City Limits
Part of the Sky Arts Artichoke Salon Series with Tate
A public conversation about the nature and use of public space

Thursday 7 October, Williamson Tunnels, Liverpool

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The Right Reverend
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Helen Marriage
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Tim Marlow: Welcome to this, the second of three events exploring the nature of public art and art in public places. The first was at Tate Modern in the Turbine Hall and, for bombast and theatre, I didn't think we were going to beat that when we dealt with the politics of disruption. I have to say though: this wins hands down. I didn't know of the Williamson Tunnels. I still don't quite know why they were built. I know there's all sorts of myths around it but it seems to me that these, in a sense, are an early prototype for installation art: something without function but actually potentially open to all sorts of different functions and roles. Anyway, we're delighted to be here.

The third event, by the way, is down in Cornwall and will deal with public art in a more rural context. So this, in a sense, is the nitty gritty of the debate, all of which has been brought together in a collaboration by Tate, by Sky Arts - and this isn't a plug for someone who occasionally employs me but - the only channel, with a portfolio of channels that deal directly with the arts and fund projects as well, but also from Artichoke, who I think are, in a sense, one of the more interesting and pivotal organisations in Britain. There is really no one else like them, and I've not encountered anyone really like them anywhere in the world. One of the things I like about them isn't just the fact that they bring almost un-stage-able public events to the public arena. It's also the fact that they want to stage events like this, as a kind of workshop. So the whole point of this evening and the other two events is to have a dialogue between the public and various people who play a role in the way that art is staged but also to use this as a kind of laboratory workshop to feed back into the kind of projects and ideas that Artichoke may come up with in the future.

The format of this evening, as I said, is a kind of conversation between our panel and you. There are solicited questions from the audience; it's not because we want to contrive how the debate is but because we wanted to give you, the audience, a chance to think about some of the questions you might want to ask and have answered. So some of you have submitted them on email; I have a list of those people who I hope are here and are going to ask the questions they said they wanted to. We may have one or two sticky moments but I'm sure we can cope. Then, after the panel have discussed those points, I want to throw it out to the floor. We've got 'till 8 o'clock. That should give us enough time but without further ado, let me introduce the panel, briefly, to you.

Next to me here is the Assistant Chief Constable for Merseyside, Helen King, which would qualify her – just that position would qualify her, I think, on this panel – but I think it's particularly important for you to know that in 2008 she led the force and its relationship to, and the policing of and the facilitating of the European City of Culture project here in Liverpool. Helen Marriage, to her left, is Co-Director of Artichoke, which was founded in 2005. She's becoming a friend of mine but I don't say glowing things about her organisation because of that, and I'm quite happy to say to you all that she is the person responsible for closing down your streets, demolishing your roundabouts, inflicting space-age looking creatures, in the name of art, upon your city, with Artichoke in the 2008 - the project that they did with the Spider, or *La Princesse*, as I think it was known (which ought to be Helen's nickname now in the art world, but it's not). Lewis Biggs is the former Director of Tate Liverpool, for ten years, through the 'nineties, but now is the Director and creative force behind the Liverpool Biennial, which is raging even as we speak. The Right Reverend James Jones is the Bishop of Liverpool. He doesn't need any introduction; he was on the radio this morning. But I also enjoy the fact that he's allowed his cathedral to stage not just conventional works of art but a variety of art that is radical in all sorts of different ways, so he'll be very interesting, I think, from a number of perspectives.

What I wanted to do before we take the questions from the floor is just ask each of the panel, briefly – it's always difficult to ask people but I'm about to ask them: briefly – to summarise why art in public places matters, why it should exist or perhaps to even question whether it should. I think that's it's only fair – no one knows who I'm going to first – to ask the Director of the Liverpool Biennial, without giving a submission statement, to begin by defending his corner.

Lewis Biggs: Thank you Tim. Well, I wanted to start with a story from my own experience, as it were, which is about bringing up my children. We used to live about a mile from here and, on the long afternoons at weekends my children, when they were eight or twelve, used to spend a lot of time on our terraced street with the other children from the street. The parents used to all go out and keep an eye on them and, of course, the parents would get talking in a group and the group would get larger and larger, and then somebody would bring a bottle of wine, and quite soon after that a police helicopter would come [*laughter*] and would circle above us until we dispersed. This is, you know, a generation ago.

Tim Marlow: When the police had money for helicopters, I imagine.

Lewis Biggs: Yeah - and it seemed to me that, in this little scenario, there are some interesting ideas. First of all there's boredom, which drives children onto the street to talk to each other; then there is people's love of hanging out, as it were, and talking to each other and as soon as two or three people get together then there's a reason for ten to join them and gossip and so on, and then fear comes, because this is not usual, this is not habitual. Something is wrong; something must be wrong, or people wouldn't be talking to each other. There must be some reason for the police to have to interfere here. There's a little kind of progression from boredom to fear which is unfortunate, and which I think it's good to do something to fight, in some way. I think if you take that little scenario and blow it up to the size of a city, we all have our habits; we all do our daily things and we get bored, and we need things to take us out of our daily habits, and what those things are may induce fear in other people. Maybe that fear is necessary, in order to get us to rethink what it is that we do habitually and whether we should be doing it habitually, and whether we could do something different, but those are the kind of issues which lead me to feel that an event like a Biennial, which only happens every two years, after all – it's not like we're trying to do it every Sunday [*laughter*]…

Tim Marlow: You should be so lucky!

Lewis Biggs: [*laughs*] …but I think disruption is a very positive thing.

Tim Marlow: Is fear a positive thing?

Lewis Biggs: Fear is not always a positive thing, no. Fear is normally not a positive thing but overcoming fear is a very positive thing, and particularly if, overcoming fear, you learn to respect your fellow citizens more than you did before and if you learn a little bit about yourself and about them through the disruption. I think one reason disruption is really, really important – sorry, I've probably had enough time now…

Tim Marlow: No, no.

Lewis Biggs: …is that change is fearful to a lot of people. A lot of what we're fed through the media and through the consumer output is that we are somehow in control of the situation, and we're in control of the situation because we have our habits and those habits are fed, and it's the duty of society to feed our habits. Depends what the habits are, of course, but that isn't really the case at all. It's up to us to decide whether we have and keep habits or whether we change our habits and, out there, there is every reason to keep changing. If we attempt to live habitually and never learn new habits then we become, to that extent, less than human, because human beings are, above all, flexible and able to react to their environment. Change, as they say, is a constant. There is going to be – it's a complete certainty – there is going to be more change in our lives; change is happening at an ever increasing rate. In order to stay flexible and be able to meet the challenges of change, disruption is great!

Tim Marlow: Good. Right, let's hold that, that's an interesting and eloquent answer. Helen King, I think it would be a very reductive view of the police to say that control were the essence of everything but, certainly, it is one of the views that people have of the police's role in any public event. Is that something you have to negotiate, or do you not really care that that's the view, it's something that you can push to one side and, in the end, you've got to make sure something happens safely, and that's the primary concern: creativity is really secondary or tertiary?

Helen King: I suppose my responsibilities, professionally, aren't for how creative an event is or how exciting it is and, although ultimately, actually, the safety of an event is down to an organiser, which I think Helen will remember very well, the police do have some key responsibilities: they have responsibilities to prevent and detect crime; responsibilities to stop breaches of the peace and, ultimately, in the extreme, it's the responsibility to react if there's an immediate threat to life - to coordinate the response of emergency services if there's a major incident or disaster. We don't want to be killjoys; we don't want to stop things happening – and I don't want to scaremonger – but we just look back to this last summer: in Germany, 21 people died at a music festival through crushing in a tunnel. In Liverpool of all cities, the memory of Hillsborough is very strong - the tragedy of what happened there - and somebody needs to be thinking 'What are the implications of any particular event to the safety of the public at large?' I do see that as a role for the police. It's also a role for the Local Authority, the City Council leads a safety advisory group where all these issues are considered. But I suppose part of the pride that I have in Merseyside Police and what we did in 2008 and, indeed, what we do every year to assist with events like Matthew Street Music Festival and other events which, in effect, take over the centre of Liverpool, is about enabling those things to happen in a way that is disruptive but enables people to have fun, to do things differently, to see their city differently, and hopefully instill more pride in their city – but to do it in a way that's safe because, if you ended up with deaths, if you ended up with injuries, the impact on people's lives, most importantly – but also on the city and the way the city feels – is massive, and that doesn't take months or years to repair, it takes decades. So I hope we don't become the killjoys, the ones who are always looking for why you shouldn't do something, but there is that need to take a step back from the creativity and the excitement of the moment and say 'What does this actually mean? If we've got tens of thousands of people out on the streets of a city, then how's that going to work? How are we going to keep them safe?'

Tim Marlow: Helen Marriage: is there – the traditional model of the avant-garde for artists that in certain quarters is discredited, but there's still plenty of artists, they want something to kick against – do the police in general, but also the notion of the authorities in particular, is that something that artists find helpful? It's something, it's there for them to kick against, and it's something that you actually quite consciously are exploiting when you are working with creative people in order to produce public events or public art. I mean, no one ever goes public on this but there must be an element of that: 'What can we get away with?' Or 'What boundaries can we go through?' Or 'What do we have to buff up against?'

Helen Marriage: I think that, you know, I would absolutely respect what Helen has said about public safety because nobody – particularly a company like Artichoke: Nikki and I started this, and started working in this field a long time ago – we wouldn't have had that long life if we'd ever caused injury or death, God forbid, to anybody. So nobody sets out to do something that's dangerous and, actually, we rarely set out to do anything that's illegal [*laughter*]. We don't! We don't. What we set out…

Tim Marlow: I'm glad that you distinguished from doing what's dangerous and what's illegal.

Helen Marriage: Well that's – it is interesting, isn't it? Lewis went back to a story, and I tell this story quite a lot: my Mum, who's always wanted to understand what I do and, you know, kind of wished I'd got a proper job – I was talking to her one day about the Elephant, and the Elephant, as many of you will know, we did this big event in London where we shut Central London, on and off, for three or four days – and it took five years to negotiate the permissions, and two years down the line I was trying to explain to my Mother what we were doing. I got to the end of this very involved explanation about how marvelous it was going to be, and how moving and all that stuff, and she said 'But why would anybody let you do that?' It was a terribly interesting question because – and has haunted me a lot – because what I realised is that there really isn't an anybody, and they don't 'let' you, and that people in Helen's position, you know, [it's] probably quite difficult when she comes up against somebody like Artichoke - that very often an event organiser will go to the authorities, City Council or Police or somebody, and say 'Please may I?' and the temptation for the authority is to say 'No', if it's a difficult thing because nobody wants to take responsibility for saying 'Yes' in case that's wrong, in case the end result of saying yes is that some higher authority or boss… a HSE or something says 'How could you possibly have let that happen?' But we don't, in general, tend to ask permission. We tend to go to the authorities and say 'We're doing this; how can you help us make this work?' That, in a way, is a very interesting psychological place to be because what you're saying is 'We take responsibility' – and Helen will tell you that over the '08 Spider, the responsibility, the signing of the licenses, the public liability insurance, all of that stuff was with us - and our stewarding company, and our technical people, our operational people. What I think people like us have to do is to almost hold the hand of the authorities who feel themselves to be in the position where perhaps they ought to be saying 'No', and say 'This is a shared responsibility, and the end result of doing this will be something so marvelous, so joyous, so benign, so wonderful for this community, that you want to do it.' You just have to get over that little hurdle of anxiety that Lewis has identified: that fear that this might be a strange and difficult thing to do because, in the end, what comes back is so incredibly positive. You can point to all of the stuff that we endlessly have to do about economic impacts - and the fact that Liverpool ONE, here, had a 615% increase in turnover[1] the weekend the Spider – you can do all of that stuff, you know, jobs created, all that sort of stuff. But it's not really the point; the point is shared joy.

Tim Marlow: Let's come on to the economic, but shared joy sounds like a kind of quasi-religious experience [*laughter*] which is a…

James Jones: Cue the Bishop…

Tim Marlow: Yeah, James Jones. We'll, at some stage this evening, wrestle with the question of whether art and aspects of creative culture have become a sort of religion but let's put that to one side and just ask you broadly where you stand in relationship to this.

James Jones: I'm a great enthusiast for public art. I chaired the New Deal for Communities programme in Kensington for four years. It was the most profound experience for me, learning from the people of Kensington about the renewal of communities. I've thought a lot since then about the regeneration of the city of Liverpool, and cities generally, and one of the things I fear about our regeneration programmes is that our cities will end up suffering from urban diabetes. This is where the blood pumps round the heart of a city and doesn't reach the extremities - the outer estates - and they atrophy and die. I think one of the great things about public art, the great thing about *La Machine*, the Spider, was that it brought people on to the street and if I've got a criticism of it, it's this: I would love the Spider to have walked through Norris Green and Netherley in Kensington because I think that would have had a profound impact on those communities - because what it does is it raises people's self-esteem, it raises people's aspirations, and these are the two things that blight the inner-city and the outer-estates. I remember when we had the Spider there was a little lad on his Dad's shoulders and of course the Spider, those of you who were here, ended up going down the Mersey Tunnel, which was a fantastic *dénouement* for it, but this little boy said to his Dad: 'I'm never going down that tunnel again!' What had happened, of course, is that that little boy's imagination had been stirred and stimulated, and I think this is one of the great things that public art does: it really does stir people's imaginations. If we're looking into the future of society, one of the things that we've got to do is to create a society where people care for each other – but you can't care for another human being if you have no imagination. In other words, if you can never put yourself into the shoes of another person, you won't care for them because you *can't* care for them: you haven't got the facility to care. But the moment - through art, and especially through public art – the imagination is engaged, that's when you start abstracting yourself and seeing the world from other people's points of view. That's the beginning of compassion and, you know, if I can just tell a little story as the conclusion of my little contribution: there's a Chinese fable of this elderly couple who are visited one day by a Genie and they're offered two wishes. The first wish - because they're a barren couple they say 'We'd like a child,' and the Genie says 'Yes, your wish is granted.' Then the Genie says 'Your second wish?' and this elderly couple say 'We would like our child to grow up and never feel pain.' The Genie said 'Oh no, no please. Don't ask for that. I'll come back in a month's time and see if you've changed your mind.' He returns; he asks the question… and they persist in wanting their child never to feel any pain as he grows up, and the Chinese fable goes on to say that, fortunately, the elderly parents did not live long enough to see their child become the greatest tyrant the land had ever seen. Because he couldn't feel pain - his pain or anybody else's pain, because he had no imagination to do that he was a careless, compassionless person. Therefore I think public art, especially, in an economic restraint, is vitally important because it's part of the way that we stimulate the imagination and develop that faculty of caring for each other into the future. So I am a big fan of public art, notwithstanding the difficulties that Helen has to contend with.

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[1] Please note this statement is incorrect; there was a 615% increase in footfall, not turnover.

Tim Marlow: Great. Well, actually, you touched on one or two areas that I know the floor are going to raise, so let's now throw it out to the floor. The first question, if Anita Morris is here…

Anita Morris: My question, probably, is more for Helen… Marriage: which factor's more important, Helen, in getting an idea really off the ground: is it the will to make it happen or the money to pay for it?

Helen Marriage: We never have the money [*laughs*]; the money always comes second. I think that if you waited for the money and if you actually knew what it was going to cost when you first proposed the idea, you wouldn't ever – nothing would happen. So we always play a really strange and interesting game – I'm sure Lewis does the same – where you have to talk about something as if it's happening, as part of the 'We're doing this, how are you going to help us?' It's a journey of faith, really, in a sort of strange way, that I think particularly a company like ours, where you're not working in any space which is dedicated to the thing you're doing – we don't work in theatres or galleries or concert halls or opera houses - so when we embark on a project it's always, we're always taking a city and turning it into our stage or our playground. It's a very – it is considered, obviously, a very illegitimate thing to do, so you start off by persuading people that they want you to do this, and almost never have we ever done it with the money in place. It's a very hard thing to do because you're juggling the interests of your funders and sponsors and the promises that you're making, and you're saying – as we did with the Elephant, you know - 'On May the 6th' or whatever it was 'We're going to be doing this', absolutely not knowing that you really can but unless you can persuade people to go with you, you never will, so it's a sort of weird, slightly bi-polar journey, where you're – I wouldn't say exactly lying – but you're kind of implying to the people who might fund it that it's definitely going to happen, and you're implying to the people who might want to stop you that the funders are desperate for this to go forward, and that you're juggling these interests in order to facilitate the thing that you're completely obsessed with delivering.

Tim Marlow: Well now the police know that, you've got no chance [*laughter*].

Helen King: I knew that all along [*laughter*].

Helen Marriage: It must be the same with you.

Tim Marlow: It must be, but actually, surely - you say there's no money; that's disingenuous. If you don't have any money - take the Fourth Plinth project: there was…

Helen Marriage: A bit of money

Tim Marlow: ...there was money, to begin with. It didn't cover the project, but it was there to begin with. Isn't it hubristic? We can all come up with ideas of things we'd like to do and if we have absolutely no mandate and no seed money at the beginning, should we even be starting to think about that or not? I mean, the Liverpool Biennial, I'm sure you have to do a large amount of fundraising but you have certain funds in place to begin with; you're not just asking everyone to make this leap of faith.

Lewis Biggs: Yeah, well, now we do, yes. We didn't when we started, when the Biennial started. When I took over the Biennial in the year 2000 I was the only member of staff and we had a debt of nearly a million pounds, and that was what I started with.

Tim Marlow: So in the next month when, we hear, there's going to be savage cuts across the board and the arts are going to get hammered whatever - it's inevitable - does that mean that, in a sense, public art projects are going to diminish over the next two or three years significantly, because how are you going to raise money in a climate where everyone is trying to raise it?

Lewis Biggs: Because it's different. I think, you know, in a recession, people play the lottery more than they do without a recession. In a recession, people need things to take them out of themselves and believe in. I'm not saying it's going to be easy but I do think that there is a need for public celebrations, public manifestations, public demonstrations.

Tim Marlow: We'll come on to the need for it. I think we'd all agree there's a need for it, and I think there's a question that will ask that, but I think in practical terms you're going to find you might have the funding in place to begin with…

Helen Marriage: Money's never been the thing.

Lewis Biggs: Money's not the issue.

Tim Marlow: Great [*laughter*].

Helen Marriage: It's really interesting because when you work with – less so with the church in my experience – but when you're working with the public service, and I used to work in Salisbury where the British Army are headquartered, you suddenly realise with a kind of fascination that there is a world in Britain where money is given for people to do the job that they're meant to do and then they spend it, whereas in the arts it's never like that; we're expected to the job we're meant to do, starting with nothing, or nearly nothing, or, you know, a tenth of the project. The idea that you would ever be in a position where there was enough money and all you had to do was decide how to spend it, on what your priorities were, is not an experience I've ever had. I don't know if you have. Because you're always trying to work out where to find the cash to do the thing that you've decided is a good idea, which is a different place, I think, from being given a budget, however small or inadequate it may be, and then deciding how to spend it. I think in the arts we're always in this position where we're going 'Well, okay, we're here, and we're going to have to get to here; how are we going to do that?' while inventing the work at the same time.

Tim Marlow: And that comes from the compulsion that what you're doing needs to be done. There is a kind of social or creative need for it.

Lewis Biggs: Well, and the desire to do it, yes. I mean it's like, there are Artist Unions which say that artists should be paid such-and-such a day for painting pictures or whatever but it's never really caught on because most artists are doing it because they can't not do it. They're not doing it because they're paid to do it, they're doing it – hopefully somebody buys what they do eventually – but they're doing it because they really, really, really want to do it.

Tim Marlow: There may be a distinction between artists doing what they feel a compulsion to do in their studios and artists feeling a compulsion to do something on a grand and public scale but I think, probably, the motivation for them to do either is similar - but releasing the second is, obviously slightly more difficult than the first.

Lewis Biggs: Difficult, but I wouldn't say different in kind, really.

Tim Marlow: Okay. Let's go to the next question. Is Laurie Peake here? At the back.

Laurie Peake: Hi. I'm from Liverpool Biennial too and last year we did a project along the Leeds/Liverpool Canal that runs through South Sefton – most people know it, know Bootle there - and North Liverpool, and British Waterways reported 100% drop in incidents of anti-social behaviour while we had a summer of artist commissions, residencies, and events. I wondered whether the panel thought it was legitimate or indeed useful to talk about art's impact on the cutting of crime?

Tim Marlow: Helen.

Helen King: I think absolutely, and something we've been doing in Merseyside Police for quite a while now is - both with our own resources but also with the Local Authorities, voluntary agencies, indeed communities themselves - giving, in particular, young people useful, positive things to do. Some of that's been around sport but a lot's been around culture as well, and I think what we've seen is there are lessons to be learnt in those environments. In the realm of sport, we've talked about, with kids, issues like 'Be part of a team, not a gang' and around arts you can see that coming together of a group of people and actually producing something they can be proud of rather than, perhaps, coming together to do something that damages a community or leaves other people in fear. That is one strand of what we do around anti-social behaviour. In the last three years, Merseyside as an area has seen anti-social behaviour come down by more than 30%. That makes a real difference to people's lives and about how they feel about the area in which they live. So I think you're right; anything that we can do, other agencies can do, communities themselves can do, that create a positive focus rather than a negative one – but as you were saying, young people gathering – they're not always doing something wrong but if people don't know why they're there they're afraid, so that creates an impact in its own right. That's something we have supported and we will continue to do so, as far as we can.

James Jones: The social impact of public art is huge and underestimated. I sponsored a debate in the House of Lords a few months ago on culture as a frontline service because, with the economic restraints, people think 'Oh, what can we cut? Oh, let's cut culture' but in fact the social impacts prove that culture should not be sacrificed at this time, and the example that you give can be replicated in other parts of Liverpool. There is the anecdotal evidence about the Culture year where there was a lower prescribing of anti-depressants because of the social impact of the cultural programme. In education too, going back to the Kensington New Deal, we built the first City Academy devoted to the environment. This was a building which now stands on the edge of Newsham Park, full of space and light. The kids in this school have gone, in five years, from 27% 5 GCSEs in A-C to this year, in August, they got over 80%. This is the same community, the same children, but what's happening here? Well, a number of factors are happening, but not least you've got this iconic building which is having an impact. If you put children and young people in a dark… box, they will behave differently from if you put them in a building full of space and light and with public art. In fact, as the kids show people around the Academy, one of the phrases I use is 'This has the L'Oreal factor' because it's telling kids 'You're worth it.' Now, actually, that's what public art does: you put these events on in communities that are neglected, and places like Bootle, and it's the L'Oreal factor: you are worth it – and don't be surprised if people then rise in their self-esteem and those aspirations. So public art has profound social impact.

Tim Marlow: Tracey Emin was very pleased when… the small bird that she has near the cathedral, it was taken. I think that some kids took it; it was hacked off. She told me that she put out a message on a website or told the press that she was very disappointed and felt that these people had not respected themselves and were letting their city down, and within a day or two it was returned. The idea that people repented is, perhaps, something that you might [*laughter*]… subscribe to.

James Jones: But actually she loves – she probably loves the Catholic cathedral as well – but she also loves the Anglican cathedral, and has done this installation so, as you go through the west door, you turn around and you see this purple neon script above the west door: 'I felt you, and I knew you loved me.' People stand and they look at this and, just, as you look at people of all ages you can see the impact that this is having. I mean, the building, the space – because of course the churches are the gatekeepers of public space: both internal public space, like the cathedrals and the Parish churches where you just take the pews out because they were never there in the first place - and they are used, as our cathedral is, for public art. But also, if you look at the geography, you'll see very often that it is the church that is the gatekeeper of the public space in the community: of the market square or the city square. It's protecting a space so that people can come and gather. Whether people have faith or not, I think it's the gathering that is so important because what it's doing is giving people a shared experience and that's actually a religious experience in the sense that the word religion actually means 'To bind people together.' So when people come out to see the Spider or whatever, you've got this sense of belonging because one of the problems of modern cities is that they atomise people into individuals. You look at the sort of accommodation that's provided: it's all individual boxes. So where do people come out of their boxes and inhabit a public space so that they can actually communicate with each other and have some sense of belonging to one another? Those public spaces do that.

Tim Marlow: Does this slightly challenge the role of the gallery or the museum? I was very struck when James was speaking, thinking that, although visitor numbers are down across the country in terms of church attendance, I think it's still fair to say there's a very broad spectrum of social classes that go to church, those that do. I think you can very strongly say that museums and galleries are, broadly speaking, a middle-class enclave. They're not totally that, and this may be a British obsession, always worrying about class but it seems to be underpinning the question, the idea that if you put decent art – public art projects – in different kinds of places, you will engage people who wouldn't otherwise come to museums and galleries. Therefore we start to raise the question: should we be spending more time and effort putting art out in the community? And is the role of the museum a 19th Century one that is essentially redundant? To take it to its extreme conclusion. He asked the previous Director of Tate Liverpool [*laughter*].

Lewis Biggs: Well, I hardly know what to say because there are friends of mine in the audience who are…

Tim Marlow: Oh, they can have their fight back in about twenty minutes.

Lewis Biggs: I have to admit that one reason why I left the Tate in order to do the Liverpool Biennial was because I had previously been involved in an exhibition called Arts Transpennine which used the north of England as the gallery space, rather than just Liverpool as a city or just the gallery itself. The experience for me of working with artists in, I don't know, there were between thirty or forty different sites between Liverpool and the Humber, Hull, and finding out a huge - I mean, it was a crash course in the history and geography of the M62, as it were, as far as I was concerned. It was so exciting to see the way in which artists reacted to these spaces which were not conditioned by the history of art, and so exciting to see the way in which the public were able to connect with the art because it was about things that were not about the history of art. All of that led me – and, you know, I love the history of art, and I will always be immersed in it – but there's more to life than the history of art and there's more to life than museums, and I have developed a preference for art that tackles issues that are not to do with the history of art. So I do think, and I don't know if this is getting near to answering your question, I do think that to work with artists who are more interested in today's issues that concern everybody else, then they are - with their own place in art history and, you know, I'm afraid it has to be said that there are artists who are mainly interested in their own place in art history. That's something that is fed to them, and [that] they're encouraged to think about by the way that their patrons behave. There are certain patrons who want themselves to become a part of art history. Of course, it's all a cul-de-sac because if you look at the old masters, they were deeply involved with the issues of their time; they didn't have the history of art uppermost in their heads – but museum culture has, unfortunately, played to the production of culture in a narrow sense. Now, there are shining examples of museums which are thoroughly involved with their context and thoroughly involved with the main issues of contemporary life and for which the history of art is a secondary consideration, so I couldn't possibly be against museums as a whole. I just found that I myself was in a hurry to work with the kind of artists who wanted to work outside the gallery.

Tim Marlow: That's a very nice answer. You put the boot in with one foot and stroked with another but it was a candid answer and, actually, it was a reductive question. In the end I think you took it in the spirit in which it was intended, which was really questioning the traditional role of the museum. That doesn't make them defunct and moribund. Thank you. I want to ask Maria Barrett in the audience because actually she has got a more eloquent way of framing what I was also trying to get at. Is Maria here in the audience? Great.

Maria Barrett: Hi. I don't think it's more eloquent; it's maybe more obvious, really. Do large scale public events – and I'm thinking of Artichoke and also of the Biennial – do they attract a wider audience? Do they attract audiences from different socio-economic groups?

Tim Marlow: Helen?

Helen Marriage: Yes, in some way that's always the intention. When we hit the streets, what we want is the broadest number of people to come, and from as diverse backgrounds as possible. It is interesting, however, that people are still slightly bound by their own territorial – you know, where their tribe exists. I think that we would be being disingenuous if we didn't say that the event that we did here in Liverpool was a fantastic success and there were hundreds of thousands of people on the streets for those three days, but when we did an analysis of the make-up of those people you could see that there were certain communities who were not represented, and that might not be a failure of us in terms of our – you know, the reach that we made through the many communities in and around the city. It may be that but my instinct is that it's more likely that in cities there are always places where people feel comfortable, and communities that they feel comfortable with and places where that isn't the case. It's a very hard thing to break down those barriers that have been growing up for a very long time. It isn't always an economic thing; I tell this funny story, again from my experience in Salisbury – again, Salisbury is a very strange place, it's very unlike here. It's a conservative, southern, cathedral city dominated by three institutions which are: the Church, the Army, and the Conservative Party, so it's not quite like here. The festival that I was running had always, always started with a classical concert in the cathedral, quite often with candles, usually with some famous soloist or whatever, and I knew I tampered with that at my peril as the new festival director, but I wanted there to be something that was about a different audience, and a different kind of experience, and a sense of celebration that was different from sitting in rows in the dark next to people that you didn't know. So I programmed the cathedral concert but I also programmed, outside it, a processional piece of Catalan pyrotechnic street theatre which was called, as I remember, Mephistomania. It was a Faust story on stilts, with people in Khathakali costumes who emerged through smoke with a groaning soundtrack with handheld pyrotechnics. We had a lot of conversations beforehand with Wiltshire Constabulary, Helen's colleagues, for one, who were saying 'No', and were saying 'We're not closing the roads', and all the kind of things that you might anticipate.

But most interestingly was then dealing with Salisbury Cathedral, who - I suddenly realised that I didn't quite have carte blanche, because what I wanted was for the piece to start on the doorstep of the cathedral so that the audience who were in the cathedral concert, who were the audience who thought they knew what they wanted, and who knew that if they hadn't already heard of it they didn't want to go, and if it wasn't the King's Singers, really, it was off the menu, I wanted them to go too, as well as the people who had come for fireworks and all of that kind of stuff. But to start it in the cathedral Close I had to go and have a sort of theological conversation with the Dean about whether he minded the Devil on the doorstep of the cathedral [*laughter*]. Now, we all laugh, but actually it was quite a serious conversation about what this meant. In the end he and I decided in a kind of jokey way that as long as the Devil turned his back on the cathedral and ended up in the town amongst the pubs and clubs then it was probably okay [*laughter*]. So that was indeed what we planned. But at the beginning of every cathedral concert the Priest in charge makes a housekeeping announcement and all of that sort of stuff, and I asked him – the geography of the Close is such that the cathedral sits in the middle of this beautiful grassy sward, beautiful houses all around and one very narrow gate. Bearing in mind my health and safety responsibilities, I asked if in his announcement he would say could anybody who was parked inside the Close not try and exit as the crowd was going through the gate, because it was only thirteen feet wide and there'd be a nasty accident.

Tim Marlow: Otherwise the Devil would get them.

Helen Marriage: Exactly. He said 'Of course, Helen,' and then he made his announcement and, absolutely unprovoked by me, he said at the end 'Of course, you might even think of going; I certainly shall be.' There was this absolutely perceptible frisson which ran through that audience of, I would say, average age sixty, well-heeled Salisbury burghers. The idea that the Dean had endorsed this strange thing was marketing that we could never have bought: effectively 1600 people trapped, listening to somebody saying 'You should go to this,' and of course the doors swung open and the Close was full of red smoke and flame; there were people emerging on stilts, groaning, throwing fireworks at everybody, and I would say probably 60% of the cathedral audience went with it, joining the people in the Close who were from another tribe, from a people in Salisbury who didn't feel welcome in that area, for whom that wasn't an actual home. So we mixed them up and the police got frightened. Roads were closed anyway because there were too many people for the traffic to keep running, all of that kind of stuff: the big pyrotechnic climax.

The next morning I was walking through the marketplace and there was a lady, aged about eighty, on her sit-up-and-beg bicycle, founder member of the Friends of the Salisbury Festival, who stopped me and said 'Are you Helen Marriage?' at which point you knew you were in deep trouble, and I kind of stopped and said 'Yep', and she said 'Well my dear, when the Dean made his announcement, I said to my friend, 'Shall we go?' and she said 'Kathleen, it's not for us.' But Helen, my dear, it was.' And that's something about territory, advocacy, marketing, feeling safe. I got, similarly, a letter from the social worker on the one council estate in this very strange city, saying 'You couldn't imagine what the kids said when they came back: they said they couldn't believe it had happened in Salisbury, they couldn't believe it was anything to do with the Salisbury Festival, and they couldn't believe that it was art and it wasn't boring.' For me, those two reactions - the old lady who felt that she knew that Pinchas Zukerman and the English Chamber Orchestra was her thing and nothing else was interesting, and the kids coming in from a place which you might describe as culturally deprived, coming to something because their social worker brought them, which is what had happened, and both, together, finding a shared pleasure in the creative possibilities of an artist's imagination. For me that's a really, really exciting and significant thing: to be allowed to do that.

James Jones: Can I say that I think that's great in Salisbury experience. The question asking about whether we are, in this city, reaching out into the different socio-economic groups – I think there are some fantastic examples here: the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and its scheme of using its musicians to go into the deprived areas, the schools - the Faith School, for example, in Everton - is a wonderful scheme of teaching musical instruments to people who would never, ever usually sign up; also the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is doing fantastic work with young people – you may not think this is art but for me, when I went to see it, it seemed to me it was the most wonderful installation – because they took all these young people who could be, sometimes, pelting the Fire Service with stones when they're called out to deal with an incident, and these young people are being trained as mini Fire Officers. I went to their passing out parade, and it was fantastic because they were all in the Fire Engine - it was really like a Tracey Emin installation – with the hoses full of water, and creating the most artistic impressions with these hoses. Here were young people being brought into something which was beyond their imagination but was then stimulating their imagination. Then finally – to declare an interest here, I'm on the board of the National Museums and Galleries in Liverpool – we've done an analysis of people who come to the Museum, and the great contrast with the southern museums, especially the London museums, is that we are reaching out into socio-economic groups that the London museums simply do not touch. So I think there is hope that we are touching those parts of society.

Helen Marriage: You see, my point is that the poverty of imagination is not only residing in those who are economically poor. My point is that there is a poverty of imagination - and the problem with it in the elderly rich, or whoever it is, is that it creates in them a fear of the other, of the other people - and that the work that we have to do is not just about reaching hard-to-reach kids or whatever. We have to do that of course but we have to do the other thing.

Tim Marlow: You're saying that we have to educate the people who are culturally educated.

Helen Marriage: I don't think we have to educate them; I think we have to take away their anxieties about being in a place where they feel as uncomfortable as the kids feel when they're asked to go to a concert hall, because I think it's the same.

Tim Marlow: Helen King.

Helen King: What I was going to say is: I think one of the great things about art in public places is that, for many of the public, they don't actually recognise that it is art but they think it is interesting and exciting. So, I think it was on the Sunday when *La Machine* was here, I went out in uniform in my bright yellow jacket – high visibility policing…

Helen Marriage: Looking very attractive.

Tim Marlow: Like a Superlambanana actually [*laughter*].

Helen King: …and I was walking along the waterfront. There were families out, there were kids out, there were couples out, and they kept saying to me: 'Do you know where the Spider is?' I've been asked lots of things in my police career but, that day, everyone wanted to know where the Spider was. They weren't saying 'Where's the art installation?' They weren't saying 'Where's the European Capital of Culture event?' They didn't know it was culture but they wanted to see the

Spider, and that’s what brought people together. Now you talk to people about the year of 2008 – I asked the taxi driver on the way here – people mention the Spider and their faces light up. You mention Superlambananas; I don’t know if that’s art or not.

Tim Marlow: It is art. The question is, is it good art or not? [*laughter*]

Helen King: Yeah, yeah, but it excites people. We have a Superlambanana dressed in the police uniform in the foyer of our Police Headquarters and, you know, it draws people together.

Tim Marlow: That is good art actually [*laughter*].

Helen King: Come and see it. If something puts a smile on people’s faces and makes them talk to the person next to them, there’s an engagement there but they won’t necessarily recognise it as being art or culture if that’s not what they think they’re interested in.

Tim Marlow: I think that’s a point very well made and, actually, what starts off with a degree of not cynicism but skepticism - which I don’t think was the case with the Spider - but Antony Gormley’s Angel of the North, he said eventually – it didn’t take very long – but eventually a group of people managed to get an Alan Shearer shirt, gigantic Shearer shirt, over the back of the Angel of the North and he said ‘I knew at that moment people had accepted it.’ Now [on] any poster for the North East, that becomes emblematic. You know, respectful of the Superlambanana, [it] has something, on a smaller scale, of that kind of icon, so I wasn’t being over rude; only a little [*laughter*]. Is Keith Calvert in the audience?

Keith Calvert: I’m not quite sure how my question follows on from what you’re talking about.

Tim Marlow: Don’t follow on. We’re going to change gear.

Keith Calvert: Okay. I’m pleased to hear there’s lots of money around because I’m a transpersonal shamanic artist who doesn’t have a clue how to bring anything into the earth but my question is to the whole panel but particularly to the Reverend, and it’s about space. It’s about art existing in space and the space in between me and you, or me and the object which is perceived to be art. From a kind of Shamanic perspective, I’m interested in how the Divine can move into that space between the person and the art. I’ve been enthused by everything you’ve said tonight, Reverend, and the language you’ve used and the energy that you create in the space between me and you. That, to me, is what art is really about; I consider it to be consciousness-changing and for absolutely everybody. As interesting as some of the little human points about safety and whatever else everything is, art can be created in space and art can be created for nothing. Art can be created just out of pure compassion for the other. I’m interested really in what – how art can be created in the space between people.

Tim Marlow: Which also is very broadening as well - let’s engage with that – but also, presumably, at a time of economic hardship and funding issues, this has an implication because you don’t necessarily need a huge amount of money to produce expensive materials.

Keith Calvert: Of course, it’s free. Space is free.

Tim Marlow: Yep. James Jones.

James Jones: One of the things I understand about the work of the shaman is the story, and telling the story. I think that is the distance between the observer and the object because it will impact upon every observer differently. It's as you tell the story and share that story that community is born, and people see things – like holding a diamond up and turning it and seeing the different facets, and the light refracted in different ways – I think that when people have engaged and then, either there or afterwards, they're saying what it has meant to them, then that is where people discern the truth about the world. There's a very famous phrase, which, in fact, comes from the Bible, about seeing through a glass darkly. Many people might know that 'Oh, they always see through a glass darkly.' If you look at the original language from which that part of the Bible is written, which is Greek, there is no 'darkly' in the text at all; it's an English translation of another word which in Greek is 'enigma'. What the writer was saying is 'Now we see in an enigma.' In other words, in a parable, in an allegory, in a story, in a picture, in a metaphor. It's as you see, and then tell that story, that you discover things about yourself and about one another. I firmly believe in that African concept of *Ubuntu*, which is [that] you discover yourself in relation to other people. I think that's what art empowers in a very deep way.

Tim Marlow: Lewis, you…

Keith Calvert: Participatory art is the future, I think.

Tim Marlow: Indeed, which actually is happening in many instances but in your Biennial, or your Biennale, there is storytelling and, in fact, shamanism in the past: [in] Marcus Coates' piece, which is now on at the Tate Liverpool, presumably a chord is struck, although from a chiaroscuro perspective rather than a shamanistic one.

Lewis Biggs: Yes [*laughter*]. Yes… It's only when you get two people in a room that something can happen between them; if you sit at home in your own room, nothing's going to happen, is it? That sense of community, as James said, is absolutely fundamental to recognise what has happened between people. It doesn't matter whether you concentrate on the people or on the space between the people but it's the recognition of community in which art isn't art if it's just done in a garret. Art only becomes art when it becomes part of a tradition or part of a discourse, part of a conversation between people. It's the conversation that makes the art, not the object.

Tim Marlow: Does it have to be institutionally sanctioned, though?

Lewis Biggs: Well, of course institutions like to take control of discourse, of the conversation; all institutions like to be in control of the situation. It's up to us as individuals to try to undermine that.

Helen King: I'm quite taken by this conversation because I think I'm going to have to tell my Chief Constable that he's introduced an institutionally-approved form of shaman art or something, in that one of the things that he's brought to the force in the last six months is something that's he's calling Just Talk. He's been a Police Officer in Merseyside, I think it's 34 years, and what he's encouraging all our officers to do is to get out and just talk to people. There's nothing sophisticated about it but we've got pretty good at talking to people who are victims or witnesses or offenders, but actually saying to Officers: 'Your job's more than that; it's just talk to anyone you meet out on the street, out wherever you are – just talk to them.' I think, just reflecting on the conversation you've been having, what that's about is, in effect, the story that the police have in people's lives. Actually, I always say it's a great privilege of my job that, just by putting on a yellow jacket and looking like a Superlambanana and walking down the street and smiling and saying good morning to people, I can make people feel better about where they live, where they are. People do like seeing Police Officers - that's why they want more Bobbies on the beat - but just talking to the public, it shapes that member of the public's life. But actually Police Officers doing that within communities - and this is what neighbourhood policing is all about - it also shapes the Police Officers and what they are, and the way they do their job, and the way they deal with the people that they've got to deal with in a full range of circumstances, and often very harrowing ones. I don't think we knew that was art but…

Tim Marlow: No, and I bet Keith didn't think he was going to get an answer like that but look what you've triggered [*laughter*].

Keith Calvert: I always love to see the police though.

Tim Marlow: Okay, thank you. Is Gillian Floyd here?

Gillian Floyd: My question is really twofold; that's why I've written it down. For the past ten to fifteen years, the Government policy has emphasised both the economic and the social benefits of public art events, so the first part of my question is this: with the advent of the Coalition Government, does the panel think that public art events will continue to be seen as vital in the socio-economic well-being of the country and, secondly, which matters more: the more measurable economic outcomes such as increased jobs, investments and so forth, or the less tangible, more social outcomes, such as have been discussed this evening.

Tim Marlow: Helen Marriage, you didn't dismiss but you said, in the beginning, whether we create jobs, that's not our main concern, our main concern is this joyous wondrous event but, presumably, your success as an organiser of large-scale public events is judged by both, I'd have thought, but the economic argument tends to wash more with politicians who sometimes fund providers or facilitators in that way. Is that fair comment?

Helen Marriage: Yeah, and I would say, just to answer the specific first piece of your question: will public events be considered, still, to be vital under this Government? I fear not. I fear not. I think what's interesting about this evening, and what was interesting when Artichoke, with the Tate, were putting together this panel, was what I really, really badly wanted was somebody who would sit up here and espouse the 'anti' point of view, you know: that it's a waste of money, we don't need this, we're closing our hospitals, how can we continue to fund the arts through Local Authorities or through the Arts Council? It was really hard to find anybody but what I fear, and the thing I really fear, is that we're all sort of signed-up subscribers, and I guess that most of you are too because you're here. In a way, we're all reinforcing our own feeling and maybe, slightly, our own anxieties, but there are so many people out there who disagree with us and I wonder if we're like a slightly strange missionary sect [*laughs*] talking to each other.

Tim Marlow: Well, that's…

Helen Marriage: …but I think we fail to make – you can absolutely advance the arguments, and I'm sure Lewis does it as much as we do about, you know, economic impact, all the things that I talked about before, but we're not making an argument, we're not winning an argument; we're advancing facts which are easily dismissed and, I think, in this circumstance that we're all facing now, will be dismissed. I think it's difficult to see how to win that argument. I mean, we continue to make it and what's strange - I didn't mean, I know you made reference to the fact we said there was lots of money around. There isn't lots of money around but there's never been lots of money around for the kind of things that we do. We're just adept, I guess, at seeking out what money there is, and trying to make things happen with it.

Tim Marlow: But there aren't, I mean, apart from your candid admission of failure, that you couldn't find a dissenting voice and you kind of created a sect, I kind of dispute that. I think that – I dispute it for one reason and one reason only - yes of course there are voices that criticise art and question what it's for but actually the Liverpool City of Culture was extraordinary in the fact that I saw no dissent of any substance in the press. Now I'm not, therefore, as a member of the media, about to castigate my own part profession but it is one of the conventions of the media that they have to question everything and, actually, often the debate about whether something is good or not, that's a valid cultural activity but whether something should exist or not is usually a creation of a media debate that is felt to be necessary.

Helen Marriage: What, you think that the public in general think…

Tim Marlow: I think the public, in general, are critical of things. They have great critical faculties; they think things are rubbish or they think things have no relevance but rarely do the public engage with the debate about 'Is it art or not?' or 'Should they actually take place or not?' or 'Is there a right for public art to exist?'

Helen Marriage: But then it's interesting, isn't it, because if you think the budget of the arts council, currently, is less than one percent of the National Health Service overspend, it will still be cut, and somebody, somewhere – it may not be the public and it may not be the sect that's gathered under darkness tonight – that somebody somewhere…

Tim Marlow: In the catacombs.

Helen Marriage: Exactly. Somebody somewhere is saying 'this type of work is not relevant, or is not working'. Or maybe it's not something that they think is desirable. Now, you advance all the arguments about the social impacts, and somebody was talking about the crime-free – and you would think that we can talk about every pound given to an arts organisation generates five more or creates – we can do all of these things but we're not winning that argument. And it will, we will be knocked in the coming months.

Lewis Biggs: Okay, we're not winning the argument because there is still the conspiracy that there is only one economic system in the country, and of course the Government couldn't possibly admit there would ever be more than one economic system because if they did admit it, it would show they were out of control. But actually there are lots of economic systems, about…

James Jones: I think they are sort of admitting it, Lewis. I mean, I know people are divided about the Big Society but the Big Society is meant to be an alternative to big Government. So, what I thought was lacking in David Cameron's speech yesterday - I only saw the clips on the news but he had all these staccato phrases: 'If it's something, do it', ' If it's something else, do it' but what I didn't hear was 'If you want to do a sculpture then sculpt it', 'If you've got a canvas, paint it.' In other words, I think it's up to us who are committed to the arts to say 'Look, there must be an art dimension to the Big Society; it's not just an alternative economic system but here is another way of people engaging with each other. So let the artistic community respond to the challenge and say 'We want to make the Big Society a society that does actually affirm the arts.' So, why not?

Helen King: I haven't got an answer about how the finances should be spent in the future because I think every organisation, every sector's going to have impossible decisions to make but I suppose one of the things I'll reflect on is what our public spaces look like in the future. I think we already begin to get a bit of a sense that after the comprehensive spending review, after jobs start to go, the sense that people will come together in public places to protest out of anger and frustration – there's going to be more of that going on, and it's good for people to be interested in what's happening in their world but it would be very sad if the only reason why people came together in public spaces was because of anger and frustration, not for that joy that you were talking about.

Tim Marlow: But art has another role, art has often been… social or political protest, not so much in the second half of the twentieth century, but this may be a redefined area that art can get engaged in, too. There are other things that art can do: it doesn't have to be celebration.

Lewis Biggs: Can I use something that is both a protest but also celebratory? At the moment we're working with an artist called Jeanne van Heeswijk in Anfield. She is working with young people in Anfield whose houses are being knocked down, and the materials from those houses, habitually, are sold to developers in London who use them to recreate old-English style architecture in London. Jeanne is working with young people in order to rebuild houses in Anfield so that those young people can see, as it were, their own community, in a material sense, being rebuilt by themselves. They're working with architects and designers and town planners in order to – now that's, I mean, you may say it's not art but it's a metaphorical process which is both celebratory and also a form of protest about what's happening all around because if you go to Anfield, all you see is acres of timber terraces…

Tim Marlow: We've only got about ten minute left. I don't want to throw it out to the floor with the proviso that you prove this isn't a little comfy sect - but if anyone does want to raise protest they'd be very welcome – but it may just be you have questions to ask. Questions or points from the floor in the last ten minutes.

Audience Member 1: I've heard a lot about the barriers and limitations and some creative problem-solving that you've done to overcome them. How do you maintain the balance between art with integrity and just an organised public event, you know, to keep it as art rather than just a big event?

Tim Marlow: So how do you stop, yeah, just becoming an event?

Helen Marriage: Spectacle.

Audience Member 1: Yeah, because, you know, within five years of planning or, how long, how do you keep it spontaneous and creative and maintain the original message when you have all these constraints. It sounds quite a difficult challenge to me.

Helen Marriage: It is quite a difficult challenge. For us it's quite interesting. When we set off to do the Elephant we knew nothing because the show didn't exist when we started talking to people about what we needed to do; we just knew that it was going to be terribly hard for London to shut itself down. You may know the geography of London, so: we closed Horse Guards Parade, The Mall, Marlborough Road, St. James' Street, Piccadilly, Haymarket, and Trafalgar Square over a period of three days. So an enormous part of the centre of London was shut and taxi drivers were very cross but I suppose the thing is that it - that five year conversation that we were having with the authorities, any of whom could have decided to say no and frustrate the project, and certainly were saying no at the beginning – that five year conversation was, there was a purpose. We knew, although we didn't know the specifics of the show, that the company that we were inviting, Royal de Luxe, were geniuses, and that the work would be extraordinary. It would have been unbelievably daft to argue for five years about shutting central London and then turn up with something naff. I mean, it would just – can you imagine? It would have just been a terrible thing. So if you're going to work at the scale that we tend to, you have to be certain that the thing you've chosen to promote or produce or commission, in the case of Liverpool, where we didn't know what the show was because the City of Culture commissioned this show, so it was completely from nowhere and was actually made in the last month before the event. It was made here, over at Cammell Laird in Birkenhead, so as the producer or the person responsible, you have to be certain that the thing you've chosen is something which is robust enough to withstand the onslaught that's going to be put upon it, in terms of 'Is it worth it?'

When we were here, we were negotiating with Helen about the road closures and the traffic movements, and you realise that in order to get access to the roads that you need, the logistical game you're playing involves closing both bus stations simultaneously, so her very sensible conversation with us was actually, 'How's anyone going to get here? Because if they can't get in because you've shut the roads and you've shut the bus stations, how are we going to move these people around?' To create that level of disruption, you have to know that - whatever solution is going to be found in the problem-solving nightmare that's going to go on behind the scenes - that the thing itself has to be worth the effort. Otherwise it's really not worth starting.

Tim Marlow: But underlying that question, which is a very good one, is the idea that creativity tends to be a spontaneous thing. I just wonder, Lewis, in your experience of working with artists in the public domain, how much the process of dialogue with space and potential audience and authority actually becomes part of the creative process, and [how much] artists are aware, in a way that architects have to be, that it's a slightly different way of working.

Lewis Biggs: Yes. I think we have to distinguish between creativity and art because everybody is creative but not everybody is an artist, whatever Joseph Beuys might have said, because art requires that public conversation. We can all be creative behind closed doors, as it were, but some of us are very creative in public as well. But, sorry, come again?

Tim Marlow: It was more about taking the spontaneity out of work when it's in the public domain but wondering whether, actually, there becomes – it helps shift the process, and the process shifts and becomes creative in a different way, spontaneous in a different way?

Lewis Biggs: There are artists and architects and other professionals who are totalitarians, who can't brook opposition of any description. I think the short answer is: don't work with them [*laughter*].

Helen Marriage: [*laughs*] But you never know that when you start!

Helen King: But that's you, Helen.

Tim Marlow: Do you want to name names…

Lewis Biggs: You can ask around.

Tim Marlow: …amongst friends?

Helen Marriage: Helen just said she thought that was me. I'm so offended!

Helen King: You stopped the tower [being] knocked down.

Lewis Biggs: But I think the ones who are much more interesting are the ones who have a fantastic vision, and it's the quality of the vision, it's the vision that people like Helen or I have to respond to because it's that that creates the leap of faith. You don't know how you're going to get there and nor does the artist, but the vision is what sustains you.

Helen Marriage: It's true. Helen's just reminded me that, when we were here, the opening moment of the Spider, as any of you that were here might remember, is the Spider hanging off Concourse Tower, Concourse House, and the artists just said 'We have to do this.' And Alan Jacobi, and Artichoke who, - unusual, the production company and I - would just look at each other going [*groans*] 'Nooo', and we investigated and Concourse House was due for demolition three months or so before we were due to be here. We just had to go into battle to say 'Never mind the EU funding that you'll lose if you don't knock it down before Christmas, and we promise we won't disrupt it for very long and, actually, this show needs this building, and you aren't to take it down', and huge rows and arguments…

Helen King: There was an early planning meeting when one of the agencies said to Helen, 'Well, what's your plan B if the tower's knocked down before the event?' And she just sat there and said 'We have no plan B', and we all thought you were crackers [*laughter*].

Helen Marriage: But they didn't knock it down, and it wasn't me. It wasn't because of me; that was the artist saying 'I need this. Make this happen.' I think Tim's right: for a producer – Lewis or me, maybe – part of the fun (it isn't fun because it's sort of agonising), is that engagement with 'Can we make this happen? Can we do this? Can we persuade them?' because, in truth, there was no reason why the tower had to be knocked down on the day that it was scheduled: it was just in the plans. Very often, that's what we would always say in the work that we're doing, that a city's - the rules that bind a city together are there, well, I think they're there because there is a compact that says that a city is about traffic and shopping and that that's how we run the place, and the rules exists to enable those things to go on and, yet, we make those rules, we the community make those rules, and we can unmake them for a moment, or for a – you know, the roundabout outside your Mersey Tunnel, you know, the Spider disappeared down the Mersey Tunnel. We knew that the space there wasn't big enough for the numbers of people that were going to be there, and you might remember that you used to have a very large roundabout with flowerbeds and trees. We knew that we needed a space that could hold 40,000 people, and there wasn't one, and if the city - as it did - wanted the Spider to disappear down the tunnel, we had to make a space. So: huge negotiations with the city about the removal of that roundabout. The crunch came when we said 'Okay, we'll pay for it. We'll pay to have it put back, but can we just take it out?' and then, suddenly, when money wasn't an issue, it was possible to imagine a space without a roundabout, so the roundabout was removed. 40,000 people happily gathered; that was all marvelous. Then the city thought to itself, 'Actually, we don't have a big gathering space for, you know, Mathew Street music concerts. What they've done, these incoming mad French people with their vision, is to imagine a space that is different to the landscape that we understand.' What the city then did, although they did try to make us pay to reinstate it, was to not reinstate it. So, if you look at the roundabout at the Mersey Tunnel now, it is demountable, and comes out when there's a need for a big gathering space. That, if you're talking about the legacy of these things, that's the physical legacy and the sort of emotional legacy of this piece, which is that the city is slightly different. Not only in the physicality but in the possibility of how it can be used, and that's a great source of pride for us.

Lewis Biggs: I think this is absolutely fundamental to the whole argument; it's about moving a city on and allowing imagination to percolate through citizens and the institutions and the people who make the rules, and all the rest of it, to allow the city to ratchet itself along, gradually, towards the future and not get stuck.

Helen Marriage: But [also] recognising that the city has made its own rules - and is ossifying in those rules - and can unmake them.

Lewis Biggs: So it's about embracing change instead of having to resist. Of course they resist initially because everybody hates change but once you see that change isn't actually quite as frightening and difficult as you thought it was going to be - because somebody else is paying or somebody else has the public liability insurance [*laughter*] or whatever – then you see it *has* happened, and then 'Oh, it's okay, we can embrace it, we can move forward', you know. That's how cities do move forward.

Tim Marlow: Which brings us full circle to the idea of change and momentum that you talked about at the beginning. We've gone overtime by about fifteen minutes, so I really need to bring the formal part of this discussion to an end. Can I thank you, Helen King, Helen Marriage, Lewis Biggs and James Jones? Can I thank, also, you for taking part and may the conversations continue not just after this event but for the next few years, and may that momentum continue. Thank you [*applause*].

End of transcript.