

Logbook #3

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# PERFORMATIVE INTERVIEWS

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Sophie Hope



### **#3 Performative Interviews**

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#### LOGBOOK SERIES

- #1 Het Reservaat
- #2 Critical Friends
- #3 Performative Interviews  
(including DVD)
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## Introduction to the Logbooks

This series of four Logbooks document the projects carried out in the context of my PhD research into cultural democracy and the commissioning of art to effect social change (2006-2010). The Logbooks act as summaries of the projects and accompany a more in depth written thesis. They provide background information, descriptions, documentation and critical reflections of each of the projects and follow a chronological progression. In my practice-based research I explore methods of cultural democracy as collective critical reflection to negotiate and contest the limits and problems of the democratisation of culture exemplified in the artists' commission to effect social change.

By cultural democracy I mean a way of thinking and acting that recognises the cultural expression and critical knowledge of individuals and communities. Through my PhD I argue that this notion of cultural democracy does not sit happily with the more dominant top-down practice of democratising culture, which implies cultural provision based on predefined economic, aesthetic and social values. Cultural democracy disrupts expected forms of participation and communication of culture, drawing attention to the inequalities and inadequacies of the democratisation of culture and the re-enforcing of certain neo-liberal values such as social inclusion, citizenship and urban regeneration. The projects documented in these Logbooks explore the complex relationships between commissioned, funded socially engaged art and the meaning of critical reflection, action and participation that contradicts or reaffirms the parameters of the commission itself as a form of art labour.

Logbook #1 documents 'Het Reservaat', an experiment in collective time travel which was the result of a residency I did with 'Beyond', in Leidsche Rijn, a new town near Utrecht, The Netherlands. Logbook #2 looks at 'Critical Friends', a participant-led critique of commissioning art which evolved from an invitation I had to evaluate a series of public art projects in Greenwich, London. Logbook #3 is accompanied by a DVD of ten short films documenting a series of 'Performative Interviews' I carried out with practitioners and commissioners as a way of going public with stories of compromise, failure and censorship of commissioned socially engaged art. Logbook #4 focuses on the 'FUNding FACTORY', a work-

shop method I tested with a group of students in Austria as a way of critiquing and negotiating the cultural production line and the relationship between critical art practice and wage labour.

Each Logbook takes the form of a step-by-step guide to the projects, beginning with an introduction to the project, the context in which it was carried out and the key starting points. This is followed by a 'making of' section which explains the process of the projects. The subsequent manifestation or findings of the project are then explained through documentation and the booklets conclude with my personal reflections on how the project has informed the relationship between cultural democracy and the commissioning of art to effect social change, highlighting key questions that have emerged. The progression of the projects reflects an iterative process that establishes a development of a methodology for a collective critical practice.

While the projects themselves have been the result of conversations and collaborations with many different partners, funders and individuals, I am the author of the content, design and editing of these Logbooks which have been produced as an integral part of my PhD research. They therefore do not necessarily reflect the opinions or experiences of others involved in what have otherwise been multi-authored projects.

I would like to thank everyone I have worked with on the projects and acknowledge the different roles they have each played to make these projects happen. These Logbooks I hope will prove useful both to those who have been directly involved and other readers who work in the field of commissioning art and those who are concerned with the meaning and possibilities of developing collective, critical practices and manifestations of cultural democracy.

## Introduction to 'Performative Interviews'

The 'Performative Interviews' are a series of ten short films about how people negotiate the complexities of the commissioning process. 'Het Reservaat' (Logbook #1) was an experiment in opening up a process of critical reflection to a wide group of residents in a new town about their way of life and the role art plays in that; 'Critical Friends' (Logbook #2) was a process of working with a small group of participants of socially engaged art projects to develop an investigation of art projects they are participating in. The 'Performative Interviews' delve deeper into the obstacles artists and commissioners face when embarking on a commissioned project.

The resulting films build on the issues addressed through 'Het Reservaat' and 'Critical Friends', focusing on the modes and mechanisms of producing art in frameworks of commissioned culture and aim to articulate a critique of the structures of administration and production of commissioned art. The projects I have been developing throughout the PhD have become increasingly focused on devising methods for critically reflecting and negotiating the frames of commissioning, funding, participating and delivering culture as a chance for cultural democracy to occur through funded commissions in ways that contradict the top-down democratising of culture. Rather than consider the artist as being automatically empowered, I want to introduce the artist and other players in the delivery of commissioned art as participants negotiating a networked series of contracts and relationships and their experiences of failure, compromise and censorship. The purpose of these 'Performative Interviews' was to see how people identify and negotiate a contract on the point of collapse. During these tense moments the construction of the industry of commissioning art comes into focus as does the artists' and commissioners' complicit roles in building it.

The interviewees are all professionals who make a living out of their work as artists, curators, arts development workers or commissioners. The interviews are performative in that they introduce a distance between the interviewee and their filmic representation in the form of mask-wearing or actors speaking extracts of interview transcripts. This performative intervention allows the interviewee to tell their stories

anonymously whilst opening up a chance for them and those viewing the films to critically reflect on the construction of these stories, their complicity in these processes and the implications of these common dilemmas that we often restrain ourselves from talking about publicly.

After having read this Logbook, I encourage the reader to view the DVD attached to the back page (the total length of the films is one hour eighteen minutes).

#### LIST OF FILMS

##### **Part 1: Negotiating rejection and failure (41mins total)**

1. Self-interview: Very Disappointing (6mins)
2. It's not all flipping roses! (4mins)
3. Cornflake: Shooting in the dark (7mins)
4. Duck, Frog and Horse on Crater 5 (21mins)
5. Learning to say no (3mins)

##### **Part 2: Taking a Stand (37mins total)**

1. Serious Research (3mins)
2. The Egg Liberation Front (10mins)
3. The Source of Art... (12mins)
4. Interlude (2mins)
5. Banging on doors (10mins)

## Context & starting points

### **Making a confession public:**

By doing the projects 'Het Reservaat' and 'Critical Friends' I became increasingly interested in exposing experiences of critical reflection that are inherent in the process of commissioned culture but that are often considered either too controversial or risky to present publicly either during or after a project, for fear of jeopardising reputations, future funding or commissioning opportunities. The informal conversations I was having with colleagues about socially engaged art as work often revealed genuine contentions and frustrations but these problems were confined to the confidential parameters of conversations down the pub. I felt these common experiences were often being brushed aside as an inevitable part of working within the constraints of a commission rather than being dealt with as more fundamental grievances that needed airing publicly. I was keen to find a way of discerning more concretely what those issues were through interviews with artists and commissioners and of trying out a way of going public with these experiences so as we could start sharing our key concerns and potentially doing something about them.

There have been precedents of making personal confessions public in the format of video-diaries. Michael Renov in 'Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices' (1996), for example, sees confessional video-making as an empowering process where the diarist performs their own identity to camera, to the extent that it can turn passive viewers of traditional media into active producers (Holliday 2000, p.511). This has also been explored in Gillian Wearing's art piece 'Trauma' (2000), for example, in which people choose a mask and are filmed talking about traumatic experiences in their lives.

### **Providing anonymity:**

I felt it was important to provide the interviewees with the option of anonymity so as to protect their identity and as a way of opening up an opportunity for people to speak candidly about sensitive cases of failure or censorship, for example. This was a practical issue, in terms of protecting both the interviewee but also the names and identities of the people and/or organisations they were referring to. While there are instances

when interviewees felt strongly the need to 'name and shame', there was also a case for hiding some names so as to create a body of anecdotal evidence that is not about personal attack but reveals much more about the systemic problems of commissioning and delivering commissioned art. While some interviewees were happy to be named and not disguised (making the point that it would be unprofessional of them to be disguised as they should be able to stand with conviction next to their statements), providing anonymity can sometimes create a stronger case of shared voices. The Guerrilla Girls, for example, are a collective of anonymous artists who, since 1985, have taken the names of dead female artists and used disguise in the form of gorilla masks in performances, interventions, poster campaigns and pamphlets as a way to hide their identities and draw attention to inequalities within the art world.

### Subverting the interview format:

As with the 'Het Reservaat' futurology workshops, I was interested in providing a different lens through which to access people's underlying hopes and fears. In the 'Het Reservaat' workshops we were talking together through the lens of 1000 years in the future which provided a way of accessing people's perceptions of themselves and society now



Still from 'The Source of Art...' (Part 2: Taking a Stand)

without asking them directly. I am interested in how the interview format is not necessarily a fool-proof format for finding out what people actually think or experience, rather the format of the interview constructs a version of that person's identity. Social scientist Barbara Sherman Heyl remarks on the problematic power relations of the interview: "for some respondents, the research interview may not be an appropriate place to 'tell all'" (Heyl 2001, p.376). How the interviewee responds can tell us more about the conditions of the interview than the person being interviewed which throws into doubt the idea of gathering evidence based on 'authentic experiences'. I wanted to try and draw attention to this problem of evidence gathering through evaluation interviews (used, for example by the 'Critical Friends') and how we problematise this process further in a way that might create and produce new (visual) languages and ways of interpreting and discussing experiences. Was there a way of creating new work rather than representations and documents of past events? The stories told by the interviewees, for example, are parodies and vignettes that viewers may relate to differently than they might to a survey, statistical information or transcript: "The dialogic interview exposes its own means of production. In contrast, the documentary interview, hides behind the apparatuses of production, thereby creat-



Still from 'Interlude' (Part 2: Taking a Stand)

ing the illusion that the viewer and reader have direct access to reality" (Denzin 2001, p.33).

Trinh T. Minh-ha's films, have been a source of inspiration for me to rethink the relationship between research and practice. The work disorients viewers who might expect 'information', 'documents' and 'truths' by problematising the relationship between artist/researcher and subject, issues of translation and the role of narrative, poetry and fictions in re-thinking cultural politics and theories. Her films from the 1980s, such as 'Reassemblage' (1982) and 'Surname Viet Given Name Nam' (1989) make use of her ethnographic research which she then reinterprets, scripts and re-works. 'Surname Viet Given Name Nam', for example, incorporates reflections on the methods she has chosen (such as how many interviews and what criteria she has used for the selection). Her voice comes through at different moments ('I find myself closer to fiction') and parts are left untranslated (Minha 1991, 1992 and 1999).

### **Performative interventions: Masks and Retellings:**

What makes the interviews performative? Philosopher Judith Butler has contested the idea of an already existing subjective agency which freely



Still from 'It's not all flippin' roses' (Part 1: Negotiating Rejection and Failure)

chooses to act; rather the subject is formed through the performative process (Butler 1997). This suggests subjectivities are not pre-existing or self-determined acts of agency that might be lying dormant, waiting to be analysed or awakened by researchers and artists. Rather, the performative aspect of social science or art implies the formation of subjectivity and agency through these performative acts themselves. The performative aspect in the interviews playfully deconstructs the interview format itself as a fact-finding exercise and offers a new way of reworking the anecdotal evidence by the interviewees disguising themselves in masks (usually animal masks) or re-playing extracts of interviews with actors. Denzin (2000, p.905) refers to 'mystories' as "reflexive, critical stories...that enact liminal experiences. These are storied retellings that seek the truth of life's fictions via evocation rather than explanation or analysis" (ibid). The aim is for readers or viewers watching or reading the performed texts to relive the experience as if it had happened to them, "interpreting the past from the point of view of the present" (ibid). The telling, sharing, re-telling, editing, performing and re-sharing are processes that open



Still from 'Cornflake: Shooting in the dark' (Part 1: Negotiating Rejection and Failure)



up the research process to multiple interpretations, drawing attention to the mode of research itself and the fallibility of the interview process as a staple research tool. Other examples of performative research techniques include:

- **'On the Road: A search for American Character'**

The artist/actor/researcher Anna Deavere Smith has been developing an ongoing project called 'On the Road: A search for American Character' where she has been trying to find 'American character' in the ways that people speak. She used to simply introduce her project to her interviewees as "If you give me an hour of your time, I'll invite you to see yourself performed" (in Denzin 2001, p.33). She turns the transcripts of her interviews into scripts and performs the interviewees on stage using their words. She describes these interview texts as 'physical, audible, performable vehicles' (ibid, p.34).

- **'Kamera Lauft! [Rollig!]'**

Another example of this method of re-performing transcripts can be seen in the video piece, 'Kamera Lauft! [Rollig!]' For this, the collective Kleines Postfordisches Drama (Small Post-Fordist Drama, KPD) interviewed a number of cultural producers about their 'work life' and used the transcripts as scripts which a cast of actors performed to camera. They describe how the film set, "represents not only the place of performance and staging but is at the same time always a place where the immediate working conditions are being negotiated, with all the associated potential for conflict" (Kleines Postfordisches Drama n.d.).

- **Ethnodrama**

Ethnodrama was developed by Jim Mieniczakowski and is where "co-performers read performance scripts based on fieldwork and interviews conducted in the fieldsetting" (Denzin 2001, p.26). It is about "giving the text back to the readers and informants in the recognition that we are all co-performers in each other's lives" (ibid). The idea is that 'informants' control the text and its representation.

## The making of 'Performative Interviews'

The 'Performative Interviews' did not take place in a commissioned context but have evolved as a self-initiated piece of research within the context of my AHRC funded doctorate. Some interviewees took part in an audio recorded discussion based on a set of questions previously sent to them, others participated in a filmed 'Performative Interview' where they chose a disguise and got more involved in directing the filming of their interview. I then made a selection of the material and re-edited it to make the compilation of films for the DVD.

Editing is thought to re-introduce biases of the researcher, rendering the film 'artistic' rather than 'scientific' and therefore there is a danger the edited versions are not taken seriously as research. Sociologist Ruth Holliday writing on the use of visual methods in sociology, for example, states "artistic film and text, one suspects, stand accused of undermining 'scientific rigour'" (Holliday 2000, p.505). She refers to how, due to the training in anthropology to create 'objective' research, if video is used it



Still from 'Duck, Frog and Horse on Crater 5' (Part 1: Negotiating rejection and failure).

is often unedited (just as audio transcripts are preserved in their entirety, pauses, hiccups, giggles and all) in order to create the least biased document that can be picked apart and analysed by the researcher. The camera might be placed in the corner out of the way or handed around to ensure the researcher and researched are on an even footing – each decision is an attempt to ‘forget the camera’ so that people can act as ‘naturally’ as possible. In this research, I have tried to reintroduce this bias, emphasising it and make a point of the intrusion of the camera – through performance and re-enactment, for example, rather than attempt to capture a ‘natural’ response. By separating the speech from the interviewee, through editing, re-enacting, costume, camera angle and characterisation, the verisimilitude of the resulting documentation confronts the viewer inviting them to create their own interpretations.

I have edited the films and clustered them in two parts. The first five deal more specifically with how the protagonists position themselves in



Still from 'Serious Research' (Part 2: Taking a Stand)

relation to specific contractual obligations and resulting experiences of rejection, miscommunication and negotiation. These are: 'Self-interview: Very Disappointing', 'It's not all flipping roses!', 'Cornflake: Shooting in the Dark', 'Duck, Frog and Horse on Crater 5' and 'Learning to say no'. The contexts and details of the commissions are not the focus here, rather it is the points of contention and reasons for these projects failing that are recounted by the interviewees. The second five 'Performative Interviews' deal not so much with failed projects rather they are snapshots of inspiration, resilience and upheaval that have made the protagonists rethink their relationship to the work they do as artists, curators and commissioners. This includes justifying the choice to return to study as a mother ('Serious Research'); negotiating the power games and political discrepancies of cross cultural collaboration ('The Fox'); how tragedy can cause one to dramatically reconsider the role and responsibility of art ('The Source of Art...') and a long term collaboration between a local authority community development officer and artist ('Banging on Doors').

#### LIST OF QUESTIONS THAT INFORMED THE INTERVIEWS

##### *General questions:*

- How would you describe your work?
- What do you understand to be 'cultural democracy'?
- Who are you influenced by (e.g. writers, theorists, artists) (three examples)?
- Who do you perceive to be your allies at the moment (three examples)?
- Who would you not align yourself with at the moment (three examples)?
- How do you think cultural democracy relates to being critical and/or political?
- Do you consider yourself to be a professional – if so, what makes you professional?
- What do you think cultural democracy looked like 50 years ago?
- What do you think it looks like now?
- What do you think 'cultural democracy' will look like in 50 years time?

*Further questions for commissioned artists and curators:*

Have you received funding for your practice? Can you give me examples of where from? Do you see a difference between these funders?

How do you receive your money, e.g. do you mainly apply for funds directly, apply for commissions or through residencies?

How do your funded projects compare to self-initiated ones?

Do you consider the issue of where the money is from to be significant?

What are the main issues for you in relation to the public and / or private funding for art?

How does funding offer you opportunities and/or compromises?

Have you ever rejected funding or a commission offered to you?

Can you briefly describe how the funding system changed during the years you have been practising?

*Further questions for funders:*

How would you describe the work that you fund?

Why are you supportive of that particular way of working?

Have you ever recalled funding and why?

How has the funding system changed during the years you have been working here?

What are the challenges of funding / commissioning art? How do you deal with these challenges?

How would you define a successful commission?

How would you define a failed commission?

*Further questions (optional): 'Performative Interviews' to camera*

Can you begin by telling me about this project you tried to do?

What were you aiming to do?

What went wrong?

How did you feel at the time?

How did you manage things at the time?

How did you leave it?

What would you have done differently?

Looking back, what was positive about the experience?

## Findings

### Part 1: Negotiating rejection and failure

In the first set of interviews we hear how proposals to turn the lens of critique towards the organisations that commissioned them have ended in rejection, cancellation and compromise. For example, we hear how an invitation to work with front of house staff led to a project that challenged the hierarchical staff structure of a museums service and the project being pulled (in 'Self-interview: Very Disappointing'); a publication about a public art project which was to act as a gift to the community led to the removal of a critical text that reflected on the controversy the artwork caused (in 'It's not all flipping roses!'); a proposal for a performative intervention into an arts festival that parodied the antagonism their commissioners claimed to endorse went a step too far and the artists were un-invited to take part (in 'Cornflake: Shooting in the dark'); artists who risked rewriting a public art brief that steered art away from providing a 'gateway' feature were shunned by the commissioner for being too conceptual and ephemeral (in 'Duck, Frog and Horse on Crater 5') and finally, we hear an example of how someone found the resources and confidence to say 'no' in order to avoid further compromises and situations of 'repressive tolerance' (in 'Learning to say no'). The friction caused by these acts of rejection are often not highlighted or considered of merit and are usually brushed under the carpet as embarrassing mistakes. It is perhaps in these frustrating compromises or acts of participating in the 'wrong' way, being 'un-invited', 'de-commissioned' or removed from the projects that one can find a sense of agency and critical engagement.

Having watched these films, we are left asking if compromise is an inevitable part of the public art commissioning process and that if an artist is not willing to make these compromises, should they be commissioned in the first place? To what extent does the commissioner have to compromise or change their expectations of the process too? The interviewees reflect on how perhaps there was not the time, space (or inclination) to unpick what was expected of them and that in these sorts of situations it is important to listen to yourself and ask what is going wrong: "maybe it's having the bravery, foresight and financial reserves to say no to something", as the Frog on Crater 5 remarks ('Duck, Frog and Horse on Crater

5'). There is a glimmer of hope in someone being self-empowered to say 'no' to organisations, commissioners or funders that demand too much or make irrelevant requests. The issue of capacity of an organisation or individual to deal with the demands (and opportunities) is a real issue and allows little time for reflection in order to build on the work.

These five short films also reveal experiences of miscommunication and crossed wires between artists and commissioners that develop out of a lack of dialogue. While the briefs may not have been clear from the outset, the artists found in the end that they were participating in the contractual relationship in the 'wrong way'. The format of these interviews also makes us question the validity of the voices – who is speaking



A collection of animal masks.

for whom? There are slippages as the woman sitting in front of the fire addresses the camera as if it is not her who this had happened to ('Self-interview: Very Disappointing'); two actors speak the words of someone absent ('It's not all flipping roses!'); the men in their handmade disguises become cartoon-like as they retell an experience they had to walk away from ('Cornflake: Shooting in the dark') and one voice wearing different masks performs three perspectives on the same event ('Duck, Frog and Horse on Crater 5'). How do we know which one is 'real' or are they all contrived? The performative aspect exaggerates the ways in which the protagonists have to perform expected roles in the contracts they enter into and highlights the moments when performances are not up to scratch and expectations are not met.

### Part 2: Taking a Stand

The accounts in the second cluster of films reveal something about the ways in which these protagonists renegotiate a sense of agency in themselves and the people they are working with, for example, the women in 'Serious Research' are declaring the very real dilemmas they face as mothers in justifying to their friends and families that this return to study is valid. That they are trying to find their voices through both their hysterical laughter and the pressures of performing the roles of mother and dedicated student is a powerful testament to the complex contractual relations that stretch beyond the commission and bleed into all aspects of life. 'The Egg Liberation Front' presents a metaphor of a failed cross-cultural collaboration between two curators (Fox and Wolf) as their ideas and expectations of artists (chickens) collide. It is maybe these differences and conflicts that are more valid and interesting than false or forced representations of cultural exchange. How do you create a platform of support without dictating the content or activity that may then take place? Wolf's call for an egg liberation front could perhaps be reinterpreted as a call for cultural democracy if it liberates art/ideas/culture from oppressive frameworks of commissions and from the supposed 'owners' of culture – artists, curators, funders and commissioners. Such a liberation front would not necessarily be plotted in a secret base in a centralised, ritualized way, rather through the existing actions of people finding ways to be radical in the everyday. There are many different forms in which people critique the situations they are in on a daily

basis and, depending on the severity of the critique, this can sometimes lead to the termination of contracts, job losses, removal of funding or major compromises to be made. It is a risky business if it is taken seriously; it requires the 'radical' to change themselves rather than impose change on other people.

In the 'Source of art is in the life of the people', the interviewee symbolically wears her 'work hat' confidently emblazoned with the words of artist Walter Crane (1845-1915), emphasising the position from which she is speaking. In her retelling of a recent tragic episode her professional work and emotional life collided and she found herself in a state of enforced 'non-action', in the sense that it forced her into a state of critical reflection. She was now convinced that the children she was working with on more artist-led participatory projects had to come first and that the artists she works with should share that approach.

In 'Interlude' the focus is also on how people participate in a process rather than on artists' ideas. Prescribed, homogenising effects of public art commissions and notions of empowerment through participation are challenged as the different forms of watching, facilitating, volunteering and mentoring are recognised as equally valid and emancipated forms of participation. 'Banging on Doors' illustrates a collaboration between an artist and community development officer and the (productive) blurring of boundaries in such a partnership. While the methods the artist and civil servant use are often overlapping, the responsibilities dictated by their different contractual positions, however, remain distinct. There is a shared sense of frustration and potentiality in working towards change and it is the local power brokers that needed challenging in this respect.

## Critical reflections & key questions

In Parts 1 and 2, the 'Performative Interviews' act as stand alone statements on the conditions of cultural production and could be played back to other people working in these conditions to elicit further discussion and critical reflection. They offer insights concerning decision-making processes on all levels, in which people are finding ways of justifying their participation in different forms of cultural production. As testimonials they speak of micro interactions that have led to ruptures in the flows of the industry they serve. These disruptions allow us to reconsider the value and validity of this industry and the expectations we place on it.

Critical knowledge as cultural democracy perhaps occurs when the frame (of the interview as a constructed site for 'evidence gathering', for example) comes into focus. In the case of the 'Performative Interviews', the slippages between fiction and fact, absurdity and seriousness are perhaps where the subject can play and revisit the experiences they have had and communicate these with others. By releasing the pressure valve, the 'Performative Interview' as a process and the resulting films aim to provide a space for absurdist confessional critiques of the relationships people have to the work they do. They are methods that offer sites of critical reflection but also the possibility of strategic action.



Still from 'Banging on doors' (Part 2: Taking a Stand).

It has been important to be able to strike a balance between the absurdity and usefulness in these encounters as there is a danger that the drama overrides the seriousness of the content, at the same time, that playful aspect draws attention to the issues being addressed. How these portraits are judged will also depend on who is viewing them, what they are looking for and to what extent the performative elements attract or distract them from the issues being discussed. While they attempt to move beyond what Minh-ha has described as a 'mere stir within the frame', they are also a method for further engaging those involved in the commissioning process as an invitation to rethink the way the industry operates. Together, they contest claims of criticality and social engagement that frame this industry in a way that works towards redistributing the right and practice of critical self-reflection as a form of cultural democracy.



Still from 'The Egg Liberation Front' (Part 2: Taking a Stand)

The 'ruptures' described through the interviews are not contrived but emerged through negotiable and contested experiences of the commissioning process. The 'Performative Interview' was a site for people to reconfigure and express these critical dilemmas after the fact. The generative metaphor of the masked or re-enacted interview was used to elicit critical distance offering new perspectives that, rather than being reconciliatory, aimed to maintain the tensions inherent in the framing of commissioned culture allowing the conflictual elements to come to the fore. Rather than brush these 'mistakes' under the carpet or resort to suggesting a model of 'best practice', these re-framed 'ruptures' raise awareness of familiar situations. To what extent, however, did they go beyond drawing attention to these conditions and move towards inter-subjective encounters or dialogical exchanges that consciously open up opportunities for self-directed, performative acts of subversion and not close down debates on scenarios of commissioned, democratised culture as failed, unsuccessful projects? A further stage of the 'Performative interviews' method could involve presenting the films to a wider audience of practitioners, commissioners and funders to elicit further discussion and address actions that could be taken.

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