

This conversation took place on the 16th July 2022, two months after the exhibition *Things* was staged in an empty terraced house in Norwich.

Mark Wilsher

I thought a good thing to talk about to start with would be the idea of representation.

Representation or presentation, you know? And as both of you made sculptures which were, broadly speaking, representative in some way, I thought it would be interesting to maybe just talk about that and how you use it and how you think about that, if indeed you do think about it in those terms at all.

Jo Addison

I think I wrestle with representation; do you mean like figuration? I really wrestle with it because I'm really really drawn to it, but also really resist it. So it's like, I'm always trying to locate some kind of part of the spectrum that's a little bit neither nor or both. If you had at one end, you know a sort of really precise re-presenting of something and then at the other end abstraction, I feel like there's this kind of sweet spot where all my wrestling ultimately comes down to. I think you pointed out, Mark, that my things recently have become more representational again, but I still feel like it's only within this part of the spectrum and I make things a lot of times to kind of get away from the either or of the other ends. And get very upset about it, get very bothered in the process.

Mark Wilsher

And why is that? Why do you feel like you can't be at one end of the spectrum or the other, why do you have to be somewhere in the middle?

Jo Addison

It's difficult to answer really because it's quite a sort of consistent hunch, which is wanting something to sort of occupy.... where it might float, it can't quite be pinned into one specific type. Even if it is a recognizable something, I don't want it to be kind of pinned into a specific one, and I suppose maybe it is talking to things that belong in a kind of shared space, a shared sort of broadly cultural space. Objects that kind of belong or kind of relate to most people. I'm probably being very Global North euro centric postmodernist. But you know that kind of relate to a... there's a kind of possible recognition beyond me or my type of person.

Mark Wilsher

So, how about you Simon? Is representation something you think about?

Simon Newby

I can relate to what Jo was saying about the spectrum, the sliding scale. I did a show quite a long time ago of trompe l'oeil paintings in fake frames, years later I showed a tutor and he questioned them for being neither too messy, nor too trompe l'oeil. They were somewhere in between and that irritated some people and for some reason I keep on thinking about that when I'm making things. Where am I? Because even when you're in the middle there is a sliding

spectrum, so, which end? When it comes to sculpture, I often think of my work as a drawing or sketch in a sculptural form, not too detailed. I guess that kind of frees me up.

The sculptures in the show are supposed to be a bit more fun than a lot of other things that I've made. Like the folding chair on its own - that was made for an exhibition, it was the last thing I made because the exhibition was a bit too dry, a bit too serious. I felt like it didn't have anything to bump into.

It's not a prop, but it's a bit like an exhibition prop. A lot of people said "you could sit on that, couldn't you?" You couldn't. But again, it's in the middle of that spectrum, heading towards the realistic because it's straight. The wood is straight. There's working screws in there, as opposed to the other one which is just mud. There's just enough of the real in them. Maybe a bit too much sometimes, but I'm not sure.

Jo Addison

Do you think it's partly tricky? Do you think it's partly tricky because it's funny how we've both kind of gone.... certainly for me it's a persistent concern that never goes away. So it will probably always make me go "hmmmm". You seem to be doing that as well and I was just thinking that maybe it's something that isn't very easy to account for verbally.

Simon Newby

The feeling maybe.

Jo Addison

Yeah. And it might go back through totally different objects but it happens. It's a persistent one, isn't it?

Simon Newby

Yes, because you're not just looking at them like you would at an image, because they're material. You're feeling them as well. So it's a mix of senses, a bit bewildering.

Jo Addison

Yeah.

Mark Wilsher

I think I agree with that in relation to "Untitled Action", the more nicely made chair, if you like. I think I told you Simon, at the time, that seeing that piece a few years ago was one of the impetuses for the whole show originally. Because I was really interested in the way that it was made like a normal chair, but it wasn't a normal chair, you know? And it reminded me of another piece, by Karin Ruggaber, the German London-based sculptor. I saw a piece by her in a show at Arthur R Rose gallery in 1999, a little space down in Bermondsey, and she had made an



A4 folder out of a sheet of cardboard. She just cut it to the right shape, and then scored it and then folded it over and then glued it and made a beautiful thing. And it was just like you would make a cardboard folder in a factory like a machine would do it.

She'd done exactly the same thing, gone through the same process, but ended up with this kind of sculpture. I mean it was a folder. You could make your own folder if you wanted to. And so that's always stayed with me as an interesting kind of problem. And I think I saw the same thing in your chair, though your chair is slightly more, you know... the proportions are kind of off, and it didn't sit straight and all the rest of it. So that's what really fascinated me and you're right it became very problematic and kind of swirly as I looked at it, my mind would get endlessly confused and couldn't quite settle on what it was that I was looking at. And that's what I found really interesting.

Simon Newby

Yes, it's on the edge of already made, but not quite.

Jo Addison

A wrongly made.

Simon Newby

Badly made.

Jo Addison

What about you Mark? Because in a way, it feels like you're...

Mark Wilsher

Well, I think I'm the odd one out actually, because I'm actually quite anti representation. And for me, art in general and sculpture in particular, I think what's exciting about art is that it's unmediated. What I like is that it offers the potential of a really direct, unmediated encounter with something as an audience member. And for me representation is another form of mediation, right? So I try to avoid it. So pretty much everything I do is just direct. So rather than having a picture of a glass of water, I'll just give you a glass of water. You know, rather than having a painting of a landscape, I would just say "go over there and look at that landscape" and that would be enough for me. So I don't think I've ever really played with representation. And when I have done anything kind of pictorial or picture based, it's using that picture as a found object. So I've done work with found pictures, you know, which I've messed around with, but they were very much meant to be found objects rather than pictures per se. So yeah, for me I'm kind of anti representation in a way. I've never really saw staked out that position before now so it's quite interesting to find myself saying that.

Jo Addison

It's interesting that you're kind of anti it in your making, but clearly somehow drawn to it in your curating?

Mark Wilsher

Oh yeah, sure. Well, I'm open you know. I like the whole variety of art, all sorts of different types of artworks. That's just what I personally want to do. I'm quite broad minded.

Jo Addison

I've been listening to a load of Ursula Le Guin essays, which is very empowering as a woman. I mean, I think it's actually really empowering for makers, actually, full stop. But particularly it is really interesting to read as a woman, I think. And I haven't really come across her except through her fiction in the past. And I really love this thing. There's this one essay where she talks about how artists shouldn't be trusted.... I think she talks about writers. That they shouldn't be trusted and that is kind of important. It's the very fact that they can't be trusted that is so compelling because they've effectively kind of rewriting things constantly in a way that, you know, it's antisocial. Not necessarily in a big, loud way, but it sort of upsets the agreed norms, it questions agreed norms. And I just wonder, there's something really lovely about when you said about anti representation that instead of giving the picture of a glass or a sculpture of a glass, you'd give the glass. Is it almost like asserting, or subverting the trust, the messing with trust.

Mark Wilsher

I don't know. I think it's just more like, it's a bit of a bit of a cliché really, but it's that idea of art getting you to look again, you know, and to kind of just kind of enliven your senses and to wake up and go "Oh my God, the world's amazing". We're so used to just getting along with it all and not thinking about it but when you stop and you're forced to look at something; I guess there's that kind of looking isn't there when you're in the studio when you're working with art there's a really intense close looking that you do. When things sometimes seem a bit weird, you know you can look at something. You can look at a rock for, you know, for a couple of hours and after a while it starts to look pretty weird. And that's the experience I want the audience to have, to just be drawn into that way of looking.

That's why I like artists because they're always trying something on and trying something new and trying to write a new, a new thing. If they're any good. And that's what I like about them. I find normal people boring because they just don't do that.

Let me give you another prompt now, maybe it kind of follows up from that. I want to talk about handmaking and the handmade because again, this is where we sort of differ. You two are both more kind of like handmakers or certainly you construct things and make things. I do kind of do that a little bit myself. I certainly alter things and move things around and I'm not averse to bending things and scrunching them up and stuff. So let's start with you Simon.

Jo Addison

That's a lovely quote. I like that "I'm not averse to bending things and scrunching them up a bit". That's lovely.

Simon Newby

That was going to be one of my questions to you, because I was wondering how you make your sculptures, the works in the show seem very effortless.

Mark Wilsher

I'll just say that with that work in particular, that was a bit different for me. That was a new body of work and it was work that I'd always been a bit scared of making. I think I've always wanted to make work like that, but I've always been a bit scared of making it. And it was the pandemic that made me think, "OK, I've gotta get my shit together and just do this, you know, because you might not get that many more chances to do things" and getting older and all the rest of it, you know, every show could be your last show, couldn't it? Really. So I thought, "OK, I'm gonna do this. I'm just gonna do it. I don't care." And how do I make it? I set myself some parameters which were sort of, you know, simple gestures, everyday objects, normal things that everyone can associate with. And then I just kind of messed around with them. So I did physically manipulate them in the studio. I moved them around. I tried things.



Simon Newby

OK, but in the studio, not at home.

Mark Wilsher

No, I did them in the studio. They were sort of pre done. And then when I found something that I liked, that was it, I kind of sat with it for a bit and I had a fairly good hit rate, sort of like a 60% hit rate. Lots of things didn't work, but some things were ok. I was pleased with that. And some things were just totally, totally a mental process. Say for instance, the bag of water. I just kind of thought of and I tried it out at home, tried it in the studio. I liked it, great. So that was fine as well, yeah.

Jo Addison

You mentioned parameters? Were they like, specific or more like a sort of sense of some, like, did you actually have a set of rules.

Mark Wilsher

I think they are quite specific. I think I might have written in my sketchbook because that's the way I tend to work. I tend to set myself some parameters and then see how it goes within that, allow myself freedom to, I've always got the freedom to break the rules if I want to, but the parameters give me confidence to proceed.

Well, back to you, Simon. I want to hear more about how you go about making things. And why?

Simon Newby

How do I go about making things? Well, in lots of different ways. I like hard edge, well-polished, super smooth, working with the right materials. My wall-based sculptures use a lot of embedded objects. They're almost overly made, made so much that you can't see the hand.

Mark Wilsher

They're very smooth, aren't they? They're incredibly smooth. You can just run your finger across the front and, not that I've done that, but you could run your finger across the surface.

Simon Newby

In the past I've also made hyper real coloured shapes and things like that, that again, it's hard to trace the artist's hand in them, but at the same time you know they've been made by hand.. And then at the other end of the spectrum, the chairs. It took me about six years to get to a chair made of sticks and mud, there was a kind of progression of just letting things go and using different materials again instead of using materials that would give a high finish. I have this picture in my mind of this person, maybe in the future, maybe in the present, remaking the world in a forest. So using sticks and wood to recreate the world. And I was also thinking about birds nests and things that animals make. I was thinking of what would happen if some birds made a chair, or what would happen if a bear made a rug.

And that got me thinking about craft, I guess. Not how physically would they make them, but just this idea of, you know, what happens if you're working not necessarily with two thumbs and fingers?

Mark Wilsher

Yeah, that's really interesting. This morning I was looking at some spider webs in the garden and I was thinking about the way that humans use, you know, nets. And spiders make these nets to capture their food. Is that spider culture? Is that insect culture and then our human nets that we use - fisherman's nets or giant trawler nets or even, you know, in the kitchen, a sieve in the kitchen is that biological? Is that something that we're biologically driven to make? Like we might say a spider is. So these definitions are really muddy, you know, they're really confusing, aren't they? It's fascinating, really. So, yeah, it's interesting you say that, that sense of a narrative to your piece which I hadn't really considered before.



Simon Newby

No, I guess I don't really make it available. It's maybe more obvious to see those sculptures as images. When you take a picture of them, they look like a drawing because they've got that line in them and they've got a little bit of texture, like a little bit of shading.

Mark Wilsher

Did you draw them first? Because you talked about drawing a fair bit earlier on. Would you sketch out an idea before you made it?

Simon Newby

No, not in a traditional sense – it relates more to a process of collecting images. It's a bit like drawing, but for me it's like seeing something drawn out on the floor and taking a picture of it and then collecting it, a bit like gathering source material.

Mark Wilsher

Thinking in a visual way, thinking in a 2D pictorial way.

Simon Newby

Exactly.

Mark Wilsher

Maybe that comes back to representation again. And so maybe, you know, it's a representation of something that you're making, maybe that collides with pictorialism somehow.

Simon Newby

Yes.

Mark Wilsher

Jo, how about you? You have a long and rich relationship to handmaking, don't you. I know I've heard you speak about it before a couple of times.

Jo Addison

Yeah, but it's interesting because it's such a live thing that I feel like I can never speak about it from any clear position if you see what I mean? And I really like what you just did [SLAPS HANDS] that. That really resonates for me, that kind of thing for me that's the Holy Grail. You know, you just fanny around for hours, you know. Trying things and chucking things and I find that... I've spoken to Mark about it before. I find the whole thing quite distressing really. I'm not really the right person to be an artist because I don't enjoy that in the way that I know I have some friends and peers who enjoy that generative process. I find it very problematic. But also I must enjoy the whole thing because I keep at it. But I feel like that is almost like trying to get... you know in sci-fi films when they're trying to dock the spaceship to the the satellite thing in space and if it goes off by a millimetre that will be it. They'll both go off and float forever more. I feel like that's what I'm trying to reach.

It's so hard to get to it. It sounds like a real cliché, but I have to make a lot, and quite persistently to get myself out of the way, because it's me who stops that happening. It's me and my kind of neuroses that belong to normal life, they don't really belong to the act of making. So I have to get them out the way. They're the kind of bits that help me get my son off to school on time or get or get a load of Excel spreadsheets done at work. Or, you know, they're the kind of sensible sort of orderly parts and I feel like I have to get them out of the way through a process of making in order to get to what you've just described.

Mark Wilsher

Are you talking about consciousness? Like kind of naturalness, like an unselfconscious action?

Jo Addison

I feel kind of like it's a bit cringy talking in that way. But yeah in a way, because what I identify, what makes me really, really tick is... like when you sent that e-mail to the estate agents [*to secure the house for the exhibition*] and you said "things like" and you gave this really small list. Was it like plates? I can't remember what it was.

Mark Wilsher

"Plates, bricks, sticks, glasses..."

Jo Addison

Yeah, and the ease with which you can throw out those words for things, I find a list of things just makes me go "oooooh". I find that really exciting. And the words for things - you can just say them and.... I really love cartoon things because, although they're incredibly crafted and sort of artful, they are a really reductive version of that thing. You know, they're like the essence of that thing. And I really like emojis or icons. And I think that's why I really love the chair Simon. And the fact that it represents as an image is because, if you were going to go "folding chair", you'd sort of go "bam, bam, bam" and everyone would recognize it as a folding chair. And I think I really relate to that pictorial or verbal description of objects, or depiction of objects. And I think in a sense, what I'm trying to get to in the making is something that is as kind of... direct or?

Simon Newby

I think people underestimate how hard it is to go to either end of the spectrum. If you wanted to paint, you know, an exact shoe, it would be just as hard as to create the perfect cartoon shoe.

Jo Addison

The other thing I was just thinking about, you know the bear making the rug and the bird making the chair. And I really identify with that. And you know, now he makes things in a different way, but my son, when he was younger, how he made things. It was like "I wanna

make a chair.” So he made an image of a chair, but as an object and it was just, God I found it so amazing. Now I sort of prey on other people's children because I find that so...

Jo Addison

I think that imperative to make is quite important isn't it? I like the differences in the imperative to make. Like a bird. You know, you assume the spider is making the web purely to catch flies, but is it? Do some of them make them a bit nicer than others?

Simon Newby

Yes, do spiders have pride?

Jo Addison

What is the imperative and how far does that go? I find that really, really exciting.

Simon Newby

Also just the idea of work as well. Work and learning how to work in that way. I was thinking of, when you're a teenager, you go to a factory to have a summer job, and you're told to move the beans on this way or wrap this in that way in a factory. Just thinking about how you would teach yourself in your own factory. “Right, this is your practice. This is your palette”.



Jo Addison

It's a really nice thought.

Mark Wilsher

The question of how you do things is interesting. I mean, when we were installing the show, something that happened was we were trying to work out where Jo's things were going to go on the table and you said that there was one, which looked like a cup or a small vase. And you said, "oh, I'd like that one near the edge of the table. As if someone just walked past and put it down as they're walking past." And so you could kind of agonize about that, but I tried to just do it really spontaneously, and I literally just walked past and put it down and walked off and it was left there and I didn't look back at it and think "Is that right? Does that look right?" I just thought, "No, that's what I did. I've done it so it's right." I really like that kind of spontaneous improvised trust in your own nature, I guess. When I was a student I used to do a lot of work just kind of arranging things and leaving things around. And I remember my tutor once said to me that he'd seen in the corridor a bunch of cleaning equipment like mops and buckets and stuff, and he wondered if it was something that I had done because it was just left. It looks so much like a collection of cleaning equipment that it must be art, right? And I thought that was fantastic and I love that. I wish I had done it.

Jo Addison

That's high praise, isn't it?

Mark Wilsher

But that kind of spontaneous naturalism is what I really aspire to, sometimes. Just because you can't fake it in a way, you can't fake that kind of authenticity. You know it when you see it or rather we think we know it when we see it. I mean perhaps you can fake it. And in fact, yeah, I think you can fake it quite well. On second thoughts, I'm thinking of a few things I've done in the past now. So that reminded me of something that happened during installation. When you're hanging a show, I'm a big believer in keeping it simple, not over agonizing. So it's like, "well, this would look good here. OK, let's put it there. Leave it." And not really overthink it too much because the audience come in and they just assume that you've put loads of thought into it and they just kind of accept whatever they're given basically. Which is very sweet of them.

Simon Newby

And especially in that place as well, because the show was in a house, it's very disarming. It's right on the corner as well, so it's very overlooked. That show would have been a completely different show in a white cube, the objects would have turned into something else.

Mark Wilsher

I was very happy with the audience reaction to the house and the whole setting. They were really like, bowled over and it set up the work so well. You know, I think it really helps to, like you say, disarm people so when they came in, they were very receptive to whatever it is that they found inside.

Simon Newby

I found it very hard looking the first time when we dropped off the chairs and you popped them in place and said “look, this is the perfect place for them”. I couldn't help looking at the kitchen surface and the oven and thinking what's going on here?

Mark Wilsher

Even though it was an empty house there was still quite a lot there wasn't there?

Simon Newby

It was a very odd experience. Great but very odd.

Jo Addison

It's partly about how we encounter it, because we know how to be in houses and we know how to be in white cubes and we know like that, I mean literally our bodies know how to do that. And so it's not even just the visual encounter, is it? It's like “How do you do this?”

Simon Newby

It was a bit like hang on, you're not showing me in the gallery. You're showing me in the kitchen. What's going on?”

Mark Wilsher

I think people walking in, they would stand and move differently to how they would stand and move in a normal house, wouldn't they? And you're right, they would equally be acting differently to how they would be in a gallery situation. So there's again a bit of a nice ambiguity somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. A bit of uncertainty of how people should act in there.

Simon Newby

Did you find that people would stay longer because it was a house, like they were coming over for tea?

Mark Wilsher

Yeah, they did stay quite a long time, actually. Yeah, it wasn't just in and out. They definitely poked around a bit and they enjoyed being there and they wanted to talk about the house and talk about the whole thing. So yeah, I think it did prolong their engagement a bit.



That actually brings me on to the last question I thought might be interesting to talk about: do we think about the kind of reaction we want from an audience? And if we do what might that be? That's a very big question. How do you think about your audience or who your audience is and is there a correct reaction to your work that you're happy when you get. Equally I guess you could think, is there a really annoying reaction that you might get which pisses you off and you think "oh no you know you've really got it wrong mate," you know.

Simon Newby

Is it wrong for me to say that I don't think about it that much?

Mark Wilsher

No, that's fine. That's OK.

Simon Newby

Because I don't really. What do I think? I mean, there's certain things I like people to pick up on. With the bear making the rugs, I don't expect people to get to that point because I haven't given them enough. But with those particular works, I think I give people a lot to play with so they can go off in all kinds of different directions. I'm not very precious and like, "Oh, you haven't read the press release properly, you haven't picked up on my references." I'm not too bothered about that. I like people returning to the work, that's what I really like.

Mark Wilsher

I guess assuming that they like it, right. It's a sign they're interested.

Simon Newby

I like it when people see a progression. I don't try and put everything I am interested in or can do or am thinking about into one show any more. And I don't have many shows, so that's quite a hard thing to do. So that's the main reaction I like. When people are "Ohh, I saw your show three years ago and this piece..." I like that kind of audience participation.

Jo Addison

Faithful.

Simon Newby

I like people who like me.

Jo Addison

No, that sounds a bit like if you were a band, someone who maybe likes a track and they've come back to see what you're doing next.

Simon Newby

Yes, or how you can do it differently.

Jo Addison

How you could do it? Yeah.

Simon Newby

Yes, which I guess is artists' practice. I mean you go back to see, how they're progressing or have done it differently or what's changed.

Mark Wilsher

So you'd like them to look almost beyond the artwork and see your values or your philosophy if you like. And to be interested in that, so that they would want to see what you do next.

Simon Newby

Just try and seek out my eye in a way.

Mark Wilsher

Yeah, that's a nice way of putting it. To perceive your eye.

Jo Addison

I do think about it quite a lot and sometimes too much, that's one of the things I have to sort of get out of the way. I know I mentioned my dad in the making of the those works [*Light Things Only 2022*], but this is a different part that he plays. He was like a big Scouser who didn't kind of get anything, he didn't understand what I was doing, but was very supportive of it. Like, very supportive for me to do it. But he used to go "What? What you doing?" I really hear that "what you doing". I hear that a lot. I feel it's a risk and a privilege to be an artist. And increasingly, living in London, it actually is a privilege to be an artist because it's really hard economically, you know, to make it work for a lot of people. So I do feel some sense of.... I don't know if it's dad's voice or what, but I feel like I'm not allowed to get too up myself.

Simon Newby

Keep your feet on the ground.

Jo Addison

No, really, I feel quite a lot that that's one of the... I don't know if that's an audience or just.... But it's like "OK, don't be a smart arse", like you know. Just bring it back. You know, I kind of get this sense of checking myself through the making, which I used to think was perhaps inhibiting, but I actually feel it's become so kind of central that I find it quite it quite pivotal in how I think. Maybe it does even come back to things like cartoon images and emojis, and you know, images that kind of transcend different languages or positions. Like that shoe that you described earlier Simon. Pretty much everyone can recognize that from a different position, and I think there's something I haven't got to the bottom of it really. It's a very persistent live thing, but I feel there's a straightforwardness that perhaps I am after, or I check myself if I breach it. I don't know whether that's good or bad, but it's become quite generative if you know what I mean.

Yeah, that's a difficult question to answer because I don't know what I want from them. Except like I said to you, Mark, increasingly, I really love when an object generates a conversation, I get very excited about the conversation.

Simon Newby

When somebody tells you a story like they see a piece of work and it reminds them, "Ohh when I was."

Jo Addison

Yes, that really excites me. Then it's done something else other than take up space.

Mark Wilsher

That makes me think of my whole reason for being in the art world, though. I mean my whole reason for being in the art world is for the places that it takes me and the interesting situations it puts me in, you know? So I love having conversations like this. Or when you're lucky enough to be in a show somewhere else. I love traveling to a different city and staying there and looking around and meeting people. And really I do the art in order to do those other things. You know, the other things are what's important. And I'm not someone who's being flown around the world and doing all that kind of stuff, but I love, you know, going to Bristol or going to Leeds or wherever it is that you're doing something. It's those peripheral things which really excite me and that's what keeps me going. I always want to have something else coming up that I can look forward to in my life.

To answer my own question about the audience - I had an early formative experience when I was doing a residency down in Croydon College a couple of years after graduation and I put some work in a show there and it was very sort of, I guess it was quite studenty [*"Things I have seen other people do"* 2000]. It had a whole big rationale behind it. You know, I knew all about what it meant, and someone came along and told me they interpreted in a completely different way and they read it as a kind of a pictorial narrative image. And right there and then I realized "I've got to make my work more understandable. I've got to make it more accessible to an audience" because there's no point in doing something that only I get. I want to do something which people can get.



I've curated various places and I've been exposed to a whole load of different audiences and I understand how people find a lot of art difficult. You know, they can deal with a lot of quite interesting, complex stuff, but equally, a lot of it is hard, understandably so. So I think it's, for me personally, like you said earlier I like to get a positive reaction. I like to always put something in for people. So even if there's quite a complex intellectual thing going on, I like to make it look nice or I like to make it be so familiar so people could be a bit comfortable with it.

Sometimes I do things which I hope work on different levels. So you could access it one way, but you could also, if you like, access it a bit more deeply. I want them to keep looking at it for longer. Yeah, like you say, I like them to come back to it. I like them to look at it the way I look at it. When I'm happy with a piece, I could look at it for hours and I'd like people to come in and be captivated by it in the same in the same way, ideally. It doesn't happen very often, but occasionally and if it's only once or twice, that's OK.

Jo Addison

You know that realization in Croydon. I mean at that time as well, we're all of a similar age. But that time, you know, I feel like that time was a very... I increasingly think it was a very problematic time for art. The culture of art, the culture of lot of things, frankly.

Mark Wilsher

You mean the 90s?

Jo Addison

I feel that we're really paying for it still in terms of how people mistrust artists - for the wrong reason. Like I love the mistrust that Ursula Le Guin's talking about. But this is different.

Simon Newby

But this is a cheat, isn't it?

Mark Wilsher

Yeah, it's a scam.

Jo Addison

I find that as a teacher, we're still paying for it because, you know, I think students are very conflicted and education is still quite driven by very sort of singular goals that are really for the very few and for the very privileged and for the very lucky. I just wonder as well if you were also kind of in that, like we all were. You might have been taught to be that, and then you encountered an audience and realized...

Mark Wilsher

I know what you mean, but I've always taken art incredibly seriously. I think there are very few artists actually who are trying to "get away with it", you know.

Jo Addison

No I completely agree with you.

Mark Wilsher

Even the YBAs, I think they were dead serious about what they were doing. You know, it's just the way the media kind of responded to it. And the way maybe the way Jay Jopling promoted it didn't help, you know.

Jo Addison

But I think we all kind of unwittingly didn't challenge it either. I know I hadn't found a voice to challenge it till much later. When I understood it better, what was happening.

Mark Wilsher

I think this misunderstanding that the audience has, or let's say, alternative readings that the audience comes up with, I think that's just inevitable in any era. I don't think it was tied to the 90s particularly. Everyone comes from their own subject position and has their own history and their own interpretation and everything. And that's absolutely fair enough. So I would disagree there. I don't think it was particularly with 90s, but I do agree there's a general mistrust of art in the public... well, do I? I've changed my mind. I don't agree. Having seen audiences coming into galleries, looking at all sorts of stuff, they're quite open minded. I think people are generally pretty open minded about things, so maybe it's just a media phenomenon that doesn't translate to reality.

Simon Newby

I was just interested, Jo, in how you select the objects you make.

Jo Addison

Select to make, you mean?

Simon Newby

Yes I guess you can put the objects I'm interested in into a couple of categories. I really like children's and pictorial encyclopaedia books because it's like the world drawn and that made me think of your table and your work, not because it reminded me of that, because there was the potential to remake the world. But I've thought about that as well, and you can't because it's too big and you're only interested in certain things. Like at one point I was thinking, "well, I could make everything out of sticks and mud and that that's it. That's the work". But it doesn't work.

Jo Addison

I love those. When you feel like "I've got it".

Simon Newby

And then you haven't, because it's not that simple! How do you think about choosing?

Jo Addison

No, I think it's probably like you, there's a sort of vocabulary of things that I think are... I feel like there are certain objects that feel like they're quite... I'm not sure what the word is, but they're like a nexus for lots of other objects they're like. Like they're encoded with everything you need to understand quite a lot of other things.

Simon Newby

They're like a sort of schematics.

Jo Addison

Yeah, I think so. I think about objects quite a lot in that way and objects that maybe have quite a long reach back beyond modern time. So even though they might be quite a contemporary object, they maybe have a long reach.

I have a very prismatic approach in that I usually come in and go "I'm gonna make a.." and then it all goes wrong and then it comes out as something completely else. And actually it feels a lot like "is it a this? is it a that? Oh no, it can't be one of that. I hate those." It's like "ah, that's too obvious. Ohh, it's a..."

I definitely do usually come in with one thing. It just never, ever comes out like that. It always kind of infuriates me because I'm so childish about it, because every time I think. "Great. I know what I'm doing today." I feel relief because I know what I'm doing and then every time it...

Simon Newby

And do the objects you're interested in become the material that you make things out of?

Jo Addison

Yeah I just keep feeding the studio with a load of bits. Like I found a cot mattress. And I just chopped it up into pieces and stashed it.

Simon Newby

Hmm, so you're returning the objects to material to then build objects out of?

Jo Addison

Yeah, I think so. But they just become stuff then, they're not conceptually informing what they're made into. So it's just like boxes of stuff that's mainly, you know, from the bins outside or I just pass it on the way home or something and think "ohh that could be quite useful" and it just goes in a box and they're all see-through. So when I'm having a little panic I can just look around and grab it, "Can you help me?" Just like grab something. I've really noticed that I can't, I can't manage what's the word for it? A process of making that isn't within a certain time frame, so I can't be molding anymore. I can't have to go and get a welder. I can't. I really need to work in a kind... it needs to be to hand. It just, it just won't wait. I'll talk itself out of it.

Simon Newby

I don't know how much time you have for making, but I don't have that much. I can't wait a month to see something that might not work. I have to know what I'm doing so I can make mistakes.

Mark Wilsher

That's true of all three of us isn't it. I think we all work pretty quickly.

Simon Newby

Yes.

Jo Addison

Yeah, yeah.

Simon Newby

Which is good. It's a good way to work as well. Even if I had more time, I think I'd carry on that way.

Jo Addison

I think I would too, I think.

Simon Newby

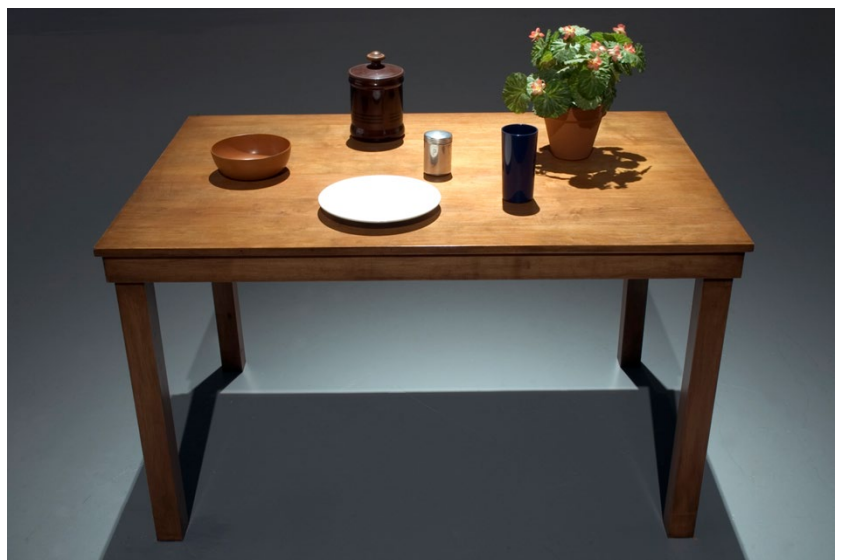
I'd just create more rubbish.

Jo Addison

I would like to ask you something a bit similar, Simon. You said something earlier about the chair. It almost sounded like it was the sort of anti other work - the smooth. You said "I really like a clean edge." And I thought I'd really love to know, in that spectrum thing that we're talking about, is it like offsetting, do you need to sort of offset one with the other, and if so, do you know anything about why?

Simon Newby

I've never been able to put it into words very well, but one of the core feelings or ideas that I try and work with is of the 3D and flatness, edges. So when I talk about "Hard Edge", I really like the line around an object compared to the things that are behind it. I really like painting for that because it's rendered on a surface, which is amazing, and is something I can't do. I studied painting, but I just couldn't use paint. So it had to be done with everything else apart from paint. What am I trying to say? In trying to bring out the flatness it helps to have observable objects. Other people work with these



ideas, like Charles Ray. His sculptures are all about the space around the edges. And the edges between.

Jo Addison

I've been thinking about him so much recently. Do you remember that table that he had that objects were slowly turning on the table? [*Tabletop* 1989] Do you remember? And you could see the mechanism and I was thinking, and this is something you want to ask you about, Mark, because it really bothers me how to hold things in the air like that. I just can't crack it I mean, I've even thought, "oh, maybe I should just like animate images of the sculptures or something." I wish that the things would just be able to float around in the air and then you could just, like, move them like in sci-fi and bring some forward and then push them back. And I love that, that sculpture is... it's a bit like Fischli and Weiss. They're so kind of...



Simon Newby

It's near perfect, isn't it? And his oil line that drips down. There's so much work like that, but not like that.

Jo Addison

What do you think about that kind of, I suppose it's like contingency or something. How do you hold things in relation?

Mark Wilsher

So this is a question about presentation, yeah? and framing.

Jo Addison

But the physics of it, you know.

Mark Wilsher

Well, I mean for me, to be honest, I avoid that problem because like I said, I try to use real things and do things in real ways, so if there's a normal way to present something, I'll use that and if there isn't then I'll just put it down somewhere. So you know if, I don't know, if a cup goes on a coaster, then I'll use a coaster to display a cup. I did a show at OUTPOST back in 2010 and I had various door fittings like letterboxes and door handles and stuff like that and they all had screw holes in for fixing them on the door. So I used those screw holes to screw them into the wall. So yeah, I avoid that problem by using the thing which normal things are supposed to use. I don't have to really confront that myself. I guess it's a question about artifice, isn't it? Artifice and fakery and stuff like that.



Jo Addison

If you think about that table or the oil line, I feel like they're quite radical, sort of political pieces, really, because they take away the unspoken of plinth or... they're like a million other things though those sculptures, but they really kind of address some problems of display.

Mark Wilsher

They're a bit like Olafur Eliasson in a way aren't they? He'll present you with an illusion or something nice visually and show you how he's doing it at the same time [*"Stardust Particle" 2014 Olafur Eliasson, below*]. And you just accept that. I guess he would say that he is trying to get you to be aware of how much you want to fall for that illusion, you know and how you know it's not real, but you'll go with it anyway. And that's part of the fun. That's part of the pleasure.

Jo Addison

It's a bit like a kind of... it's quite like a theatre method, isn't it?

Mark Wilsher

Brechtian, yeah. I'm not averse to a bit of fakery and a bit of staging, but I try to play it down I guess if I have to use it.



Jo Addison

What about you, Simon? I really identify with what you were saying. You know, you bring that object in and there's the kitchen and the domestic behind it. It's quite a sort of shock, especially with something so... because we talked about it as an image, it almost requires the plainness of a background. I can see why that's quite problematic, but that's also really exciting about what you did, Mark. But yeah, I just wondered how reliant you are or questioning you are or curious you are about the wall or the floor. You know - where it is and what it is.

Simon Newby

I'm pretty open I think, less precious now. I've worked in lots of galleries before as a technician so I've hung lots of shows and that really influenced how I present my own work. I'd get very

particular, which I'm coming out of now, I don't think people look that much. Not that long ago I was hanging some of my works and thought, what if I just drill loads of holes so I can put the pictures anywhere? They're just holes, I don't have to fill them. I found that quite liberating..

Jo Addison

Did either of you happen to see the Royal Academy Degree show this year? Because Kobby Adi, who's teaching with us and he's, he graduated from Goldsmith and then went to the RA, and I think it's the best show I've ever seen at the RA [Right]. It's just the most beautiful... Mark, I think you'd really like it, and it represents quite well online. And I think it talks really well. It's a very political work as a young black man studying at the RA. So it's got a narrative that's quite, that's the central narrative, but actually it relates so much just generally to what we're talking about, you know, that kind of reverence with which those walls are treated and the... the way things are hung and how it really relates well to that.

Mark Wilsher

That's interesting. I think you're right Simon. People only look closely when something is really jarring or really wrong, and I think that sometimes it matters and most of the time it doesn't probably matter as much as we think it does.

Simon Newby

Like hanging pictures from wire.

Jo Addison

Simon, what do you do now?

Simon Newby

I'm an artist's assistant. I work for Ryan Gander in his studio in Suffolk.

Jo Addison

I was going to mention Ryan earlier because we were talking about how much someone knows when they come to the work. And I remembered reading an interview of his where he was saying he was trying to really make it possible for someone to kind of swat up around the work. He didn't expect people to come with knowledge, but he wanted them to do the work to get to the point where they could relate to it. So he was quite specifically directing their encounter – well he does doesn't he? I mean, that's kind of what he does. And yeah, you can probably hear, I think I mentioned it to you before, Mark, but I do feel really like I'm not quite allowing myself to just depend on that wall or that floor, I don't know why. Like it was yesterday. I just ended up going out and putting everything out in the backyard. I was just like, "oh, what does it do? What



if I just leave it all out?"

Or, I've got an allotment and I still think I might just go and plant them all or something. I feel like I just need to. I'm struggling so much with how to hold things in the air that I think I might just go and like, chuck them up and see where they end.

Simon Newby

That would be incredibly hard. It was hard putting my chairs in the kitchen, I couldn't imagine putting them in a wood! They wouldn't be anything there. There wouldn't be anything to look at. They'd just be invisible.

Jo Addison

It's so tricky, isn't it? Those alternative steps that you might take?

Mark Wilsher

I think maybe when you're making something, you're always kind of envisaging the kind of situation that it might be seen in and that the two kind of go together, don't they?

Simon Newby

Yes. Sometimes it helps to focus on the work when you just think about it going into a white cube and you don't have to worry about the wood or the kitchen or the kitchen surface.

Mark Wilsher

I feel like we should probably wrap it up now.

Jo Addison

I wanted to tell you that I did read the text as well, after [Georges Perec "*Things*" 1965]. I hadn't read it. Have you read it, Simon?

Simon Newby

I haven't, no.

Jo Addison

God, it's quite amazing, isn't it, Mark? You know, it's so speaks to now as well.

Mark Wilsher

It was a big hit when it was published and went straight on the school curriculum in France. I think it's still on it. Every French school kid reads this book as a as a kind of primer, and yeah, it's a real critique of consumer capitalism and the birth of marketing and advertising and market research and all those kind of horrible consumer things. And it's totally based around the thingness of things and how you kind of manifest your identity through what you buy and consumption and so on. And yeah, it's also it's got a nice thread of existential angst running through it.

Jo Addison

It's great, Simon, and his books do this thing, don't they? Where you go " Why? Why do I still want to read it?" Like it doesn't have a lot of the things that you think are necessary to keep you reading it.

Mark Wilsher

Like a story or characters or anything.

Jo Addison

As fiction I mean as fiction, because it's like, you know, that's the sort of stuff you are very familiar with reading about in other ways. But that one in particular feels like, "why is this so compelling? Why is this piece of writing so compelling?".

Mark Wilsher

I'm really grateful that you went off to read it. In my mind, the book was kind of the fourth part of the show. You know, and I was hoping that people would go away and read it and it would kind of colour their experience of the whole thing retrospectively. Not in any particularly clever way, just because I'm a fan of it, and I thought it'd be fun. I'd recommend any Oulipo texts heartily. I'm a huge fan. There's one of his essays which is just an alphabetical list of everything he eats over an entire year. It's great. This brilliant list... six bottles of cognac, four ducks. You know, whatever. It's great.

Jo Addison

That's so good.