The Gardens of England
Part of the Sky Arts Artichoke Salon Series
A public conversation about the nature and use of public space in a rural context

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Tim Marlow: Can I encourage you to come near the front? A lot of people are, but because the emphasis of all - this is the third of three, the third and final - of the salons we've staged is on an intimate dialogue between the panel and the audience. The first of the discussions - the salon – took place at Tate Modern, back in June in the Turbine Hall, where the emphasis was on the politics of disruption in the context of public art in predominantly urban spaces. The second salon was in the Williamson Tunnels in Liverpool a month and a half ago where the emphasis was on the capacity of art and the arts as a force for urban regeneration. Tonight's salon, here at the Eden Project, I think wins for venue – the Eden Project probably does trump the Turbine Hall and the Williamson Tunnels – and the emphasis is, I think, to a certain extent on art and the arts in rural spaces. But I also see this as a kind of accumulation, so if people want to talk about the politics of disruption and the notion of art as a force for rural and urban regeneration, that's fine.

Our panel, who are going to be introduced to you in a minute, will answer or present a kind of broad manifesto of where they stand in terms of what they do. The whole evening will then proceed with questions from the floor. We solicited questions; there's a lot of very interesting questions. So, I'm hoping a) that the people who have solicited those questions are here and b) that they're big and brave enough to actually ask them but, if not, I'll do it from the questions that I've actually got on a clipboard. Then we will kick it around among the panel. We have to finish at 8 o'clock, fairly much on the dot. I've been asked to say that the first twenty people who want to go to the *Heart of Darkness* - which is an event that's being staged in the Eden Project, over there – the first twenty people who want to go to this, if they speak to Hilary Garnham who's at the back there, at the desk – who's about to wave – when this has finished, that's fine. She won't accept people who go racing there during the event. We're trying to keep you here – but anyway…

The event is staged as a partnership between Artichoke - who have been responsible for some of the most extraordinary public arts projects in Britain over the last few years, ranging from a giant mechanical spider in Liverpool to

something as ephemeral and something as complicated to stage as Antony Gormley's *One & Other* on the fourth plinth a year ago last summer - and Sky Arts, as you know, is the only – I have a certain vested interest here, but only a certain interest – is the only channel with a plethora, sorry, is the only organisation with a plethora of channels devoted entirely to the arts. Fear not, you're not being broadcast live on a television channel tonight, but it is being filmed and it will be put on the web.

Okay, so, without further ado, our panel: Bill Mitchell is the artistic director of Wildworks which is a site or, I might say, place-specific landscape theatre project, among other things. Many of you will also know him for his work at Kneehigh Theatre; it's where I first encountered him when he was Artistic Director from 1995 to 2005. I think at the last reckoning his work had been seen on five continents. I think the Arctic and Antarctica have yet to be conquered, but it's pretty universal: his profile and his work. Maggie Bolt is the former founding director of Public Art South West and also the founder of the Public Art online – the first of it's kind, really, a very influential website – but she's now director of Maggie Bolt Associates which is a multi-disciplinary arts consultancy. Juliet Ross-Kelly is company director of the EcoAction Partnership. She was formerly in PR. This is my interpretation of her CV, not hers. I suggested to her that her conversion, if you like, to the ecological issues surrounding staging public events, came when she got involved in promoting Jamie Oliver's fifteen restaurants, she said no, it actually happened on the Isle of Wight when Lily Allen cancelled as a front line and the organisers of the festival said 'Okay, have the money, and let's see if we can make the festival eco-friendly.'

Juliet Ross-Kelly: It wasn't very much, by the way. [Laughter].

Tim Marlow: Yeah, as you pointed out. But it's amazing what you can do on a headliner's fee, at a festival. And finally, Peter Randall-Page, who is described here at the Eden Project as an international rock sculptor, which I love. I think that's a brilliant – one that I will use frequently. But I would say he's simply one of the most respected of artists working in Britain today. He is predominantly but not exclusively a sculptor and his extraordinary work, *Seed*, which is at the heart – literally and metaphorically – of the education centre here at the Eden Project, where he also worked with Nick [Nicholas] Grimshaw in the design of the building itself, is something that I'm sure all of you are aware of and familiar with.

Okay, let me throw it to the panel and ask, with the notion of rural spaces in mind, the role that events or festivals or exhibitions or objects can play - should play - and where you see the state of play at the moment. Bill Mitchell.

Bill Mitchell: Could you say that again? [Laughter]

Tim Marlow: No. [Laughter]

Bill Mitchell: I'm going to describe what I do, and I'm going to describe what I love. What I do is direct a company [that] works not in theatres - it works in places that are real and that resonate, and it works with people who I sort of want to celebrate. That's what interests me and I thought what I wanted to do is just describe a few incidents over the last five years that I hope answers that question.

Tim Marlow: Well, it's painting a landscape; that's what we want.

Bill Mitchell: There are little moments that I value, and they are things like directing a show with an audience who is now watching a man fly into the sunset;

it's working on a show called *Souterrain* where the plot is a man who has just lost his wife and is so… grieving… that he has to go into the underworld to get her back, and the whole audience, as one person, follows him - they go through that space; talking to a couple of people in Devonport, and we were asking people a question about the sea, and what does the sea mean to you, and he says 'I loved my time' – he was in the Merchant Navy, and he loved his time in the Merchant Navy. He loved every moment. He particularly loved exploring the Arctic. And we looked at the woman - and she'd been very quiet - and she said 'I hate it. I'm jealous of it. And it takes him away.' And something, just in that phrase, we knew we had the heart of the show; we knew we had the heart of the next project we wanted to do.

I've just last week come back from Port Talbot. We're looking at doing *The Passion* next Easter, and I'm shown a site which I've never seen before. It's a road with a whole road of terraced houses on one side and on the other side all the houses have been demolished and all you can see are the pillars underneath holding up the M4. I ended up talking to a person who lived on that side where the pillars are, and they love that community; they loved the people in that area so much [that] they moved to the houses on the other side. So their view is now the pillars underneath the M4.

Tim Marlow: It's interesting to me, thinking about what you do and hearing you talk, that on one level, if you're staging theatrical productions - and it could be *The Passion*, something that exists, or it could be a new show that you're devising –

Bill Mitchell: Yep.

Tim Marlow: If you do that in a conventional theatre space, wherever that may be, I wonder whether there's a pressure always to confront the space because it's that kind of conventional, neutral space, or it's something that you almost disregard where it is, whereas when you work outdoors, or you're at the Minack, or you're working at Port Talbot – wherever it may be – the space is intrinsically part of the conception of the -

Bill Mitchell: It's real.

Tim Marlow: And you work with it more, I guess, but it's a much more tangible – is it? Is it a much more tangible element in any production?

Bill Mitchell: It's a character. The audience is also a character. The participants are characters, and the site - I have to get to know it, and it starts to talk to you about what it wants to do, and you absolutely treat it like that. You can also treat it like a musical instrument: you find out how it plays, and what it resonates – and then connecting up with the people that live there.

Tim Marlow: How intrusive is it? In other words, if you take the Shakespearean line that the play's the thing - obviously in the context of your productions, the play is one of the things but it isn't just the thing – is there an element sometimes that theatre in more public spaces outside the theatre, or in the theatre without walls, is something where the play is simply one element among a number? Or would you argue that that's always the case?

Bill Mitchell: I suppose it's trying to work out what… The understanding of the theatre is much broader; that's how I think about it. So what you're trying to do is build a world and that world, because everything around you is real - and I'm also interested in the people, and they're real – means that you can heighten the

story. You can take a story that resonates there and it feels real. So when I'm describing an audience watching a man who can fly – fly out into the sunset – at that point, everything, because it's real, has told you 'This is how it's going to work' and so you believe that as well. You can ignore the crane at this point but what you're doing is picking up all the resonances of all the history of that site. So everything it was and everything it had been, and everything that people want it to be: all that is known as well. It carries quite a lot of messaging. It carries quite a lot of baggage.

Tim Marlow: "All the world's a stage", I guess, is the other Shakespearean quote one could throw. Maggie Bolt. Both as someone who works for a consultancy - or an organisation that facilitates - but also someone who's worked in the public domain, I mean, you set up Public Arts South West; what do you gauge to be the appetite, both institutionally or amongst the local authorities and so on and amongst the public, for the kind of broad public spectacles that we're talking about, in your experience?

Maggie Bolt: Well, I come from a different area really because my interest is about people's quality of life and the quality of the environments they're in. I've worked within public art for a long time and the first thing I'd say is that it's not an art form and that's where it goes wrong: when people think it's yet another art form and it's about making their work bigger but plonking it into the public realm like it's some big outdoor art gallery. That's not my view at all. I've always engaged with urban design and architecture and regeneration and all of those people that make decisions about our environments every single day, and say 'Why aren't we having the way artists think and interpret places as part of that mix, and therefore the work is part of that whole creative catalyst that goes on in terms of how we develop spaces?' Often people say, 'Well, you're talking urban design, and that doesn't apply to rural' but rural is man-made as well, and decisions are made all the time about what goes where, what's developed, and over the years I've got very – I mean, I subscribe to *Concrete Quarterly*, and you can't get nerdier than that [laughter] but it's just so interesting, all of these things. I drive everyone who knows me mad by saying 'Look at all those road signs, you don't need all that,' and 'Why have they done that here?' and 'Why have they ruined that village by putting that through?' but it's all actually about what you were talking about: understanding the place. I think that when artists come into a situation and really start to look at context – because public art is all about collaboration, it's all about context – it shouldn't happen without a kind of knowledge, and without something to really add to that environment. I think that, actually, over the past ten years, we had a Government that raised environmental issues more than any had before, and an awareness of people about what they had and what they could lose. I think if we try to take localism at its purest sense of people actually really getting involved and engaging in what goes on around them, then the appetite could be quite big.

Tim Marlow: This is slightly unfair but – chuck it back at me if you don't want to – but is there a kind of model project - commission, sculpture, event – that you've seen or experienced, that you may not have initiated yourself, that you think we should be aspiring to?

Maggie Bolt: Well, I think that in a rural setting, something I've admired for a while – it's now stopped – was FRED, which took place in Cumbria. I don't know if any of you knew that, which started in a very small sense; it was really about… the whole premise was, you know, you couldn't make the work anywhere else. It was about people understanding the incredible natural world that was there, and how artists were creating work that really engaged rural communities, really engaged farmers, you know, really got people proud of where they were and

what they were and the fact that people were coming to see works and coming to see the landscape afresh. I thought that was a really interesting project because - well, it was entirely artist led - but it was about capitalising entirely on what was there. It wasn't trying to have a curatorial kind of deceit or, you know 'Well, we'll make it into this' or 'We'll shape it into that,' it was enjoying it for the value of what it was, and artists were just creating the most extraordinary works that everyone - not the art world, but everyone - just enjoyed.

Tim Marlow: Thank you. Peter Randall-Page, how much do you distinguish - I mean significantly distinguish - between the work that you make in your studio that you are wrestling with the materials and your various creative demons – and gods, I suppose – and specific commissions? Now what I'm getting at is how important is a kind of dialogue with the space or spaces in which you're working, because I've seen your work in rural contexts that maybe you made specific for that, but that's… your work has a natural dialogue with the natural world, whereas here you've managed to fuse it with architecture too. Is there something significant about the way you'd approach a self-contained sculpture and something for a commission?

Peter Randall-Page: Yes. I mean, I think the thing about an object, when you take it out of… dare I say the white cube of the art gallery? [Laughs] You know, it is just the thing. You know, it's the relationship between the object you've created and where it is in a social context, in an aesthetic context and everything, and I think in some ways the idea of making objects as a way of communicating can feel like a slightly blunt instrument in the twenty-first century, when we have so many sophisticated ways of communicating. Actually, sculpture can't deal with all the issues that we might want to talk about in our world - It's not brilliant about dealing with socio-political things, I don't think. I think I'd rather make a documentary film or write a book – but it is very, very, very, very good about dealing with what it's like to inhabit a physical body in a physical world, and what it's like to have a relationship with a place. I think that's what you're saying [Maggie] –

Maggie Bolt: Mmm.

Peter Randall-Page: I was very lucky quite early in my career to work with a visionary organisation called Common Ground, who actually pioneered the idea of the arts being a way of enabling people to connect with the things that are subjectively important about their life. I must say, the artwork that… the sculpture that I've found most moving in my life is the things which enable people to make some connection with where they live. I mean, there's not a mountain or a rocky outcrop in the world that hasn't been anthropomorphically named; we look at the constellations of the stars, which are purely random things, and we find pattern and meaning there. For me, art – and particularly art in sculpture, and sculpture in landscape - is at its best and at its most potent where it's actually creating a sense of what our relationship is with the place: the world we live in and the meanings that that has.

Tim Marlow: Sorry, Peter was talking very eloquently about sculpture as a means of communication. Can you all hear him clearly, because he, it's –

Peter Randall-Page: Oh. You can't hear me?

Tim Marlow: I wonder if it's to do with the mic?

Peter Randall-Page: Or I could just talk a bit louder.

Tim Marlow: Sorry guys.

Bill Mitchell: Now, I can actually talk loudly enough without the mic.

Tim Marlow: If you're over there, try that. [Laughter] Well, speak into… I was conscious, sorry. The other question for you, Peter, was sculptures in the public domain tended to have been, in the past, monuments and memorials: that's been the fundamental role. Now, clearly your works don't… that is not what they are. But is that something that you still feel, consciously, artists have to wrestle with? In other words, do you have to deal with that kind of historic past in order to make significant works in the present, or have we shifted fundamentally in the way that public sculpture –

Peter Randall-Page: It depends how far you want to look back; if one looks far enough back and you look at the kind of small interventions that people have made which aren't even considered as high art like the wayside shrines in southern Europe or the genius loci - the sense of place in the things people have made. In Korea and in Japan, every field had its little god which is to do with what that place is, and the relationship between the people that live there and the place itself. So I think yes, if we look back in recent history - and by recent history I'm talking about hundreds of years, I'm talking about back to the Renaissance and so on - yes it has been aggrandisement and a celebration of important social events and important people and so on. But I think actually there's a very much deeper fundamental root for sculpture, for public sculpture if you like, which actually I would like to tap into because I think it gives us… You know, it's very very easy to feel that human beings are the kiss of death: everything we do, everything we intervene [in] is just, you know, messing the whole place up. I think when you see things where there is a genuine symbiotic relationship between people and a place and something that's built up over a long period of time, that's kind of optimistic and consoling. We kind of need that because you can't just be pessimistic; you've got to have a bit of optimism.

Tim Marlow: Cue Juliet Ross-Kelly. Juliet, I don't want to ask you to then put the boot into humanity but nonetheless the question I'd like you to address, if you would, is how responsible do you think the initiators and the stagers and creators the of public arts are, broadly speaking? Is this something that we've got a long way to go, in your experience?

Juliet Ross-Kelly: My experience – and I come from obviously the experience of the music industry and putting on events: the Isle of Wight Festival is our biggest event that we advise on. At the moment, it's a bit of an opt-in scenario. So, there are measures of governance that have been created, like the new British standard, BS 8901 -

Tim Marlow: What is that?

Juliet Ross-Kelly: It's basically a sustainable event-management scheme that you…

Tim Marlow: Are we adhering to it tonight? I hope so.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: I don't know; I'd have to go around and check! [Laughter] Have you all lift-shared here, or got on public transport? It's a whole process that you have to go through – a very lengthy process – that you have to go through as an event, the outcome of which [is that] you are either BS 8901 or you're not. We do a full carbon audit at the Isle of Wight Festival to see where our impacts are and we know, basically, what they are: it's audience travel,

waste and energy. Going through the process of BS 8901, you have to address those issues and then also there's a thing call Julie's Bicycle ig mark. There's also an opt-in scheme called the Greener Festival award – which Isle of Wight Festival has just won Outstanding for the last two years. Sorry, blowing my own trumpet slightly. So, yeah, it seems a bit of an opt-in scenario at the moment but I think that should definitely change, and I think obviously the London Olympics will be a bit of a point in which those changes are made.

Tim Marlow: You do? Even -

Juliet Ross-Kelly: Hopefully.

Tim Marlow: Yeah, all the bus lanes changed in London so the VIPs get to the games, not the athletes; I think they've got a long way to go. Okay, broadly speaking it's a voluntary thing but you foresee in the future that any major or often minor public arts events will have to adhere to certain environmental standards.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: I'm hoping so, yeah. It's an increasing market; most of the festivals that – you know, the top two hundred festivals, I guess – go through those whole processes. The Isle of Wight Festival was the first one to do both BS 8901 and Julie's Bicycle ig mark this year, but I know that most of those people do the Green Festival award.

Tim Marlow: Okay. Let's focus at the front. Thank you all. Let's throw it to the floor now and take some questions from the floor; that's the way I really want to proceed. Is Sara Bowler here from Falmouth Arts School? Great. Sarah, could we have your question? Sorry, there's a mic – is there a mic coming? There is. Thank you.

Sara Bowler: Thank you. My question is: given the growing use of art in public places, what are the speakers' views on decommissioned work after a period of time? Is it appropriate for work to be placed in public environments indefinitely? Could future generations accuse us of littering public space?

Tim Marlow: That's an interesting question. Do you want to have a crack at that, Maggie?

Maggie Bolt: Yes. I think the future's definitely temporary, actually. It was very interesting in the Netherlands, I think, about… in the seventies, they had a scheme where artists would get on a stipend for life, and all they had to do for that, really, was to produce a piece of work once a year, which they gave to the state. There just was too much work. In the end the government had a complete cull and just cleared the lot. I think public art is as guilty of littering the environment as anything else, if it's ill-considered and ill-thought out. I've always felt that there should be review periods to protect the artists as well, because environments change so rapidly that within a couple of years the intentions behind the work can be completely distorted by what's gone on around it. So you have a review period and then, yes, you do look at whether the work should be retained or be decommissioned - but you do it in a way that's cognisant of a kind of timeline because there's exactly the same issues that a body like English Heritage would face about… You don't want to get whims of tastes and be too subjective. I know public art officers that don't like certain sculptures that are in a city from the seventies, and they're brilliant pieces of work: they're just not to their taste. I think there's a danger there when everyone says 'Oh, we'll just get rid of things and start again' but I think if you have a more objective viewpoint of whether the work is still fulfilling what it intended to do - and if

you're able to, you always involve the artist in that – then you can move on naturally. But I think the requirements of public art briefs of, you know, vandal-proof and lasts for a hundred years: they were always nonsense really. You want to actually make them think in a much shorter timeframe and also really invest more in temporary work which can be much more powerful, actually, and much more satisfying for artists a lot of the time, when they don't have the same kind of restrictions.

Tim Marlow: Let's bring in the international rock artist at this point, shall we? Peter. In a sense your work is vandal-proof but is certainly there to last. Peter Randall-Page is not just for Christmas: it's there for a long, long time if it's put into a particular place. How do you feel?

Peter Randall-Page: Well I think the future definitely is temporary. [Laughter] Certainly on an individual level it's obviously temporary, and I suspect in a slightly more black mood that the future does feel rather temporary for all of us. Anyway I think, as an artist, for me… Obviously I make things which are going to last for quite a long time. Of course that longevity is relative because all things break down in the very long-term but I don't think I could, in the way that I'm interested – in the way that I work - which isn't actually to do with current issues that are kind of topical issues; I'm not dealing with topical issues…

Tim Marlow: So your work, you're not – you don't…

Peter Randall-Page: Well I don't… I suppose I'm into timelessness a bit but at the same time I certainly think that more art isn't just better, and I certainly think that the world is full of a lot of things that I wish weren't there. Most of them aren't art, but some of them are art. [Laughter] I think where you've got these policies – I remember they had this Percent for Art policy in the Republic of Ireland for some years. I'm sure they haven't anymore but you actually found that every roundabout, every public building had some thing outside it – an absolutely ghastly sense of all this stuff. I just don't think we want more and more and more stuff; I think we just want appropriate things in good places that, you know, are good.

Bill Mitchell: But one of the things I love about the work that we do - and theatre in general - is it's wonderfully ephemeral. You look at a site, you think about a site, you start to add things to it. While that show is running, that's as real as anywhere that's ever been created but within two or three days of that event, that image, everything's gone – but when you walk back later you can still remember that world; you can see it but there's no evidence. Recently we were working in Kensington Palace and there were various tribes that came together. So there was us, who really wanted to burn everything, change everything and make a bit of a… and a tribe called Conservaters. When we were getting down to the nitty-gritty, they said something which really shook me to the marrow, which is 'Our job is to keep everything, forever.' [Laughter] So different to our world.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: Can I just interject in there?

Tim Marlow: Of course.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: Obviously talking about music festivals, most of which are there for a weekend, but the work that we do - and again, like you [Bill], we have to return a site back to its normal public use within four days of the event shutting down – but what we've done in terms of our work with the Isle of Wight Festival is about leaving positive legacies, so the event goes on in people's minds throughout the year.

Tim Marlow: I think the Isle of Wight Festival of 1969 is still reverberating in people's minds, isn't it? But that's narcotic, as much as anything else.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: Yeah, we were talking about it earlier. No, but it's about –

Peter Randall-Page: I'm embarrassed to say I was actually there. [Laughter]

Juliet Ross-Kelly: It's about looking after the site, long-term, that we use there. It's about initiating other… Basically we partner with an environmental charity on the island called Gift to Nature. They do massive amounts of work for us, year long; we've initiated a Give Bees a Chance campaign with them. So much has happened: we've planted a wildflower meadow on the site; we've reintroduced the Black Poplar tree to the island which, before we started work with them, there were only three left on the island. So it's about creating positive legacies that people can enjoy year-round, not just on that weekend that's the festival, which I think is really important, and not very many people do at the moment.

Tim Marlow: Interesting, isn't it, though, that there is… there's a balance, but there is often a desire – and I don't know whether it's genuinely publicly there or whether it's something that's whipped up by certain vested interest groups. For example, the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square seems to me an obvious and fairly visionary thing that you have a temporary work of art there every year or so. Whether you like the individual works or not, it's an obvious model. But there is always pressure to put a statue of the Queen Mother or David Beckham or whoever it may be in the public domain at a particular moment on there – and long may that be resisted – but the other example is Rachel Whiteread's *House*, which was done in East London in a park, where the argument was just over the length of the contract but then it became a kind of football – if that's not mixing metaphors with something that was cast in concrete – where in fact then a lobby said that it should be there permanently. But the organisers and the artist were vehemently against that because of course it then jeopardises any potential temporary project in the future if there's going to be a lobby around the thing being permanent. So it's an ongoing subject; it's an ongoing battle.

Maggie Bolt: And there is an issue with memorials because you can, you know, unless an authority actually has a policy as to why you can't just raise money and put something somewhere, people can. You have situations where they want to commemorate someone or, in Bristol, the wife of Cary Grant wanted a sculpture in the middle of Millennium Square and you have to really think carefully about 'Just because people have money, can they buy space to memorialise themselves?' So you actually need to have policies. It's the same with hospitals and donations. It's a nightmare for them: people wanting to have their name everywhere. It's quite an issue that you have to factor in how space is used.

Tim Marlow: There's another issue, which is about the economics of all this in the current economic climate, but I want to hold that because that's a question that I'm going to solicit from the floor in about ten or fifteen minutes. Let's move on. Is Kate Harvey here? Kate, thank you. There's the mic.

Kate Harvey: I've got a question which is relating to the economy for events in rural areas and whether, by necessity, the economy exists outside the rural area, whether there is enough within the area to support the range of events and happenings that go on, and really whether there's anything – if the economy needs to come from outside – whether there's anything we can do to improve relationships between the tourism industry and events that take place, both large

and small scale, and whether by doing that there is an adverse effect on the nature of the place and the environment in which it takes place?

Tim Marlow: Bill, this idea about partly imposing from the outside but also – and I think I'm taking this in a broader context – but also it's about who it's serving as well as –

Kate Harvey: Exactly, whether it's a question as to it's serving the people of the local area…

Tim Marlow: Or it's attracting…

Kate Harvey: [Inaudible]… attract people in and, if so, if there's a conflict of interest.

Tim Marlow: I'm going to presume that you – you might not admit it in this particular context - but you presumably want the broadest possible audience. You can't just be serving a local audience and yet that has to be your fundamental core, doesn't it?

Bill Mitchell: Yeah, there's a wonderful contradiction and in a lot of places we've played – I mean, Cornwall's a particular thing and I'll get to that – but a lot of the places that invite us in and a lot of that places that we want to play are… people haven't got a lot of money. You almost want free shows. You certainly want a way where the people who will benefit most can come along and see you. At the same time… So, a lot of the time we're playing around with two-tiered ticket systems or finding a way where we flyer the local area and they get a discount and they can come along and show their postcodes and things like that but my experience, both with Kneehigh and with Wild Works, is just wanting to do work in Cornwall and finding that so hard to do - and finding that more and more. I was trying to get European money; I was trying to get all sort of different ways of funding the shows so that we could do work back here. So it's… there's contradictions.

Tim Marlow: How does it work though? Being as candid as you possibly can be, is it the case that if you serve a local and regional community to the best of your ability, you may attract a broader audience? Or is it in fact that by doing something that attracts a broader audience from the start you will also then engage the local and regional community, or am I just being too reductive and it's not as simply divided as that?

Bill Mitchell: Well, there is a quote - and I think it's a Miro quote - which is: 'To be truly universal you have to be truly local', ie. do what you know. My passions have always been certain parts of the landscape, finding that connection with people, working there. That, if it's working properly, will pull people in. You don't have to go somewhere else or try something that's pulling a lot of people in. I think you just have to do what you do well: what your heart tells you to do in terms of… See, I think if you're doing the right thing, people will come and find you; that's my experience. We've ended up in some really odd places, working, but people have found the company - and they've found the company regularly, over about three weeks, four weeks, filling out every night. You have to be true to yourself in that area.

Tim Marlow: With a music festival though, to be brutally honest, the location and the locale is simply the backdrop or the… it's a physical venue. You have to - by definition - on the Isle of Wight Festival or Glastonbury, be looking at a

national/international audience. In fact one tends, in these instances, to ride roughshod over local needs, broadly speaking.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: Well the reason, actually, the Isle of Wight Festival got their license when it was resurrected in 2003 was actually to attract [inaudible] to the island, which of course it has done: a vast amount. I actually don't know the percentages but a vast amount of people come from the island to the Isle of Wight festival. Of course, a lot of people come from the mainland.

Tim Marlow: Thank you. Maggie.

Maggie Bolt: I'm not a great fan of large events that are dreamt up as a kind of curatorial premise and then a place is found to meet it. I think that kind of jamboree is dying out a bit more: where people will just come, create work and then go again, though there's really interesting work, like in Falmouth with Lucy Lippard, about the politics of place and just really understanding a place. That was enough in itself to just have a reaction. I think sometimes there can be spectacular areas where you're celebrating an event but I think a lot… a move back to artists creating work because that place is important in itself, and if that's of real interest it's going to attract a wide audience: it's going to have relevance to local [audiences] and it's going to strike a chord with people who could be thousands of miles away. It's a kind of genuine nature of the work, really. I'm not explaining myself very well but I just think that if people were a bit more honest about the work they were making, that's going to find the people – rather than just having 'We'll do this because it's talking to our peer group and we'll get brownie points for having the right artists in this place, and then we'll attract the usual kind of circuit that goes around the world looking at things.'

Tim Marlow: I think that's a fair point; there are more Biennales; Biennales seem to be sort of breeding around the world. It is noticeable how many of them pay lip-service – and some much more than just lip-service – to the place in which those Biennales are. But on another level, if you take what Bill says about excellence and being true to yourself, which I kind of subscribe to, broadly – I think we probably all do – but Tate Modern, for instance, the national collections there: they don't relate to an audience in London, they relate to a global audience. So then the question is, 'Well, what's wrong with having globally celebrated things anywhere in the world?' Potentially they can relate to anyone. Is that the worst manifestation of globalism: that anything goes? Or is that a sign of something more optimistic, where anything becomes possible?

Maggie Bolt: It's quite different when you're talking about a building, a cultural building that was about collection - and that a lot of those things have come out of journeys and people and what they've discovered and what they've bought – to finding an area where you're going to start up this kind of other cultural activity that actually doesn't have any relationship to that environment. So you can't really compare something like major museums and the role they're doing to the more ill-thought-out Biennales that sometimes take place. There are others that are absolutely fantastic: Venice and the Architecture Biennale, particularly. It comes with that place - there is a dialogue that goes on there - but even then, locally, it's ignored really. [Laughs] You know, it's just something that kind of happens, but somehow it works there. But I think there is a kind of pressure sometimes to think 'We'll get the big names in', and it's the same people. You could travel all round the world and see the same artists doing work everywhere.

Tim Marlow: You see the same curators going to see the shows as well.

Maggie Bolt: The same curators. I just think, you know, there's more people in the world than this; there must be something other than just this.

Tim Marlow: Yep. Let's move on. I'll save you from having to talk about global tourism and localism, Peter; you can answer the next question. [Laughter]

Peter Randall-Page: Thank God for that. [Laughter]

Tim Marlow: Is James Green here from Newlyn Art Gallery? James, thank you. There's the mic.

James Green: I think my question might already have been answered but it's really about permanent work and, particularly, thinking about a rural context. I can't think of very many examples of exemplary pieces of public art that take place in a rural situation. There are many, obviously, in metropolitan situations. There are a lot of organisations that are commissioning projects which might be socially engaged or transient and seem to be very successful in rural situations but it was really about coming back to ask that question about permanency in a rural situation, which was that was there something particular about the rural that makes that problematic?

Tim Marlow: Yep, I think it's still a very interesting question because I think we've agreed - or there's a consensus here at least - the idea that the future is temporary, but it is still the case that amongst the most potent of all art works in the public domain would be Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, for instance, or Walter De Maria's *Lightning Field*, and these are permanent works that are being eroded – in the case of Spiral Jetty – in a rural context, which seems to imply, Peter, there's a place for that. But there haven't been many celebrated - in monumental terms – examples of those works in rural contexts, have there?

Peter Randall-Page: No. I think it's very interesting, this idea of the ephemeral and of the idea of doing something that you're making as a permanent thing, and I think there's a few different aspects to it. I completely empathise with what you were saying about, you know, the event happens and it's gone and, actually, I don't like taking photographs when I go on holiday. I've got hardly any photographs of my kids because actually I've got it all in here. So I feel very strongly about that. Then, bizarrely, of course, what I actually spend my time doing is making these rather permanent things. [Laughter] It's partly because if it's hard to make and even harder to destroy, you actually have to have quite a big commitment to it because you can't give up and say 'Oh, it didn't work.' You know, you've got this bloody thing you've got to deal with [laughter]: this object. And that is quite particular about the business of making sculptures in the way that I do it, in an object-making sort of way. So whilst I feel in principal I'm in favour of the ephemeral, actually as a practitioner, making objects, it wouldn't be very good if I thought 'Well, it doesn't really matter if it doesn't – if it's no good, because it'll just, you know [laughs]… won't be there in five minutes.' It's actually kind of important to me. So there's a bit of a dilemma there for me.

Tim Marlow: I like the fact that you placate your guilt for making permanent sculptures by not taking photographs of your kids [laughter], which I think only slightly works. But do you have a dream project or perhaps a number of dream projects that in a sense are partly in the tradition of things like Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, or maybe even go back to the medieval stone-carving tradition on cathedrals - I know you worked at Wells Cathedral, for example – or the stone monoliths of Stonehenge, for example? Are there dreams that you have of a particular location where you produce something that is there for a long, long time?

Peter Randall-Page: Well I do. I mean, I'm very excited about making spatial experiences. You know, volumetric and spatial experiences: that's sort of what goes on in my head. That's what I dream; I dream exciting spaces and exciting objects, so, yes. The answer to that is yes I do have all sorts of things that I'd like to do.

Tim Marlow: Well share some of those dreams then. Is there a particular place that you would like to work with or in, or is there a particular structure you would like… Is there a stone equivalent, in your mind, of the Angel of the North? It's always cited. Is that something you'd like, ultimately, to have a crack at doing?

Peter Randall-Page: I don't think it's so much to do with scale; I think the scale thing is an interesting one and of course we have got into this rather giantist…

Tim Marlow: We have, because the Spiral Jetty's big but it's not monumental and overwhelming is it?

Peter Randall-Page: No, and I think Antony Gormley's *Angel of the North* is a fantastic piece, and I think it sits wonderfully and I think it's absolutely great.

Tim Marlow: But it's the ambitions that it spawns that you're worried about.

Peter Randall-Page: I do slightly worry that then we feel every region of the UK feels that they've got to have something which is not only – nothing wrong with having something iconic – but actually something just big. That does slightly worry me. So certainly my dreams of things I'd like to make aren't necessarily on a monumental scale but I suppose they're to do with my sense of what it's like to be in a particular space, a particular landscape, subterranean spaces, those sorts of experiences: the kind of experiences that people must have had – prehistoric people – going into caves, and how extraordinary that must have felt. The sense of the underworld and the overworld and how spaces correspond to psychological states interests me.

It's interesting because when I first went to the Minack and no one was performing there, it felt to me like a wondrous kind of installation or sculpture in and of itself. I'm not saying that seeing your production there ruined my experience of it – of course it didn't; it just gave me a different kind of experience. But places like that, in a sense, fulfil this demand, doesn't it? And also provide a context in which other things can take place.

Bill Mitchell: The Minack's a very particular – as a theatre person it's actually quite a hard place to play.

Tim Marlow: I'll bet, because you're competing, whether you want to or not, with amazing…

Bill Mitchell: Yeah, and if you've ever stood on the stage, you look up [and] there's two different audiences: they're split by a big lump of granite in the middle.

Tim Marlow: Three if you count the seagulls. [Laughter]

Bill Mitchell: And then you've got to compete with the wildlife; there's the dolphins and all the rest of it. I think it's fascinating because I quite like big things. I was just thinking about where I'd like to work - and I don't think rural or urban. I was just thinking 'I'd love to take over a village for a while and see

what happened', and 'I'd quite like to work at Battersea Power Station and do something there.' And those places stay: the Minack stays. Just on a previous point: I think one of the things that's wonderful about the plinth is that anybody could walk past that and imagine what they want to put on it. It's the empty spaces that charge the imagination - sometimes more than full ones.

Peter Randall-Page: I think you're absolutely right about empty spaces: their potential. There's nothing I like better than to have my studio completely empty because it's just full of potential. Once I've made something, actually I'm not interested anymore, really [laughs].

Tim Marlow: Empty? Or just with a great block of granite there waiting for you?

Peter Randall-Page: Well, either really but, you know.

Maggie Bolt: I think the point, though - about the rural spaces - you're making: if you think of… in Portland [Dorset], you've got John Maine's work there, which is… most people wouldn't know it was an artwork at all; it's just very very subtle. But it's stayed and it's maintained by people. Then you look at the kind of commissioning that Kielder's been doing: extraordinary pieces. I think I agree with you about the scale, and that's the only good thing, in a sense, about the passing of the RDAs: that they don't all want iconic pieces which, you know… The bigger they are, the less in content. It was just becoming kind of ridiculous, really, because they were just buying a label, really: just a thing that didn't mean anything. But in a rural setting, there's not the – you're not competing with… like an urban setting which actually probably needs shaking because it is so badly designed and things have gone wrong. Normally, work commissioned in a rural setting is to celebrate what's special about that place. Often large works are to try and give a place a face again: give it back its personality that it's lost. So there are very very different reasons why you would undertake certain works. I agree with you about less – having less – and that's one of the problems now, is to stop people over-designing our rural areas in the way that we've lost character in our built environments – you know, in our more dense environments.

Tim Marlow: One of the broader questions in the opening discussion - about the politics of disruption – were what our urban spaces were fundamentally for and that, in spite of the eloquent protestations of the foremost Chief Commissioner of Police, Ian Blair, the notion was felt very strongly in… Of all those there, that actually they were mainly there for things like commerce or shopping and traffic - if you take the authorities' reactions to most proposed events - because anything that gets in the way of that is deemed a mega-event, so you're then going to have to work around that.

Maggie Bolt: But the biggest myth in this country is that we've got public realm, and we've got very little public realm; it's all privately owned. We're allowed in it, as the public. It's not public realm at all; there's very very little.

Tim Marlow: Well that's interesting because that's the thing I wanted to… and it's interesting there's still a perception. There are public spaces in cities that in theory are publicly owned and, in practice, sometimes they are, whereas in rural communities land ownership is a critical issue. So there's that issue I'd like you to wrestle with, which you've mentioned and, secondly, the idea that if art and arts events are supposed to be fulfilling various criteria – they may be spiritual, they may be enlightening, they may be part of a kind of entertainment or leisure context away from pure commerce – is that kind of thing… Does that mean that, actually, arts events are less necessary in rural areas because in fact it's the landscape and it's the context in itself that is, broadly speaking, not over-tainted

by commerce and it exists in the public imagination – public domain – anyway. It's a space which people feel free to own visually, emotionally; they can wander in it. I'm over-romanticising peoples' relationship to that but my point is there is… it could be argued that there's less of a perceived need to stage or infiltrate or litter the countryside with arts events. I don't know how you would respond to that.

Maggie Bolt: Well I think any human desire to do anything creative is entirely separate from whether you're living in an overly commercial situation or not. It's the desire to experience something that is more than having just shelter and food. So I think there's a need in rural situations where people don't get to experience different events or different approaches or ways of thinking, or whatever, because they're not able to or aren't going to travel somewhere to see it. You want to have activities that happen everywhere. I think, within cities, one of the big big problems is not so much the events but just the lack of space for people to come and sit and be, because the commercialism is such that you have to sit at a table and buy something. You know, they take away public benches because they don't want to encourage people drinking; it's very hard just to access your cities, never mind having the events in them. So I think there are very different needs there, and I'd say that it's important, especially for artists, to feel engaged wherever they are and not isolated by the nature of the context in which they live.

Tim Marlow: Peter, do you feel that there's any greater need for your work – I mean this is from your perspective but also from the perception you have of the people who respond to your work – is there any greater need for your work to be sited in a rural context as opposed to an urban context?

Peter Randall-Page: No, I don't think so. I live in a rural place and I've made work there - which is a project that I did with Common Ground that I mentioned earlier on – a couple of decades ago now, and that was a fantastically fulfilling thing to do because it was obviously… it involved engaging with not only the landscape but engaging with my neighbours and people that lived there and the people that inhabited the same world that I lived in. It resulted in me having all kinds of conversations with people who I would never have had those conversations with. You know, conversations about life, death and the universe with my farming neighbours and the vicar and all sorts of people. So that was fantastically enriching, and that was just because I happened to live there. But, certainly, I don't feel it's more important to work in a rural or an urban place, in that way.

Bill Mitchell: I think some of the work we do, because it's public art, is about values - about what you've got, what exists – and holding some sort of mirror up to that, or finding a way of amplifying that so people can see it in a slightly different way. Now, that's been true of certain urban areas I've worked in but it's also been true working here in Cornwall. We did a project; the idea was could you find a way of getting people to appreciate woodland more? So you could go on a slightly hippie tack and enjoy the woodland in that sort of way. One of the things we did was just get chainsaws working, and you had trees coming down.

Tim Marlow: That would be a great way of making people appreciate the woodland.

Bill Mitchell: Exactly. They were coming down anyway. Or we were trying… But it does: it focuses the mind in terms of something, or a threat of something going. I think there's… in certain rural areas, certainly in places in Cornwall, you can take a lot for granted. You can take community for granted. You can take an

awful lot of things... that this will never change; it will always be like that. Sometimes you can do a piece of work, we have found, and people go 'Ah, that's what we are, is it? That's what we love. That's what we value.' Yep.

Peter Randall-Page: No, I think that idea of holding a mirror up to things… That that's what art can do, in a way, is to hold the mirror up and to allow - at its best - to enable people to see the world in a slightly fresh way and see their own situation, their own place, in a slightly fresh way - like you do when you're a kid and everything's new and fresh: that excitement. I relate very much to that.

Tim Marlow: Art can't change the world but, subtly, it can change the way people see the world, and that's the beginning of changing the world. Is Simon Chatterton here now? I want to throw in an environmental issue if he is. Is Simon here? Yeah, thanks.

Simon Chatterton: Hi. I don't know if you can hear me. I think some of those issues of sustainability have been discussed well by the panel but I'm conscious that however careful we are that, often, taking thousand of people to a rural location in the name of art does expend a significant amount of energy and resources. I guess what I'm interested in is how we can best justify that inevitable environmental impact in terms of the kind of social, economic and cultural benefits that events like these can provide.

Tim Marlow: Juliet.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: I can answer that in a couple of ways but I know that the Isle of Wight Festival – obviously there's 55,000 people that come to the Isle of Wight Festival – and as an approximation, that's worth ten to fifteen million pounds to the Isle of Wight, which I'm sure – especially in the current climate – that's ten to fifteen million that they really can't do without. And that's just us. There's another huge festival that happens on the island, called *Bestival*, and I would imagine they hit the same amount of levels in terms of input to the economy. But of course, like I said, there's 55,000 people that come to the island, so we have to work with the festival promoters to limit that impact and that's hopefully what we've been doing with the Isle of Wight Festival for the last three years. The three main ones, as we all know, are audience travel, waste and energy. I can go into examples of how we've tackled those: we heavily promote our lift share scheme, Festival Buddy; we promote public transport to the island; we have started charging for VIP car parking in the hope that we will limit the amount of cars that are coming onto the island. Unfortunately I think we're a few years off actually charging for all the car parking that happens at the Isle of Wight Festival but that is certainly something that we want to do. Hopefully for 2011 we'll have a Park and Ride scheme happening from the mainland as well. In terms of energy we use renewables when we can, we use solar energy, we use locally sourced biodiesel and, this year - for the first time - we used pedal power. So we had people on bicycles, using that energy to power some phone charging units. So all of these things are good: they actually do make a difference but of course they are a good PR angle as well because people on-site actually see these things happening and therefore it becomes part of their acknowledgment of what's happening for the festival in a sustainable way. For waste we recycle as much as we can. We're also very lucky that we've got the Waste-to-Energy plant, so anything that can't be recycled is sent there and actually powers homes on the island. So there's all sorts of things that you can do to limit your impact at such events. I don't think it's a reason not to have those events because I think people are always going to go to those events and enjoy them.

Tim Marlow: But one could say 'You would say that, wouldn't you?' My question is that, politically - I mean culturally politically - that eventually we're going to get to the point where festivals like the Isle of Wight - and we can make it broader - or Glastonbury become unsustainable and in the end if you're having that number of people wanting to go to that kind of event then it has to be staged in a major urban area because, by definition, it's environmentally… potentially environmentally…

Juliet Ross-Kelly: But the demand for those events is still growing: it's up 71% since 2003. So obviously the demand is there but what we've got to do is what I was saying earlier: we as a public - and the types of businesses that I'm working for - we have to lobby those event organisers to actually put on those events in a sustainable way and not for it to be an opt-in act of governance to sign up to things like BS 8901 and Julie's Bicycle Industry Green mark. Those things should be happening as a matter of course.

Tim Marlow: Do you think the mega-events threaten them?

Maggie Bolt: I think there is a really tricky balance because when I first came down here about thirteen years ago one of the first things I got involved with was Forest of Dean looking at what had happened with the sculptures they'd had there, and a publication called *On The Beaten Track*. They had actually… normally you're kind of planning for failure in arts things and you don't plan for success [laughter] - and they'd attracted so many people that they had actually trampled across the flora and fauna they were trying to protect. So there is a kind of balance, really, about highlighting an area because it's so beautiful [and] attracting so many people that they actually walk across that area to see certain things. So you have to be very sensitive about how you do it. I think there is an issue about, you know, just the right balance. Too many… I mean, a lot of places now, particularly rural sculpture parks or trails… It's trying to get the right amount of visitors but not too many because if you have too many you actually start to damage that environment. That's a really tricky balance because everybody says 'Well, surely, you know, the more you should have…' but the Forestry Commission's been looking at that for a long time. So I think, maybe, then – again, it's this more temporary thing - saying 'That will happen there for a while, and then it won't; it'll stop and that place will almost… grow again, you know - take a breath and have an event taking place somewhere else' because so many people want to do things. When the Forest of Dean... after foot and mouth they had a four evening event called *Light Show* or something. No, it wasn't called that but it was basically some kind of evening events and artists had done light works. They thought they'd get - I don't know, I'll probably get the figures wrong - but something like four thousand people and they got, like, three times as many. They couldn't handle the amount of people that wanted to go and see it. The environmental impact was quite something and it's just because so many people do want to experience these things that I think you have to work out what happens when it gets so popular you actually do have to stop it and maybe start again somewhere smaller. I don't know, but it is definitely an issue.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: I agree with that. There has to be some kind of saturation point where it isn't beneficial but that's why – referring back to what I was saying before – that's why we've implemented a programme that's twofold; we actually do protect and we do work with the site. We do protect the site, and there are things that are… If areas are sensitive, like the pond or the Millennium Wood that we have there, it's all cordoned off: people can't access those areas. We work tirelessly to regenerate things that are happening on the site as well as elsewhere on the island.

Tim Marlow: But that doesn't deal with the bigger picture, does it, which is the sustainability of the need… I mean, you can have smaller concerts, you can have headline acts, but you don't need to have fifteen of them in one particular place every year where the environmental damage is seen by many as not a balance. It's not my view but that is an argument. Maggie's point is, in the end, that will become unsustainable, or that is has to be every two years or five years or it stops for the foreseeable future and then is resurrected later, and the Isle of Wight Festival becomes reconvened somewhere else.

Maggie Bolt: Put it out to fallow for a couple of years.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: Unfortunately, while the demand is there – and as I've said, it's increasing...

Tim Marlow: But the demand will be there if you moved it to ten miles up the road or fifty miles up the road.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: But unfortunately we're not making those decisions. We as a company are not making those decisions; the decisions are coming from festival organisers and promoters, and are they really… you know, do they take those things into account? What I'm saying is, for those bigger events - we're not the biggest event on the festival calendar: Glastonbury has utmost, you know, more than 120,000 people there - but, like I said, people are making those decisions… They're business people; they're not environmental people.

Tim Marlow: Yeah, but it may be that there's legislation in the end that says all the local…

Juliet Ross-Kelly: Absolutely, and we would welcome that. We as a company would welcome that.

Tim Marlow: … Local authorities give permission for these, it's not just… Anyway, I think we should move on. It's not because it's not a very interesting subject but because I want to take two or three more questions before time runs out. Is Penny Saunders here? Penny, thank you; here's the mic coming now.

Penny Saunders: I just wondered whether it's affected - this economic crisis that we're going through and the effect that it'll have on this country – whether you think it's going to affect the artistic inspiration and also the way public art is commissioned.

Tim Marlow: So the economic situation - for example, if we take the notion of public sculptures or so on - that temporary is not perceived as value for money and therefore people want permanent, or there won't be the money to make any kind of public art?

Penny Saunders: Well, I sort of hoped you'd work out what you thought I meant [laughter].

Tim Marlow: Good, we will. We will.

Penny Saunders: Can I just ask another question?

Tim Marlow: Yes.

Penny Saunders: You know they used to say you could get the entire population of the earth on the Isle of Wight?

Tim Marlow: Yes.

Penny Saunders: Do you think they still could? [Laughter]

Tim Marlow: Only if they festival's on.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: Maybe standing on each other's shoulders.

Penny Saunders: What's more amazing is if you did try and do it, how would you do it?

Maggie Bolt: And would you want to? [Laughter]

Tim Marlow: It might give the rest of the planet a kind of fallow period, mightn't it? Bill, do you want to have a crack at the implications for artistic… grand and small artistic projects, publicly funded in the economic climate?

Bill Mitchell: Yeah. We were working out the other day… a lot of work that we've done over the last four or five years, probably about 80 percent of it has come through RDAs, public funds in some ways, local councils - and that's gone. So economically, yeah, there's a huge change in terms of what's possible and how that develops. Artists trying to work out how to do something – that hasn't changed. We have to do that and we will always continue to do that; we'll find a way of making it work. I have no choice. The work I do, it is large; I'm working with a lot of people. It takes a bit of time to do and it costs money but it's what I do. I have to find a way of doing it and therefore you're going to go out and find… and you have those kinds of conversations and try and pull those back in, and somehow you have that – you know, the ambition becomes true again.

Tim Marlow: Maggie, do the arts have a slightly different role, or is there a greater appetite or a similar appetite for public arts projects in a time of economic [difficulty]? Or have you found in your dealings with local and regional authorities that in fact arts are the first thing that goes when it comes to public funding?

Maggie Bolt: Yeah, I think one of the biggest myths around public art in terms of artists integrating into a built environment is that it's publicly funded. The majority of it certainly isn't; it comes through negotiation through the planning system, through section 106, and it's private sector funding. It's publicly pushed through the local authorities having policies and so on, and I think one of the big issues is with the local authorities losing all of their specialist resources. You've got Somerset County Council cutting out all its artistic activity – it's just gone. So you're losing the focus and the catalyst for encouraging work. Now there can be, with some things, a certain freedom in not waiting for permission to do things but my concern is that we've made so many inroads in the past ten years about really trying to create quality environments and quality housing, and understanding place and place-making, and that it's cultural as well as bricks and mortar, and that in our current coalition government, you know, the built environment fits precisely nowhere, and we might find we're going back to real kind of make-do… you know, cheap solutions – which is why we had to invest millions in regeneration projects in the first place – and so we'll lose the notion of real place-making which involves cultural activity as well. So I don't know if that answers it but there's a broader picture of losing why we make places: it's for people. It's not just for economics, it's for people. And we'll lose that.

Tim Marlow: This is only anecdotal – well, it's not anecdotal, it's more experience… it's limited experience – but at the Tate Liverpool when a discussion was had, there were various conversations about the economic downturn in a city that's often felt the economic downturn, and arts have been perceived as a substantial force for urban regeneration. It may just say something about the nature of people who want to come to these salons - you know: the great and the good and the creative and so on – or it may be that there really is a great popular desire for ongoing public arts projects, but there was not a single dissenting voice. There was nothing akin to the Daily Mail, akin to the Sun, akin to any of those stereotypical views that often are pedalled in the media that somehow the public don't want art projects and the money could be spent better elsewhere. Now, that's a terrible thing to throw down to the floor now, to say 'Is there anyone who wants to put that view?' because it will make them look like a kind of pariah – but if you want to just do it privately afterwards, for my anecdotal resource, I'd love to hear it because I've not encountered it on any of these salons yet.

Maggie Bolt: But what was interesting was CABE - the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment who are now, obviously, disappearing – they've done some research on beauty. Out of the research, no one was against beauty. People didn't think beauty was elitist: they wanted beautiful places. It was a really interesting piece of work because it was almost making the economic argument to put beauty back on the agenda of local authorities because of course people want nice places to be and things to look at, and considered, sensitive places. For a quasi-government institution to actually research it – it's like the research into happiness announced today, saying people are happiest when they live in the moment, you know: day-dreaming makes you unhappy! [Laughter] We actually have to do research to remember want we need out of life, which is happiness and beauty!

Tim Marlow: I quite like that: that people are campaigning and saying 'I want more unhappiness in my life; I want the world to be less beautiful.'

Maggie Bolt: Yes! But everything we're doing is bringing more in, that's what I'm saying. We don't realise.

Tim Marlow: There needs to be a violent demonstration. Peter – briefly, because there's one more question I want to throw it out to – but you're a monumentally successful artist in every way. How's the economic downturn hitting your perspective of things? I'm not asking you personally if you've been hit but from where you sit and work are there significant differences noted?

Peter Randall-Page: On a personal level there don't seem to be, partly because a lot of the projects I do are very very long term, so in fact…

Tim Marlow: You've already been paid, you mean?

Peter Randall-Page: Well [laughter] they kind of stretch over years and years so, in the ups and downs of things, tend to get sort of flattened out. I'm much more concerned about things like… I was talking earlier on about this local project which we have in my village, which is to have a week of arts, workshops, things going on in the summertime. We have been lucky enough to have funding for it. It's been fantastically good fun for everybody; lots of people have got a lot out of it. That kind of thing is going to be hard to do. That's going to be very hard to do and I'm kind of wracking my brains to think 'Now, how are we going to do that?' because if you actually charge everybody what it costs to put the whole thing on, you just end up with a whole load of people my age who can afford to

go and have a jolly week, and actually you want to have people who are hungry to be involved. You want to have people who are different age groups: people who have just come out of college, and young people and all that kind of thing. Now how one actually thinks of ways of making those sorts of things happen - which, to me, in many ways, is really what I think the arts in rural areas is all about: it's actually things which grow from grassroots and where you've got artists and people who want to work with one another and kind of…

Tim Marlow: A communal spirit.

Peter Randall-Page: Yeah, but also bringing people in from outside. I think it's that same combination: if it's something that grows from the place but also draws in the best of… You know, why shouldn't we have art and culture of a standard that you get in the metropolis in rural Devon? There's absolutely no reason why not.

Tim Marlow: Absolutely not, no. Both you and Maggie have touched upon this idea of happiness, beauty, coming together, which is a nice cue up for the last question tonight which we've, briefly, just about got time for. Is Tom Stanbury here? Tom.

Tom Stanbury: 'It's all very well, but is it funny?' Is my question. Or 'Is it fun?'

Tim Marlow: Or but is it fun?

Tom Stanbury: Yeah. I'm thinking of the quality of playfulness, which I think is very important. I'd like to see that you think.

Tim Marlow: Yep. That follows on really nicely because, in an economic downturn, the idea that – I mean, it's the kind of happiness/unhappiness – but there is a sense that it's seen to be trivial if you have too much fun at a particular time like this. How do you respond to that, Bill?

Bill Mitchell: I have a lot of fun [laughter]. I try and have as much fun as I can doing stuff, and when it's working, or when it's actually happening, I can't describe the buzz – the energy that happens. What I do find it that it's taken more time: that less fun is preparing it, trying to find the money for it, is the sorting it out, you know, getting it going. But absolutely: the whole point is you've got things lined up, there are accidents happening everywhere – I mean in the best possible way, and serendipity - and things that you could never conceive of happen in front of you. I get such a buzz from that, and that's the energy that I have to take back, and then I can give to somebody else and charge that up. Hopefully, anybody experiencing that in any particular way is also picking up that same energy. I would add 'meaning' to that list of beauty and…

Tim Marlow: Happiness.

Bill Mitchell: Happiness. I think as the money goes down the need for art goes up, and the sort of finding why we're here, finding… trying to understand the myth-making, trying to understand those bigger things: they go up. That gives me a lot of fun.

Tim Marlow: Juliet, you have very definitely not been the prophet of doom on this panel but you've had to defend the ecological and environmental side of things which, obviously, is critical, but where do you stand on the issue of playfulness and fun? Is that something that of course you would salute but in a

sense has to be secondary to the sustainability of the projects that you do, or can the two go hand in hand?

Juliet Ross-Kelly: I don't think we should get away from the fact that people go to these events to have fun. Going back to mentioning Bob Dylan at '68 *Isle of Wight Festival*, art in public spaces – or music in public spaces – has the potential to create what I perceive as a memorable moment in cultural history, and so why shouldn't those events happen?

Tim Marlow: We just have to make them sustainable so that we don't feel guilty.

Juliet Ross-Kelly: Make them sustainable, absolutely.

Tim Marlow: Peter, you're a man who brings joy to many but is playfulness and fun something that is consciously there in what you do?

Peter Randall-Page: Absolutely critical. Central. It's the whole thing. I wouldn't want to live in a society which wasn't interested in understanding the human condition and, actually, doing art in all its manifest different ways is kind of trying to understand what we are and who we are. Playfulness, to me, is absolutely critical. I think you can't overestimate how much creativity and playfulness are absolutely synonymous. I think half the time it's creating situations where playfulness is allowed to happen or where playfulness can happen. Ironically, often – and this is talking as an artist – one has to actually set parameters. Like, you know, you have to draw where the playground is in order to play in it. That's just something you learn as time goes on: that in literature the sonnet is a very useful form because it gives constraints within which you can invent. Different musical forms are useful in that way but it's all ways of being able to get to the point where you can play. I'm a great enthusiast about playing.

Tim Marlow: So actually a certain cultural worthiness is no bad thing because it gives you something to kick against and play with…

Peter Randall-Page: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

Tim Marlow: Maggie, finally. I'll give you the last word but you've hinted - and sometimes you've been explicit - with the idea that so much of what does get realised in the public domain in artistic terms is 'worthy' or not up to standard. Is that lack of fun something that is one of the keys to try to improve the quality of what's out there in the public domain? Or are we overstating it?

Maggie Bolt: I think, yeah, a lot of the area that I've worked in isn't fun. You have people virtually wanting guidelines for innovation; it's really painful. What I'm experiencing at the moment which really isn't fun is seeing really good projects stop, see really good initiatives stop. A lot of people are saying 'We can't. We shouldn't be investing in these at the moment when there's no money', and it is exactly the time to be thinking more creatively and really pushing things. I think there'll be a lot of corners cut. I think it is going to be hard – well, it's already hard – to fight for the place around the table for the artists to be. It's always been hard to take risks in such a risk-averse society but now I think a lot of things will have to be more, kind of, guerrilla tactics, actually, to bring back the fun, and not wait for permission: just do them. I think that's going to have to be the way forward in a lot of cases. If you know you're going to get the answer you don't want then just don't ask the question. [Laughter] Just go ahead and do it.

Tim Marlow: That's a brilliant note on which to end. [Laughter. Applause]. Can I say that the fun can continue? Those of you who want to go and see *The Heart of Darkness*, just go and jump on Hillary who's at the back there. Twenty people. The rest of you come to the bar. Can I thank our panellists: Bill, Maggie, Juliet and Peter? Thank you all for taking part and for your questions. Thank you all. [Applause].

END OF TRANSCRIPT