

Recreating the Conditions for *Long Film For Ambient Light* (Anthony McCall)

12 noon Friday 16 March - 12 noon Saturday 17 March, 2007.

Teaching and Learning Cinema (Lucas Ihlein and Louise Curham)

<http://teachingandlearningcinema.org>

Interview 08: Saturday 17 March, 2007, 1640h, **0840h**

Lizzie Muller, Chris Fortescue, Lucas Ihlein

Lizzie Chris, isn't it?

Chris Mm.

Lizzie What time is it?

Chris Now? I don't really have any clear idea but probably about half past eight or something like that.

Lizzie Half past eight in the morning...

Chris Twenty to nine.

Lizzie Good guess. And how long do you think you've been here?

Chris I came at around five or so.

Lizzie Five in the morning – ok, so we're just going to do a little interview about your experience of the work, and then we'll move on to kind of thinking about what your thoughts are about it. But first of all I'd quite like to know how it unfolded for you, just as an experience for your body and your mind – so can you describe what happened in the run up to coming in the room and first entering the room?

Chris Where do we start the run up?

Lizzie Up to you. How much of a run up do you need?

Chris Well it's quite a long one because I knew that it was a long piece and I knew that I wasn't going to watch it for 24 hours, or be involved with it for 24 hours, so then I had to decide on an entry point and I thought that dawn might be a nice entry point but I didn't really know when dawn was, so I had to think, 'oh yeah ok well, 5am should be ok', so that meant I had to kind of organise myself to wake up and get over here and stuff.

Lizzie So how did you feel when you woke up?

Chris Oh I felt excited, I thought, 'oh this is good', it was something to, something out of the ordinary, and it's always nice getting up before the sun because you see aspects of the day that you don't normally see.

Lizzie And how did you get yourself here?

Chris Taxi. And the guy didn't know the way – so that was good.

Lizzie So you rocked up in a taxi and gave Lucas a call?

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie And he came to...

Chris And he let me in, and I'd never seen this building before either so I had to spend a bit of time checking that out, and then - a little bit of time. And then I came in and – what was my first impression? I think my first impression was just the harshness of the, of the light, and how I really didn't want it to be there.

Lizzie The light bulb?

Chris Yeah the light bulb, horrible insistent little monster of a thing. So I thought about the light bulb for quite a while and obviously it, you know it's got, it has a reason for being there because it's a (cinema?) reference and all that kind of stuff. But then – yeah...

Lizzie Tell me how it felt not wanting it to be there. Was that a bodily experienced thing, or...?

Chris Yeah, yeah it's just a reaction to having your eyes pinned like that, especially that early in the morning like you know, I'd like something a bit softer especially after you get up and move around in the early morning kind of half light, which is really nice, and you come into a hard situation like this with a blasting light bulb, so it's really unpleasant.

Lizzie So how did you arrange yourself physically in the space when you first came in?

Chris Well that's interesting actually because I didn't, when I came in I didn't register that, I couldn't really figure out where the ambient light would come from and I presumed that there would be skylights and I don't know why I presumed that but I just did, and I thought, I thought the roof would be the source of light; I didn't even register that this was a light panel. And I allowed myself to be aligned by the location of a pillow, there was a pillow over there so I thought, 'oh yeah I'll go and sit on that'. So that's interesting because it's sort of like, 'oh yeah' – the seats are in the cinema, you go and sit on them. And all the other seats were occupied by people snoring, so...

Lizzie No one snored, I'm not going to have that on – for the record, none of us snored.

Chris I was there, you were asleep.

Lizzie And then – so you arranged yourself by the pillar. Pillow. By the pillar and the pillow?

Chris That's right, yeah.

Lizzie And you were facing towards the light bulb?

Chris I was facing the light bulb and I was facing you know – but basically I was directing my attention to the ceiling, which was sort of like a complete furphy. And – but that was good, in the end. But also I think that something, there was something about – after I sat there for a while I realised, 'actually, I'm being photographed'. So that was strange because, I mean that was one of the other impressions that I had when I came in, there was the light bulb and then there was a screen.

Lizzie Screen?

Chris Yep, there's a screen in here.

Lizzie Oh, of the video camera?

Chris Yeah, so then I immediately realised you know this was something that was being documented and that made it even more kind of ghastly because of the fact that, then it was like, 'oh yeah, here's a rat in a concrete box with a single light, and let's just watch it with a video camera and see what it does', so that was, that gave it this kind of forensic, sociological experiment thing that it wouldn't have had I think probably originally. And it also made me think about the, the motivations of the people who are re-staging it, which are obviously different from McCall's.

Lizzie Let's come onto those a little bit later – so they were the thoughts that were running through your head at that point; can you kind of elaborate on them a little bit now in terms of you know, rather than post (hoc?) what you think about them now, what was actually running through your head at that point? Were you thinking, did it cross your mind to leave, or...?

Chris Oh no I don't, I don't leave, I mean I, no I mean I very rarely kind of think, 'oh well no' – no, I don't do that even in movies that I don't like, I sit through them to the end cause I quite like sitting there, whatever; I don't mind spending the time even if I'm – I don't think I've got anything better to do, generally speaking. So that wasn't a, I didn't feel like leaving. And it was like, oh it reminded me of retreats I've been on, just the idea of having your attention drawn down to something that, you know you take away all the distractions and you just have some kind of pure attention, which was, it's nice, it's a nice thing to do so – even if there's a light bulb it's ok, you can block it out with your leg or something.

Lizzie Mm, a lot of people were doing that, working out a physical arrangement of themselves that would block out the light bulb.

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie So then can you kind of draw me in a bit more to what happened as the experience unfolded? So you were sitting there, you noticed the screen and you were arranging yourself so you could see the ceiling, and then what happens?

Chris Yeah well it was complicated by the fact that there were, that it was a crash pad I think, quite a lot. So there was the work and then there was the video camera documentation and all the other kind of palaver, documentation that was going on, then there were the sleeping bodies so there was like three different aspects to the work which wouldn't have been in the original, which I had to...

Lizzie And they seemed quite distinct to you?

Chris Oh yeah, yeah quite distinct. They could have – any of them could have been taken out, sort of thing. Yeah and so I had to negotiate them as well as the work so that meant that I couldn't, I couldn't move around – I felt that I couldn't move around freely within the space because it was, I might trip over somebody who was having a nice dream or something or I might block out the video camera when it was supposed to be taking a picture of the wall. So there were those kinds of spatial and behavioural...

Lizzie Mm, social.

Chris Social constraints, yeah.

Lizzie And then?

Chris So I just sat there for a while, I sat – I, once I occupied my, my cushion I sort of sat there, and I looked at the roof a lot and you know I just tried to kind of attune myself to the ambient light and how that might be shifting, and I read a little bit of the notes; I sent an SMS to somebody in Vienna.

Lizzie What did the SMS say?

Chris It said that I was, just said that I was here and doing this particular thing and – and it was strange because the person that I sent the SMS to was waiting in a queue to go into a, a contemporary opera, a modern opera which was based around the Minotaur, the Minotaur myth, the Ariadne thing.

Lizzie The maze?

Chris Yeah and I thought, 'oh this is really interesting' because there was sort of a nice correlation between that particular mythology and the one that's evoked here I think, I liked thinking about those two things separately. So I escaped, I did one of the things you're not supposed to do in the cinema and that's I had my mobile phone on, so – yeah. And then I just, after a while I was aware that the light was changing and that it was coming from behind me and I went, 'oh right ok, that's where the screen is', so then I repositioned myself; and people by that time were waking up and moving around. I think you asked me about a cup of tea around that time...

Lizzie It was quite bright by then.

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie So can you describe to me that, that realisation that the screen's behind you and then the light changing and any kind of physical, emotional or mental...?

Chris Well that had a very – yeah that had a very strong emotional effect on me because I, I felt like I'd done something wrong; it was really strange, I thought – and it was tied up with the sociological thing that you were talking about earlier on because I felt, 'oh shit, I've been constrained to such an extent that I haven't seen the work', you know I've come into the, I've come into the place and normally what I would do would be to kind of cruise about a bit and look at it from different angles and everything like that but I felt constrained by the, by the other people in here, in a way that I wouldn't have been if they were all doing the same thing; you know if we were all at the same...

Lizzie Point.

Chris ...point, then it would have been easier to sort of negotiate through the crowd because there would have been consensus of behaviour that's ok, but I couldn't do that so there were, that made me – that made me sort of surrender the way that I would normally go about becoming acquainted with the work and when I realised that, that actually the part where the change that I was here to somehow witness, I'd missed that because I'd been worried about the other people, and that pissed me off, a real lot. And it was quite a complex emotion because – well it just, it was, it was like a psychotherapeutic moment because I realised that it was the same kind of thing that, that happens to me a lot, about trying to balance my own kind of way of negotiating the world with other people, and just that, just the whole thing about relationships and stuff you know, you can't just do what you want the whole time because there's other people and the other people don't want you to do that and blah blah blah, it's just basic social dynamics and I think that's one of the reasons why I'm involved in art and like it, is because it enables me to sort of escape from that to a certain extent, or abstract it. It's like a, it's like a refuge.

Lizzie Or in a strange way in this case, intensify it.

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie Ok so you've been pissed off, you've gone through that and the light's changing - and I suppose by now you're looking at the window, or...?

Chris Mhm.

Lizzie And what's, what's attracting your attention? What are you noticing?

Chris Well just how much nicer it is than that bloody light bulb. You know?

Lizzie Mm, (I was the same?).

Chris Yeah it's just real nice, and it's got a nice full spectrum of colour and it's full and juicy and it represents all the good things in life.

Lizzie It's rich.

Chris Yep, rich.

Lizzie That's what I wrote down, interesting. Ok, and so did that have an effect on your thoughts and your emotional state, or...?

Chris Yeah, yeah and it made me think a lot about – it was funny because when it started to come up then I started to think, 'well Chris, how come you came here with only four hours' sleep? Why did you decide on that entry point? Why did you decide that you would come in at dawn rather than dusk?' And I thought, 'well you know because I was somewhere else at dusk' and you know, but I think when I heard about the work I thought, 'oh well dawn would be the best time to approach it', and then I thought, 'well why?', and then I thought, well, because of the light and, and the contrast between the kind of horrible, you know bitter little kind of man-made scrappy little thing sticking up there and this beautiful full, juicy sort of – I thought, 'the reason that you came at dawn Chris is because you're an optimist'. So that was good. Yeah I think I would have, you know the idea of actually having the light disappear in favour of that – yuck.

Lizzie Mm, it's a very depressing moment.

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie Interesting. So, and thinking about the social dynamic now - so when you came in we were all asleep and we kind of constrained you, kind of almost involuntarily, and then we started to wake up and I offered you a cup of tea – can you talk a bit about that kind of change from being surrounded by sleeping bodies to this kind of more active social situation we've got going on?

Chris Yeah I think that the, the main thing about that for me was speech - at what point do you speak to people or, you know how do you interrupt people? Do people welcome the interruption or not? And you know, the thing about at what point – because often in art situations or situations like this it's not, you don't necessarily want to talk to people or think that you should, you know because it's a place where, it's a contemplative space and you know if people are sort of sitting there having their thoughts then you don't come up to them and say, you know...

Lizzie 'What are your thoughts?'

Chris Yeah, 'what are your thoughts?' or, 'would you like a cup of tea?', whatever...

Lizzie (Sorry?)

Chris No, no, I mean it's, it's – but of course it's not like, you know there's no - I mean who's to say what this kind of space is? It's all about, you know you just

have these ideas that are based on various fictions or experiences you've had previously that aren't – there's no rules here.

Lizzie So you were thinking to yourself, 'when, at what point do we speak?' – did you want to speak?

Chris Oh I never really want to speak.

Lizzie Did you want to be spoken to?

Chris Well I suppose, I suppose it's, it's – yeah I welcome interaction let's say so that's, you know you can't just sort of stay in the kind of (mug's?) situation forever you have to kind of interact and I, I welcome that so - but it's just a matter of at what point and in what terms and you know, it's trying to judge – I mean I think there's something about - well a situation like cinema normally where you know you know exactly what all the rules are and you go in there and it's all prescribed for you and all you have to do is sort of succumb; you know that doesn't happen here so then you have to, it just means you have to think about all those things, you have to think about more, or they present you with a, you know a possible – they present a threat because you don't really know what the correct way to do things – there's no, there's no map so you have to kind of, you go, 'oh yeah', you have to just think about things that normally you don't have to think about, it's just prescribed by the – you don't talk to people in the cinema otherwise people behind you say, 'shut up!' so that's all, you don't have to think about it it's already just done for...

Lizzie Or at least you know you're making a conscious choice to break the rules.

Chris Yeah, yeah that's right.

Lizzie So you left for quite a while.

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie Why? What did you do?

Chris Well I decided that I needed to have a piss so I thought I'd go and look for the toilets and that took a...

Lizzie Four hours later!

Chris It took a while, it took a while and then when I came back I got interested in the documentation so I read quite a bit of the stuff, yeah. And then I...

Lizzie Ok, and then I suppose when, by the time you came back everything was starting to become quite social by then.

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie And now that we're in this much more social phase - everyone's (bringing?) croissants and coffee and it's packed up a bit - can you talk about your experience of that very social phase and of the work, and whether the work continued to exist in the same way, or your relationship to it?

Chris No I think that, I think that once I started to socialise the work was, it became an object in a way that it hadn't been before. You know I think that previously I was subject to it, I was in an unknowing position and I had to, you know I didn't know what it was going to do to me but then once I was in the you know had the comfort of the group then I could you know, I was in a, in a kind of a different relationship; I could objectify the work and kind of think about it objectively in a way that I couldn't previously. I mean I was thinking about it objectively while I was in here but at the same time I was, I was immersed in a way that I'm not now.

Lizzie You might not be able to but can you describe that change from subject to object, or from you being a subject to the work being an object? Physically? Or emotionally?

Chris Physically – well not really I think it's, I think that it's just about speech I think, for me it's just about speech – as soon as you have to speak then you can't be immersed in the same way.

Lizzie Ok.

Chris And I don't think it's physically – I wouldn't describe it as a change in physical sensations or anything like that it's just a thing about the kind of, the kind of mentality that you have to manifest in order to speak, which is different from if you're just kind of sitting there waiting for something to happen or – you know.

Lizzie I just want to chase around a few of the things that you were saying during the course of that chat, and one of the things you said earlier on was that when you came in there were three distinct elements and one was the work, one was the people - and what was the third one?

Chris The documentation, the parenthesis.

Lizzie So I just want to fling out the idea that all of those elements combined are the work, and see – I mean obviously that thought must have crossed your mind, that rather than there being the three distinct elements and one of them being the work, the entire situation, and you in it, must be considered the work...

Chris Mm, yeah but I think the, the difference is that this is a work which – you know it's a – yeah you could say that but then the work becomes a quotation. You know the McCall thing; the McCall element is a quotation then, somehow. You know I think it would have been – I don't know it's hard to say; it's even impossible to say because I, I wasn't in, at the work in 1975 so I don't know what it was like.

Lizzie I think it was done a few times.

Chris Yeah, that's right.

Lizzie So in a sense they are (repeatable?) conditions.

Chris Yeah but I think that – yeah, that’s right.

Lizzie And I’m interested to chase up a little bit more what you said about the difference of intentions of the people recreating it now, and McCall.

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie I’m really interested to know what you mean by that, and how – because at that point you also started talking about you know, the sociological experiment of it which I suppose me with this tape recorder asking all the questions slightly reinforces.

Chris Mm.

Lizzie Can you talk about this interview and its relationship to the experience?

Chris Well it’s – I don’t know, it’s hard to say because it’s like a, one of the things that’s enjoyable about experiencing the work of art or a work of cinema or whatever is sort of debriefing afterwards; that’s really good, and kind of you know talking about what it was and all that kind of stuff so this is simply a, a thing like that, somehow.

Lizzie A debrief?

Chris A debrief but it’s also – it’s different because I know, or I presume that it’s going to be made use of and that’s a different, that’s a really different thing. So you know, it’s like there’s – I think the difference between – it’s hard to say because I don’t, you know I don’t really know, I can’t be in 1975 in the UK so, but I get the impression that there’s a sort of second degree thing happening here that wasn’t happening then, you know there’s much more of an involvement with the ideas that were embodied in the elements; the lights and all that kind of stuff.

Lizzie What do you mean, ‘an involvement’?

Chris On the part of the people who are actually staging I, so I guess that earlier McCall and his team would have been more concerned with the formal aspects of the work and how that related to art practice at the time and all those kinds of things.

Lizzie Than the experiential aspects of the work you mean?

Chris ‘And’.

Lizzie No ‘than’?

Chris No, no ‘and’.

Lizzie More concerned with that than...?

Chris No, no I think altogether but I think that what's happening now is there's this other level on top of that which is saying, 'ok here's something from 1975 which we don't want to forget, we want to bring this up here and say, "ok this is an important aspect of experience and we want to foreground that and we're going to put big quotation marks around it"' and all that kind of stuff, so that's different, it's something...

Lizzie It's a historicisation?

Chris Yeah that's right, yeah all that history has now been kind of brought to bear on the work in a way that it wouldn't have been originally and so it has, it has less of an immediacy because of it, I think.

Lizzie Mm, because it's, because of those quotation marks?

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie They become the barrier to some degree of complete immersion?

Chris Yeah, yeah.

Lizzie Ok did you have other things you want to say? Anything else that's on your mind?

Chris Well I'm quite interested to find out what your situation is with regard to this thing and the work and stuff?

Lizzie My personal situation or...?

Chris Yeah, yeah what's your, what axe are you grinding in here?

Lizzie Well I just, I'm finishing my PhD and it's on the experience of interactive art and it started off being about how to describe and work with that experience and talk about it and blah-blah, and it ended up just being a whole bunch of methodologies for trying to get to the experience; trying to record it and document it and so I just, I found that you needed the real material, you know? Not just a kind of reflection on your own experience but you needed other voices and you needed ways to get them to describe experiences you know as closely as possible to how they were lived to get some of that juicy rich material to...

Chris To what?

Lizzie To, either to work with if you're an artist making works that have an experiential emphasis or - well I'm a curator and like the kind of shows I put on and the artists I work with are all essentially kind of experience-based artworks and then I kind of felt like I didn't, you know you're working in the dark because you're working in a tradition that's developed on how to work with objects as opposed to

how to deal with experiences and how to preserve objects and how to keep them safe and how to restage objects; as opposed to how to kind of understand and preserve and reflect on experiences. And you know, not...

Chris Well you can't preserve experiences.

Lizzie Well, you can document experiences, which is what we've just done essentially; and we'll never reach the inner unfolding, subjective world of the human being but one can kind of put on the record how it felt to be there. And my impression was that there wasn't very much of that going on and that it might be an interesting set of tools for people to have if they were interested in collecting experiences or having that as part of the record of the work.

Chris But I'm a bit curious about what you mean by 'experiential art', I mean isn't all art experiential? And what - I mean what do you mean about - you mean just in terms of interactivity or something like that?

Lizzie Yeah, I think all art is experiential and you know there's lots of beautiful (phenomenological?) art theory to help us understand it (that?) way, but I think there are artists, contemporary and historical artists who have been more interested in actually making work that primarily takes experience into account as opposed to primarily making an object, for example. Artists that were - I would say Lucas was one, and other artists I've collaborated with, particularly artists making interactive artworks that you know, exist in that moment of activation by an audience; I'm kind of interested in thinking about the experience first and the object itself after. That makes it too schematic; it's more a kind of an evening up of the balance really, I think there's just been an over-emphasis on objects, and material culture.

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie As opposed to experience - and then there's that whole kind of strand of social science and ethnography that seeks to understand the experience of material culture from the point of view of the people that live it, and that's kind of the, that was, that's the inspiration for these kind of tools that are ethnographic tools, in a sense.

Chris Mm, yeah it's kind of interesting with something like this too - when you talked about the schematic I think that's one of the things that's really interesting about this work and other kind of high-minimal works if you like, that they, they start off from really schematic notions but they're all really concerned with physicality; even though they don't really talk about it, you know they just kind of make little (lines?) - and a couple of years ago I went out to the Double Negative in Nevada, that Michael Heizer work which is just two, these two cuts in the, in the Mesa desert in Nevada made with dynamite and bulldozers in 1969, and it's just, you know you can, you can describe it in all of those kind of classic you know, anti-sculptural ways of you know removing the object and he basically didn't make anything he just took something away and it's all, it doesn't, it can't be codified by a gallery, there's no way you can contain it or objectify it or anything it's all just, it's just this thing in the desert. And the really interesting thing about that was that you can talk about it as a

conceptual thing, you know as a piece of conceptual art, pure conceptual art; it doesn't really need to be made...

Lizzie You could write an essay.

Chris Yeah it doesn't need to be made it's just an idea, but in fact when you, if you say, 'ok well I'm going to go and check it out', it's, it's a super-body experience because it's way out to buggery in the desert, you know there's no sign posts or anything you've got to locate it and it involves this kind of amazing orientation thing and - similar to what I was describing coming in here but it's kind of no, it's not sociological so much because there's no people there and then when you get there you're in this kind of baking hot desert and - well I was - and it's just this really incredible physical thing; it was amazing, it was, all you're left with is your own experience in this weird environment which has been totally directed by this really simple gesture.

Lizzie There's also the other aspect of it with - you know like you were saying the debrief is part of the fun? And the debrief is rarely captured and there's that aspect that it actually provides a chance for people to reflect. But - Lucas...

Lucas What's going on?

Lizzie We're just finishing.

Lucas Did he say anything smart?

Lizzie He did say several smart things; I can't remember (what I was going to say now?) (inaudible).

Chris He's bugged it up totally.

Lucas Sorry.

Chris She was about to do the wrap-up thing.

Lizzie I was about to do the (wrap up?).

Chris (And it's gone?) now, totally.

Lucas Just carry on.

Lizzie But the other thing is that you know the diversity of the experiences is really interesting; so you know like you said, this is, this is - the same as the desert work it's a conceptual work, (you don't need to?) make it I mean you could just reflect on the idea within it, and then if one did then postulate a kind of experience that would go with that, the concept (inaudible) should be there, if all of these concepts were to work themselves out the way that they were intended to work they would produce this kind of set of cognitive effects, and actually the kind of reality of it is that every experience we've recorded you know are kind of astonishingly different - obviously due to circumstances; like your one of coming in in the dark and

not even realising where the (light comes from?), and other people were here when it went dark and, and all of those circumstances are important but the different ways people responded to situations and it just seems to me there's an accumulation of those different lived experiences which is much, much richer than you could get to by just reflecting on one ideal.

Chris Yeah but isn't it also, I mean – I guess it's that classic sort of anthropological problem because as well as the, as well as the experience that I might have coming in here and engaging with the work this isn't just like a debrief; and you could say that everybody's responses have been different but that also reflects this (*taps microphone*) as much as the work, doesn't it? I mean...

Lizzie The process of recording?

Chris Yeah the process of recording and the fact that there's parameters placed around it and you know you – that's why I'm a bit, when I hear the idea about sort of, you know trying to capture the sort of...

Lizzie The lived?

Chris Yeah the lived experiences, you know the reports that come afterwards are totally mediated by the, by the way you collect them.

Lizzie But let's say that like there's no, there's no romance about that, like everyone knows that recording something will, that you will never – like I said you'll never get to the interior of another person's experience and you could even argue that the person themselves has no access to the lived reality of it's past, right? And you know those problems of inter-subjectivity and the kind of classic, not just anthropological but I guess phenomenological, philosophical problems about anything that tries to understand experience, but just the practical fact of it is – or, let's say the practical emotional fact of it is – it's fun to have these experiences and to me, the same way as you were describing the light bulb and real light, you know there's a richness in these that I don't get from the conceptual description. So you could just put it down to the...

Chris You just like talking to people.

Lizzie I just like talking to people.

Lucas Yeah, she does.

Lizzie (Summed up?).

Chris So why do you need this bizarre kind of you know, staging thing of you know – when you just want to have a chat with someone? What's that doing?

Lizzie What bizarre staging thing?

Lucas Oh you mean, with the whole art?

Lizzie Oh the artwork?

Chris Yeah all that shit.

Lucas You could just walk around the streets with that thing.

Chris Yeah exactly.

Lucas Or even without that thing.

Lizzie Well that's what Lucas does.

Chris No but you have to do it because you're writing a PhD so you've got to get it down in a way that kind of, you know that the PhD parameters have to be satisfied in some kind of a way, so...

Lizzie That's true although this has been an interesting day for me because like it's not part of my PhD. So like that's done and dusted and...

Lucas This isn't – this is a pro bono...

Lizzie Pro bono...

Lucas I'm actually just interested to see the way that Lizzie does it because you know I did some, before Lizzie arrived I did some recorded conversations with people and they were not nearly as kind of – like Lizzie's quite specific and structured and guiding in a way, whereas mine were like really meandering, and...

Lizzie Did yours include, 'yeah and another interesting thing I thought was...'?

Lucas Well a couple of people went like, 'no I don't want to be interviewed but I want to ask you some questions', so we recorded that, so that was (fine, we just?) – but I you know, it's just seeing different – obviously even the way that you'd go about the method of asking questions completely changes the sort of - I mean it's like going to a psychoanalyst or something, they, it draws out of yourself and you think, 'this is really something that I said, and I own my experience in that room', but obviously their skill is in how they draw it out of you and guide it, guide that path.

Lizzie But also all those problems you're talking about like obviously they're real but it just depends what claims you make for the data you've got you know? Like no one claims for it to be privileged access to the genuine; you know, 'roll up, roll up and see the real live experience of several audience members' like it's – there's always, there's going to be...

Lucas But actually heaps of artwork these days does that; you know the whole Biennale last year which was all about talking heads on video tape from various areas of strife around the world, presenting first hand accounts in their kind of heavy subtitles and you know sort of I guess the issue is then how you edit and present it, as to how you then might consume it afterwards. It becomes a completely

new work in itself; maybe we should talk about it in that term: ‘hi, we’re making a new artwork that’s parasiting on this current artwork, and would you like to take part in that?’

Chris And not be a smart arse.

Lizzie Yeah...

Lucas And you not be a smart arse? Is that what you mean?

Lizzie Or you?

Lucas Me?

Lizzie Or me?

Lucas None of us are going to be smart arses...

Lizzie None of us are going to be smart.

Lucas We’re going to be dumb-arses.

Lizzie ...(lucky if we have an arse at all?) – but as we talk it is like, making me think that one of the reasons for having all this kind of like, (corpus?) experiential, like recorded experiences is to try and think about the work; it’s like yesterday after we interviewed people you start like doing these mind maps and, ‘oh this person’s structured their experience really visually’, ‘this person’s structured their experience very, based on sound’, ‘this person’s very spatial’, ‘this person’s very social’, and everyone has these different ways of structuring the trajectory of their experience. And you start to like, come up with these – which is exactly what a social scientist would do with a phenomenon, right? So they’re trying to explore how people learn, or – and they structure, in exactly this way, through an analysis of their data they come to an account of that phenomenon and I just, I wonder who else has done that with art? Like whether reader response (theory?) of the kind of phenomenological art criticism schools do that? Like, work up from data or whether...?

Lucas I haven’t seen anything that does that.

Lizzie See I’ve never seen anything that does that and I wonder what the issues are with it? Like, cause we could go ahead and do it – like and I have done it in my PhD without actually thinking about that at all, but I wonder like what will the kind of attending problems, criticisms are you’d get rained down on you for doing it?

Lucas Yeah it’s interesting, I mean you’ve got to sift through a lot of stuff as a result, like it’s going to be hours of...

Lizzie And you’re not allowed to go, ‘oh that one was boring’ or something.

Chris Aren’t you? Why not?

Lizzie I don't know, because there's...

Chris If it's an artwork you are.

Lucas Yeah if we - if I do it I'm allowed to do that, if you do it, not.

Lizzie And if (Zafa?) does it, absolutely not...

Lucas If (Zafa?) does it then every kind of pause has to be...

Lizzie I work in this research group that does have cognitive scientists and kind of, other quantitative-style researchers and there's this one guy who's been like charged with evaluating artworks, and he...

Lucas He's like a robot.

Lizzie He's like a robot but we gathered a bunch of data one time and he said he wanted to cut out – there's something they do statistically where they cut out the extremes of the experience so that you end up with what seems like the most...

Lucas The mean.

Lizzie ...whatever it is, he wanted to...

Lucas The kind of average experience.

Chris Sounds like a mean way to do it.

Lizzie He wanted to – yeah – he wanted to do that to the data because there was two people who'd had experiences that just didn't happen with the others and he was just like, 'let's get rid of them'.

Chris Yeah really?

Lucas Yeah you cut them off the end of the bell curve, don't you? He discarded – there were too many standard deviations from the norm.

Chris Yeah see this is the thing, this is the thing with statistics because it's like if you, if you give it a chance then you know it might end up looking like a (one over f?) distribution or something like that which has extremes, and predictable frequencies of extremes so it's like, 'wergh', it's a different thing altogether to a bell curve.

Lizzie I wonder if you worked with a really, really smart you know, mathematician like a visionary kind of mathematician you could actually find some ways of doing quantitative analysis and stuff which would be really generative and interesting.

Chris I'm sure you could, there's all sorts of ways you could do it – word, you know word frequencies and stuff like that.

Lucas Oh yeah.

Lizzie I'm more interested in (Zafa's?) kind of...

Chris There was a guy that did a word frequency analysis of Ulysses.

Lizzie Yeah I've heard of people doing that kind of thing a lot with old texts as well, Shakespeare and Homer and stuff.

Lucas What was the most common word in Ulysses?

Chris Oh I don't remember what it was, 'the' or something like that but he did it to produce, you know to analyse what it was and it was a (one over f?) distribution, pink noise.

Lizzie Pink noise, (one over f?)? I don't know what any of that means but I like it.

Chris It's good isn't it?

Lizzie Pink noise – it sounds very gay.

Chris It does, doesn't it?

Lizzie It sounds like you know you're trying to listen to the TV but there's someone going, 'oh I never! Did he really?'

(laughter)

Lizzie Pink noise! I think we've finished, haven't we?

Chris We haven't finished yet because there's a whole lot of things in there that I – and I just can't figure out why...

Lucas 'I just want to clarify some of the things that I said'.

Chris Yeah because I didn't talk about – you know we were talking about physical experience and I didn't talk about sound and I didn't talk about touch, and they were the main things that I was experiencing.

Lizzie I did ask you.

Chris I know but I didn't, I didn't talk about them, I don't know why I didn't talk about them.

Lizzie Ok, alright, we can do that.

Chris Why didn't I talk about them? Is it because this is supposed to be a visual work or something? I don't know. I didn't know why but...

Lizzie Because I quite specifically said to you, ‘how did that feel in your body?’

Chris Yeah but you know...

Lizzie And you said...

Chris You know – yeah, well I suppose I don’t, I can’t understand, I don’t suppose I know what ‘feel in your body means’, but yeah I thought...

Lizzie ‘Sensation’ you repeated to me; that’s - when I said, ‘feel in your body’ you said ‘sensation’.

Chris Yeah.

Lizzie Well the record will show whether that’s true or not.

Chris Well yeah I thought the sound track was the best part of this movie, a really good sound track.

Lizzie Can you describe it?

Chris Well it had this very lovely velvety background, which is that – hear it? It’s lovely.

Lizzie The air con?

Lucas The air?

Chris Yeah, the air con.

Lizzie Yeah but it, that only, that...

Chris Yeah that wasn’t there initially - and it was funny because when I came in I thought there’d be air con but it, this only came in when the light came up.

Lucas Yeah, it’s automated.

Chris Yeah, yeah. And there was all these really great train sounds, really lovely train sounds.

Lizzie Mm.

Lucas They are aren’t they? And then birdsong.

Chris Yeah, yeah – I don’t like birdsongs.

Lucas You don’t like bird...?

Chris No, I don't like birdsong.

Lucas At all?

Chris No it's too sort of natural and – I like industrial din.

Lizzie But not industrial light, only natural light.

Chris No, interesting – yeah, yeah, I didn't like the light but I liked the sound of the trains.

Lizzie You called it 'insistently mean', and I remember thinking when you said that, 'God it's a shame isn't it because there was a time when that would have been a miracle' – that would have been a little miracle hanging in the middle of this room; and you know you said for you you felt optimism because you came when it was dawn as opposed to when it was dusk and when natural light disappeared in favour of artificial light, but I was thinking how for so many people the light bulb represents like, optimism, possibilities...

Chris Yeah but because of the stupid illusion about sort of you know, reason over nature – reason conquers nature, you know it's the sort of ridiculous progress idea.

Lucas Train over bird.

Chris Yeah that's right.

Lizzie I just got this image of all these little birds tethered on their backs to the train (tracks?), 'help! Help!', and you like the baddie, running away...

Lucas The bandana and...

Chris No I like birds but I don't particularly like to – I suppose because I work with sound a bit and whenever I get, I'm always after kind of air conditioning sounds and stuff like that so when some bird squawks and has this, it immediately kind of registers nature then I start to get really pissed off and I want to edit it out. In fact when we were talking earlier about how you could, you know...

Lucas Get this down.

Chris ...how you could – when we were talking about how you could use the, use the material subsequently in other ways I thought what would be a really good thing to do with this tape, or these tapes, would be to go through and edit out all the words.

Lizzie And just get like, (*makes ticking sound*)?

Chris Yeah all the breaths and the kind of background noises and stuff like that and people shuffling around but no actual information.

Lizzie I've heard that done before to radio programs.

Lucas Didn't that happen with the moon – there was some artist did that, the moon landing transmission; all the sounds in between 'one small step for man'...

Lizzie Before we use up all your hard drive on our (amusing?)...

Lucas I bought a new big hard drive.

Lizzie Oh did you?

Chris You haven't got a computer (inaudible)?

Lucas No.

Lizzie I just wanted to ask you about touch? What did you want to say about touch?

Chris Oh just how it was a really, you know the physical comfort or not of the place was sort of a really strong thing about it, and you know the hardness of the surfaces and you know the – and also the idea that people were over here on nice soft beds and I was kind of you know lying on a dirty floor, that sort of thing. Yeah but those things were just as much present, you know the other physical sensations apart from all the – you know all the sense are equally engaged, apart from maybe smell, but...

Lucas I'll (just fart here?).

Lizzie I was about to say, it depends on where you were lying – ok, there's really no need to have all this on the record...

(laughter)

Lucas I mean I suppose if we were sensitive enough we would say that this room had a certain smell.

Chris Yeah, yeah, exactly yeah, yep.

Lucas It's just hard to name.

Lizzie We started to really notice it last night cause we wanted the door open, and...

Chris Yeah concrete and...

Lizzie Well the air went off, and...

Lucas You notice it when you go somewhere and then come back, like...

(end of recording)

