

Art + Writing 2009

Art + Writing was a series of events that explored the spectrum of 'art writing', a term that no longer simply describes criticism, catalogue essay or document. The series was programmed by Sovay Berriman (Spike Associate Artist) and Megan Wakefield (Researcher: PhD Spike Island/UWE) and launched at Spike Island Open Studios 2009 with a panel discussion that sought to investigate the changing trajectories of written texts as they orbit and intersect contemporary art.

All events were funded by Spike Associates programme and were free to attend; they took place in the Spike Associates space at Spike Island, Bristol.

Art + Writing: Panel Discussion

Saturday 2nd May 2009

Speakers; Michael Dean, Maria Fusco, Matthew Price

Chair: David Trigg

13:00 Informal buffet lunch and social with reading material and other related resources available.

13:45 Panel response to a pre-set question

14:45 Break

15:05 Audience questions posed to the panel.

16:00 Event ends.



Matthew Price, Michael Dean and Maria Fusco, 1/5/09

Art + Writing: Seminars

The seminars that followed the initial panel discussion were each led by a different practitioner representing some of the varied approaches to art and writing. The seminars aimed to offer a more focused look at particular areas and were informed by the session leaders' own activities.

Saturday 30th May

Neil Mulholland

Neil used free software and blogging sites such as *wetpaint* and *vue* to look at of possibilities for exploring ideas and your own writing. Neil set up a wiki page for the session, <http://artwriting.wetpaint.com/?mail=1134>, with detailed information regarding the day (see below for a copy) and which was added to during the seminar.

"Hello!

I've set up this wiki to help with preparing for the workshop, to keep notes on what happens during it and to allow you to follow up some of the things we look at. It's open so you can keep adding to it if you like. I'll encourage others around the UK to use it so it forms a basic network (more on this on Friday).

What to bring:

- 1. A PEN**
- 2. A NOTEBOOK** (a [moleskine](#) style notebook is best)
- 3. A LAPTOP** (not essential but could be handy)
- 4. YOUR HOMEWORK**

What's the homework? First, read this Chapter by James Elkins: [Stories of Art \(New York: Routledge, 2002\)](#).

Once you've read this and thought about it, I'd like you to draw a map of your own. Your map should represent what you see as the key ideas related to your work. It's there for others in the group (rather than just for yourself) so you need to make sure that it gets across where you are. A map is as much about what it shows as it is about what it conceals. So ask yourself some questions:

What do you already know, what do you need to find out?

In particular, you might want to focus on these questions in relationship to reading and writing.

What have you read/written, what do you read/write, what do you want to read/write, why do you read/write, how do you read/write? How will you access the kind of reading and writing that you need?

The map can take whatever form you think is most appropriate so long as we can all see it! Bring your map with you on Friday. We will look at them and discuss them before moving on to look at other writing tools. If you can, scan it or take a photo of it and put it up on this wiki before we all meet.

If you don't like drawing and want some help with making a simple mind map then I'd recommend using VUE, it's free: [VUE: Visual Understanding Environment](#). If you have a laptop, install VUE on it and bring it with you. I'll be using it to run the workshop. I'll also show you a few other free open source tools you can use to help you write and

publish your work.

*See you all on Friday.
Neil.”*



Neil Mulholland and Art + Writing participants 30/5/09

Saturday 13th June

Colin Glen

Colin's session looked at imagination and memory in relation to art and writing with a particular focus on review writing. Participants were asked to bring along two reviews to discuss, one that they'd particularly liked and one that they hadn't. Participants were also sent a text by Colin to use as an introduction to the session, please see below.

The principle of aim of this seminar is to look at establishing a dialogue between the processes of writing and of making art, using a correlation of the two models of memory; recall and the imagination. Initially, for the purposes of beginning the discussion, we can separate writing and art-making into two oppositional positions- in terms of the debates on the function of memory, asserting writing as recall and art-making as imagination. Writing's principal function is commonly seen as a commentary on the artwork, its description. It is a construction, a functioning almost mechanical system, which follows a logical course – the argument - in order to communicate between the artwork and the audience. The writer puts themselves in a position of authority, of knowledge which is then imparted to the reader. This position accords with the predominance of the recall function in theories of memory, the practical retrieval of facts and information about an event from the past. The artwork, however, is seen to be created from the intuitive sense – communicating an individual response through the relationship with materials. The imagination is seen to come to the fore here – allowing non-linear thought patterns and free-association to contribute to making the artwork. As Paul Ricoeur has said, imagination has played a lesser role compared to recall in the history of memory, less privileged for its use function. However, in my practice the release of the imagination is prompted by a purposeful forgetting, a need to clear to the side so many facts and information precisely in order to make a functioning system. I attempt to make an artwork or indeed to make a piece

of writing that both creates a convincing argument which can be followed by a reader/viewer but also that allows the mind of the reader/viewer to fly off with the imagination. I see the imagination as a tool as much as the recall function, for creative invention. In my current project, The Clearing, I am concentrating on the process of clearing out a space both literally with architectural space, and metaphorically, the mental space, in order that activity can function in thought and imagination. This project has developed over the past 10 years – beginning with the idea of absencing oneself through performing an artwork, which extended into the notion of crafting an artwork, manually making a drawing with its accompanying effect of 'losing yourself' in the concentrated activity. The activity clears the mind, yet conversely the current project has been realised like a piece of prose writing in that it has been constructed in order to function as legible, following a concise argument. In my writing I will often concentrate on having one thing to say, one insight or experience that I would like to communicate and elicit responses to. The Clearing project has been constructed on this basis, one clear idea achieved through an editing process, honing down from all possible permutations and elements. Yet it is designed with the intention of allowing the imagination of the viewer to be in the ascendant. Much of my influence for the work has come from the poet Thomas A Clark whose writings and ideas on space, particularly the text 'On Imaginative Space' have pertinent resonance. The title The Clearing, originates from a line in Clark's poem 'Some Alternatives to The White Cube', 1996, in which he describes possible imaginative functions of the gallery space. It can be 'a space like a clearing in a wood'.

Colin Glen

Saturday 18th July

Becky Shaw

The third of the Art + Writing seminars, delivered by Becky Shaw, looked at the relationship between writing (usually viewed as 'idea') and the material world ('form'). Becky set some home work for the session which is outlined below.

'I'd like to grapple with a number of problems that continue to fascinate me, including: the power or weakness of description; why text is used in visual art; the real and imaginary; time and process in text and object, and I'm sure much more that will develop with your input.

Please bring a pen and some paper and also the following three tasks:

1. Read Bill Brown's essay 'Thing Theory'

<http://www.faculty.virginia.edu/theorygroup/docs/brown.thing-theory.2001.pdf>

2. Bring with you an example of an artwork that uses, or is, both text and object. Ideally this work should be your own, but if that's not what you do then bring with you an example by someone else. Find a 'good-enough' means to represent the work, such as a photo etc.

3. Can you think of a text you have read where the description of something material (object, food or perhaps a process etc) has remained with you. Please try to track down the text and bring a photocopy of the page/s where the description is situated.

Beck Shaw'

Saturday 1st August

Brian Catling

This fourth and final Art + Writing workshop of the summer was entitled: 'Ekphrasis, or Stealing Tales and Peeling Stories' and looked at over-reading and the imagination. Participants brought along a picture of a narrative painting or other narrative artwork that they liked, and Brian created a writing exercise based upon writing the scene immediately preceding the given image. Brian also read from his book, Bobby Awl.

More information can be found on the Spike Associates blog

<http://spikeassociates.wordpress.com/category/projects/>