.

JR: And so erm, the White Cube or the gallery space imposes sets of restrictions as well, it has a history, it's not a neutral space, it creates value judgements, you know, it presents value judgements. Is this art? Is it good? Is it interesting? And so on and so forth. So why I was asking where the work starts and stops is does the work say erm, of Simon's, include the big issues, include other things as well, or does it, or is there this erm kind of disavowal of anything other than the picture, the object, the art work, so that on the grounds of some kind of equality, because there's not equality, and I think you won't find that in the gallery as well as you won't find it in the world in general, so I'm wondering what goes in, what represents you at that point, is it just the picture, or is it also somehow we need to know how you arrived at the point of making these pictures. But then I would say well I'm in a gallery and who cares,

Richard Gildea: That's what I was saying to George...

JR: You know, who cares how you got here, or should I? Is that part of the project? Because you talk, Colin you talk about this kind of energy that motivates you, that kind of brings that

makes this possible and that it's kind of interesting to be involved because of that. So I think maybe that's why I'm wondering where that starts and stops for you.

RG: Well the only way we can get that sort of point of view across is when people come to view that we're available to comment. You know, then we can get that point of view across. Just looking at the pictures is not going to explain anything.

JR: But do you think more needs to be explained?

RG: No I don't.

CB: No, I don't wanna help the punter at all

RG: But I'm thinking about what Colin said.. you know...

JR: The picture is enough?

CB: Yeah

RG: I think it might be this time

CB: Absolutely enough, and er...

JR: Do you think that as well, George?

George Westren: Erm, yes, to some extent

CB: Depends on the point of the exhibition doesn't it? //

JR: Do you think it needs some kind of erm, guidance? Do you think it needs some kind of subject matter?

RG: Well I think maybe Hannah has purposely done it this way, I think she wants it to be mixed up like this. I'm not trying to read her mind, I think it's a good idea, and I also think erm, you were mentioning about outsider art and all the rest of it, I know Hannah put a letter together with all our names mixed in, not identifying who's the artist, who's the outside artist, and I think that's what she wants on the night so when people come in they're not aware of the difference. I'm hoping that they'll see the difference through the art, you know, they'll distinguish some sort of direction of one type of art and another but, I don't know whether, I'm speaking out of turn here, I'm speaking for Hannah, I don't know whether that's her intention or not, but I've got a feeling it might be. //

CB: I like the idea that we'll be indistinguishable, and then it'll be interesting to see.

JR: And my feeling is you won't.

CB: No, that's why I made that comment

JR: My feeling is that you won't.

CB: It won't be indistinguishable, yeah.

JR: I saw some of your work the other day and there was something about what you get taught in art school. I think two things that you get taught, I think in contemporary art schools. One is

what we would call a kind of criticality, a kind of reflexivity so that you, you don't, you don't, you no longer believe your work is you, in a sense, you know, that somehow you can create this kind of reflexive distance, between you and your work so that you can actually consider and be critical of your work as you're doing it. So that's one thing we teach. Another thing we teach, I think, is probably what adds up, just one word: style. What I consider style is some notion of consistency. That I can look at your work and then I can look at something else and say ah, that's Colin's again. And people will say that's a kind of measure of people's er, focus. I just think a lot in the style. What I saw in the, what I saw when I visited Greenwich the other day, was erm some of it was really eclectic, but it didn't look like, deliberate. It just looked like somebody was a bit all over the place just doing stuff, so I think it won't just all sit next to one another. I think that, I think people will be looking for the gaps, because the title itself it's called Reframed.

CB: Yes, I think that

JR: And you're walking in with that, with that intention in a way

CB: Yeah

JR: To find the gaps, to find where it falls down, something falls down, to find some, where something is more er, focussed, to find these moments.

CB: Yes

RG: I agree

JR: I don't know...

RG: Well George and I were having this conversation about this very thing before we met you, er, about distinguishing between the trained artist and the untrained artist, and I, I said to you George, I think they will notice the difference, but I also said, that Hannah told me that they won't.

JR: But why, why do you think she's hoping that?

RG: I don't know if she is, I just got that impression, by leaving the names anonymous, who's trained, who's untrained, putting us all in the mix together on the same night, all that kind of thing.

JR: I think maybe that's the bit I don't understand, and it seems to underpin the exhibition in a way, why you would want to make, why you would try and erm, not make, why you would try and hide that.

RG: I don't know if that's a fact. I don't know that's a fact. >>

GW: I think that if you, if you go to art school, you, you immediately have a wall put around you, and you're inside that wall, and you get all the advantages from being inside that wall, er, you

get all the contacts all the advantages of people who go to art schools, er, and if you're of outside that wall you don't have the same advantage, so it's...

JR: Yeah, I think there are advantages, probably, and disadvantages accrue as well, I think for a lot of artists, there is, I think pleasure is something that gets lost very easily.

RG: Are there limitations imposed on you?

JR: I think you impose your own limitations through training.

RG: You do it yourself?

JR: Absolutely.

OM: Yeah I would say so, definitely, I know it's happened to me. I know I've lost a, a level of freedom, as it were. There are certain things I disallow myself to follow through with because, because, maybe it's because it's a little bit outside of the area I've been working in, and I'm concerned about responses

JR: You might be accused of being not being responsible?

OM: Yeah, kind of.

JR: Of not being focussed, of not being consistent?

OM: I feel a level, a level of pressure to, to kind of keep myself on, on this track. And I don't really know what the track is, but I know there's a track there now, and I know that is only there because I've been to college and because I've erm, been developing, er, kind of developing a style. But it's quite, it's quite, my work is quite spontaneous. It's, it does have a freedom, but yeah, it's closed, my parameters have shut down a bit. I'm not, not as open as when I first came to college. //

JW: I can remember interviewing Damien Hirst, and I can remember his work, it was very memorable. I don't have that good a memory, but it was memorable right at the beginning. And I think it was, and what we used to say, when we interviewed people sometimes we'd get people who were already successful, who hadn't really had much training before, and I remember saying to them, a few of them, look, you do realise if we accept you, you're gonna lose that, actually you, because in a sense they did have a style, as I would see it. They were able to do something that was, well professional, they were selling their work, and the would've, that would've gone. And ever since I've been involved in teaching in art schools there's always been that fight between the, there were people that stood up for the life drawing tradition and all that, and you had a subculture, so there was a degree of, of choice I think that people had, students had when they went. Erm, but, I don't know if this is, er, helpful, but erm I had a chat with er, with Hannah about this, I was, and I was saying, that there was a category of people, who, I was just trying to get, get back, it's Richard isn't it? Sorry, I got your name wrong, erm, come back to that thing about the difference, bit, with the homelessness and with

the criminal.. there's, there's a group that brings together armed services, er, homeless, er, criminals, entrepreneurs, erm, and artists, and that's dyslexia, or dyslexic style thinking. Which I think is absolutely, this whole thing about, erm, no one's bothered about the agenda, or I haven't heard anyone saying you know, let's define our goal, you know the targets and all that stuff. //

Trish Stevenson: Can I just say something, because I'm came at this much later. I only found out about this a couple of weeks ago I found out about the project, and I'm an outsider, I'm a New Zealander and I just arrived here, and to me the English way of doing things is weird. It's really hierarchical and it's really Establishment oriented. So some of the things you're even talking about are not part of our culture really. We are a much more inclusive culture by and large. We still have the pecking order of course but we don't have the same weight placed on whether you are trained or not trained for a start. But my understanding from talking to Hannah, and the bit that was drawing me into this, is about the dialogue between two... people coming from different walks of life, really, but united with their interest in ideas and art making and creativity and I guess that's why I'm coming to it is to... Cos initially I was thinking, oh, it is about the exhibition then when I saw your work, and she was saying, "Can you respond to that?", to your work, and was thinking "Yeah and I'm going to try some things I haven't tried before", because, like you, I've been through the conventional, erm, thing, just come out the other end of a Masters, and feeling like it straight jacketed me in a way that I wasn't before. So I'm going to use the opportunity to break out and do some things that I've been thinking about but haven't really got around to. And I will do that in response to the work that I've seen. But I think she's also... she's saying "Have you rang George? Have you got in touch with George? Have you spoken to Richard?" And I think there's something about the process, that we will go through over the next few weeks. //

RG: I feel of late that we're a little bit like guinea pigs that we're been looked at and listened to and analysed and someone else is writing up something about the process we're going through and we've got no control of what is going to happen with that.

JR: [Indistinguishable]

RG: And I'm aware that the tapes on but I'm talking on a 1:1 basis. But that's what I feel like. I feel I'm part of a laboratory experiment. But not quite. I think there's good intentions behind it. But I am aware that there are other people analysing the outcome, and may be writing a paper on it or...

JR: To what end do you think? Why would...

RG: I'm not quite sure at the moment. I'm investigating it in my own way...

CB: There is a little bit of that isn't there... but erm...

RG: But I'm quite happy with it...

CB: The intention is good...

RG: I'm not restricted by it in anyway...

CB: No... it'll be interesting.

RG: I'm really... I'm really keen to see what happens, like you...

CB: So am I, I'm keen to see what other people do with it.

RG: That's why I'm still involved. >>

GW: Maybe one day there won't be an insider/outsider art.

CB: Well there isn't... in life... it's a piece on nonsense. Isn't it? Let's face it.

JR: Er... I don't think that's possible.

CB: No, people like to...

JR: I don't think that's a realistic... I think you have hierarchies... I think you have... I don't think I see it as hierarchies...you have distinctions that will always be made, I think.

GW: So...

JR: And one of the challenges to the distinction is that something falls outside. Because it's what art tries to do as well. Art always tries to find - certainly contemporary art, but I think it is a tradition in art - that it always finds the place where things fall out of the discipline, or fall out of the field, or bring in another field. Like art/science, art/politics, art... art and society... [indistinguishable]... so you always... art and design, and so on so forth. So you're always pushing against something, and then including, trying to include something. So you're always trying to find those spaces where something is, is overlapping with something else.>>

JR: And I'm curious to see... I'm as curious... I'm not just curious about the so-called outsiders here, I'm as curious about the so-called artists and their involvement, and what they... Because I think it's interesting what you say about you can break out and I'm curious if that's another way of saying, "to hell with quality now", because you've got outsiders that are not trained, then I can kind of do what I want now. //

TS: I'm an outsider in that I've never exhibited anything here in the UK, so, y'know, my name is, um... y'know... I'm looking at ways that I can build my brand, so I'm not going to be doing crap work just because other people are considered to be by somebody else to be not part of the establishment. Not at all. //

JR: See I think there is a fantasy about the real, er, the real world so to speak, and the outsider inhabits the real world. I think it's a fantasy very much in academia...

CB: Yes it is.

JR: ...very much. You are very exotic because you inhabit the real world, and we can only think about it, so we can only analyse it from here. Whereas I think it's a load of bullshit.

CB: Yes it is and it justifies the hierarchy that they're speaking from, the position you're speaking from.

TS: Well it does, yeah.

CB: And that's all it is. It's actually a fear-based reaction to what you're looking at.

JR: And you are interesting to me because you are from the real world.

CB: Well so are they. Tell us one of us who isn't.

GW: And so are you... yeah.

JR: Yeah but the fantasy exists, here in art college about this idea of the real. And the Everyday we talk about all the time here.

RG: Uninhibited world.

JR: Yes. Uninhibited, spontaneous, engaged, committed..

CB: Rebellious.

JR: Rebellious, obnoxious, anarchic, bloody-minded, and all the rest of it. //

CB: I feel for you trained community...

TS: [Laughs]

CB: ...because I do, in a way, feel that you've set up boundaries for yourself that just need to be flattened again.

OM: Yeh.

CB: And I'd love that.

TS: Yeh.

OM: I think that's what this opportunity, you know, can, um... can offer us really.

TS: Exactly.

CB: I hope so.

OM: To kind of, actually... open ourselves up again. And maybe... maybe... yeah, underlying will be, kind of, something quite selfish, that, actually, this is personally, for me, a... a...

CB: What's wrong with that?

OM: Well nothing.

TS: It's good. //

GW: I go in looking at the Turner prize with the wrong attitude anyway cos I'm not going to like it before I see it and that's wrong and I should go in there with an open mind. So I shouldn't talk about the Turner Prize, because it's my pet hate. //

JW: Well, if you wanted to, if you really want to sell work in I don't know the white cube or something you might be able to do it if you try hard enough over years and years and years, just focus on that one thing, but would you want to? And there all these other places, there are all these different places you can be, there's always a problem and an advantage as well. So I think it's just, it may be is a bit more relaxing to know that, so that you don't feel that you are always, always an outsider, for example, which is easily done if you believe the particular text books.

CB: I would rather be the outsider

JW: Yeah, okay, but that's your choice though isn't it? As long as you make that choice, that's great. //

CB: I've never considered the showing of art, ever, before. I just give 'em away, my pictures, to whoever likes them. You like it? I give it to you. You know.

JR: And the irony is the only reason you're being talked about as outsider now is you've been brought so-called inside...

CB: Yes.

JR: ...In the gallery.

CB: Yes, yes.

JR: Otherwise you don't have that label.

CB: Yeh, yeh, yeh. That's right

JR: You're just Colin...

CB: That's right.

JR: ... You make some pictures. //

TS: What we are talking about now is really interesting because, because it, I think the value of, for me, of, of art education, was finding the, the world of art and ideas that I, that I could resonate with, that, that was the exciting thing, you know, that knowing that you know, that I was working on a concept or something that somebody you know, 50 years ago was also thinking about or someone around me nearby is thinking about, that's really exciting because you feel like you belong to a body, in a body of knowledge and I think, you know for me, that, that, what you were just saying, I mean it's obvious isn't it but it's lovely I mean because you can see that you're working something and these other people are, er, in a way it ...>>

RG: It's something I've never considered: bringing someone else in on my work, I have a sense of guilt about it somehow, but I can understand the sense about it and if it's acceptable in the inner circle it should be acceptable for the outsiders.

All: [Laughter] >>

JR: Can I just say something about er, critics and, erm, critics again Colin, which is something about erm, being part of something and I think critics are often, why a lot of artists are making work or their audience are often other artists.

CB: Yes

JR: you know, you get these very close-knit communities across, say for instance London, it's a big city but it's a very small art world. And you get different communities in London that are almost making work for one another, in a certain kind of way, so that it's other artists plus friends of artists, that are interested in certain things.

CB: Who are the insiders

JR: I don't know if it's... I think it gets very erm...

RG: Or enclaves...

JR: I think it gets much more ambiguous who's doing what at certain moments, I think, you see I think it benefits you in a way to hang on to a term like 'outsider'.

CB: Yeah yeah sure

JR: Erm, whereas I would say in the art world things do get much more ambiguous, and things do fall outside quite easily, or things... You know it's not as hermetic (sp?) and it's not as, it is exclusive on the one hand, on the other hand it's very erm, fluid...

CB: It is, it's exclusive if you, if you buy into that game and you're allowed to be...

JR: It depends on the game, I think you have to define the game then at that point, because there are a lot of different games going on. There are people we... in London there are people that completely are kind of sub-cultural in the sense that they are not a gallery system, they chose not to be, but they are really busy making things, they're really busy talking about them, they're really busy showing them to one another, in basements, in... y'know... in high rise blocks, in abandoned spaces and so on so forth. So when you're talking about the game I think you're talking about games, plural.

CB: Yes yes.

JR: And I think it's the one you're trying to play, I think that's the kind of focus artists are bringing: the game they want to be involved.

CB: Yes, which is many and varied of course

JR: Absolutely

CB: But I'm getting at that that little clique of artists are, to all intents, to themselves, are the inside, are inside in the centre: another little insider group there. And unless they show their work to critics, erm, and include them that way, then the critics are the outsider: the critic is the outsider not the painter. //

JW: I think it's really important, though, because I moved from teaching fine art people to teaching designers, and think there's... I've made an artificial distinction - there isn't really one, actually - but there is in so far as designers are more likely to have a client and then they have certain responsibilities if they put things into production. Which I think... Now I think it's really important that artists don't have that. The deal, I think, is that artists - as opposed to, say, musicians - don't usually expect to get paid, unless they're clever like Damien, or people like that. And the deal is that you produce something that you cannot know what it's going to be. It's really important that you don't know. You might have visions, you might go towards certain things, but the unexpected is really, really important. And I think this book, Richard Florida's book, on the creative city is interesting, and it says, well, you need certain things for a city really to buzz, and the important fourth, I think it is, on the list is the artists and the creatives. Because you can't actually... You're... I mean... What you are doing when you're messing with this stuff, is that you're messing with yourself and the whole context, and some bits of things there... erm... you don't actually know the complexity of what you're dealing with. That's very different from something you can be trained for, and planned for - you cannot really plan for it.

CB: No, you can't at all.

JW: And that's the buzz of it, that's the craic. I mean... So I think it's got to have... erm... you know... To actually take that opportunity is fantastic... Because... it's... Most people don't feel at all licensed to do that.

CB: No. Yeah, it's a very good word for it: yeah, to be licensed. >>

RG: Can I ask another question about the night of the exhibition? Who are the audience, do we know the background, the catchment area, where they're coming from?

JR: I know as much as much as you Peter. No, I don't

JW: We could bring some design people in.

JR: That's something that you can have something to do with as well. You know cos I think there is a kind of visibility you can create here rather than being invisible, or alternatively erm, somehow, you know at the behest, just working completely in hock to the market. I think there is a visibility that you can start to build up here, much more on your own terms. So for instance, if you had a website. There's, like there's a group in Hamburg that have been working for about 25 years, and they're, again, what fall under the category of outsider, in this

case they're people in hospital, most manic depressives and so forth, people on medication. But they produced, erm, I saw some books actually, coincidentally when I was in Hamburg because I knew somebody that worked for this group for a few years, they produced the most amazing books, and there are the most amazing images in the books, and they produced them year in year out so you've got this incredible anthology of 25 years of these different artists that passed through this place and produced works, so I think there's an opportunity here you really grab that and erm, you can, because there will be other disparate groups here not only across the UK but across Europe that you can, you can start to link up with so you start to create your own sub-economy and sub- you know subculture.

CB: yeah, yeah it's right there, you've just opened my eyes to it yeah

JR: so it's not so black and white that well I'm either in or I'm out, you know, you start to... and the internet is probably... you're never better placed to do it as you are today to start to network laterally to start to network backward and horizontally across, across the world.

CB: And keep the integrity of... the creative integrity stays with you that way.

JR: Depending where it goes you can end up in Rio in a year's time with some .... I don't know, I don't know where it goes, but you could be sitting on a beach in Rio because of that, because of the Stephen Lawrence Gallery. //

JR: I think then the distinctions, I think become more blurred, not maybe to the people that fall outside this group, but certainly within the group you start to develop, if you start to develop this, the distinction between what's outside and inside becomes less blurred because you're all inside, because what this group is actually is, is being inside, because then you've got an outside so I think then those distinctions then between artists and non-artists become more, blurred because you've created this inside.

CB: Good, because they need to be blurred. And then reformed, then re-blurred

JR: I think again you can be strategic. I think it's where they're interesting: where they're blurred, where they're not. You know. It's where you can push and pull with it. It's where to...

CB: So, to set it up...

JR: And how to use things, how to use... if the distinctions are being made than how to use that. And maybe how to use people that are making those distinctions. Well, if you're a museum director, you're kind of interested in us being outsiders, well why don't you put us in here for a while, then, and we'll gladly embrace this status of outsider. So it's being kind of strategic with it, where these things can be blurred and not.

CB: Yes, sure. It's a question of just doing it, isn't it? Rather than saying, "Well there's the work, you do that. I don't what you're going to do with it, just do it, and I'm not expecting any results, mate".

JR: You come with it. You come with it. //

JR: It's interesting, there's a tradition... erm... there's this guy Jack Spector, he's written a book called Surrealist Art and Writing, so we're talking 1924, if you imagine, Europe is just after being in flames and it's about to go up in flames again. So you've got this really dynamic period between 1924 and 1932. The Surrealists, Dada, Futurists, all that lot. The Surrealists - Jack Spector - wrote a book and in his book he writes about the amount of group photographs the Surrealists took, right? Which he says wasn't a coincidence. You'd often get: group photograph, eyes closed, and then often a nude figure in the middle. What Spector argues is that this was a really powerful way of identifying them as a group. So while Breton, who they call the pope of Surrealism, Andre Breton who kind of the driving force, he proceeded to excommunicate a whole lot of them in 1929 because they joined the Communist Party... Louis Aragon and people like this. So he threw them out, chucked them out. But they continued to take group photographs. So it was almost like they claimed that while the people may change, the faces may change, this group is absolutely consistent, is united, and is driven. And I think that's really interesting... how they moved. Because this group morphed, changed, broke down, built over again... right into the 40's.

CB: So it was an artwork itself in fact.

JR: Yeah, because they made a lot of artwork collectively as well. Which is also a possible here, that some stuff ends up... It was a question I was kind of wondering: are they kind of going to do something together? Not because they all like one other or anything, nothing to do with that. But because the possibility exists as well. The Surrealists used to have this game called the exquis-... exquisi-... Exquisite Corpse... and... you know that game where I draw something, you add to it, you add to it, you add to it, you add to it ... So they did a lot of... um... and they did a lot of automatic writing...

CB: Yeh, I've done a bit myself that way.

JR: So they did a lot of group work together and produced it under that name. So there was no one author. It was collective.

CB: We could be the inside/out group couldn't we? >>

CB: The other this is we don't really know each other that well, don't think anybody really sort of... conceptualising it.

JR: I think the potential is there. I think someone needs to drive it or grab it or, you know, do something with it.

CB: Which is kind of how I, the position personally I'd given to Hannah.

JR: Yeah.

CB: Hannah was doing something with it, she was collecting work in...

JR: Yeah but I would say that Hannah is also part of it.

CB: Yes of course.

JR: You know, she's done a great job, but I think she's implicated as well. She's not neutral...

RG: No.

CB: She's definitely not neutral.

JR: ...she's part of this, and for better or for worse.

CB: She's an artist as well isn't she?

JR: Yes. So, um, that means that you can take the responsibility of her as well, as well as add extra responsibility to her, depending on what you kind of want, do you know what I mean? You can use Hannah in the best possible way.

CB: I personally feel, still, a little bit... standing away from her. I'm not going to do that anymore. This conversation has changed it.

JR: Oh, you can push and pull with Hannah

CB: I'm going to, yeah. Because I thought I was just being polite, I mean I don't know Hannah very well, so be polite, and not push. //

JW: I am very interested in this whole process of how organisms or organisations do create themselves. The self-creation process is really fascinating to me. That's how nature works. It sounds like you're on the road to creating something. And of course, that's the other thing as I said, you won't know what it is, because you are on the inside of it. You will only recognise yourselves when you see it reflected around you. And I think that's the other thing that John was talking about, in a sense you are an outsider until you find someone who is more of an outsider, then you think: "Oh, I'm a bit of an insider now". So you can move around as an organism, you can move around until you find yourselves with the other differences, the other distinctions that are helpful to you.

JR: Yup. Cos people will always make those distinctions, you don't have to make them at all.

CB: No, no, not at all. You don't have to listen to them either, or be affected by them, actually: other people's distinctions.