

[52:28]

...the information anymore.

Yeah. I think I was surprised when

– were you studying photography on
the undergrad or – ?

I started to study photography and then changed to sculpture.

Okay. And yet the book you are copying I guess primarily if you had to

restrict it to one medium – it's a painting practice

and I think – this production of the cyanotypes
has this painted preparation and then this photographic process and then
becomes this sculptural form somehow . It's all tied up in
the book!

Yeah it's – it's also a bit like a chameleon. Could be discussed as a painting,
could also be discussed as a sculpture, could be discussed as a book,
– could also be discussed as just a documentation of a really long
process or a really long work period.

Yeah! It's really performative .

And there was definitely a thing about it – of being in the studio as a
photographer that is usually working a lot in the dark room...

And being away somewhere in the basement and –

Busted! Um and then opening it up and people kept coming into
the studio and talking to me and I could have a coffee with them or read
something in the meantime and still be working all the time...

Yeah. it's like cooking.

Exactly!

You described it earlier as cooking and I think – you know yesterday I was like, 'Oh, I feel so exhausted, but I can be productive by roasting some vegetables, because then I have permission to sit with the oven on.'

Yes! Alexander Kluge, who is a German author and filmmaker – unfortunately his works are not really translated yet into English – but he's always talking about these things being containers for stuff, and they can almost be like substitutes for windows, as well as screens – so something that you can look at, or make, and then they open up or they channel lots of other things. So during this self-imposed timeframe and production frame lots of other things happen. Yeah, just like cooking.

Yes, and I think – here we are in an office block and there is – yeah we have spoken about inherently this labour involved in the production of this piece, but also now you're sort of describing it in terms of umm, the liberation of that structure . I was speaking to an old colleague last weekend who was saying since she started a PhD it's really difficult and – she works as a curator and obviously has had a lot of contact with artists but feels like she's entered into this space for the first time of experiencing perhaps something of the studio practice and how do you self-impose structures and have some sense of gratification or permission or something to stop working?

Yes.

Because within of 9-to-5 employment situation

The procrastination is all taking place within this context of the work environment and so there you can – you know, something is conceivably a meeting, or you're printing and you're photocopying and you're undertaking different types of activity that all fit within this umbrella of work that you can close up at the end of the day!

Yes.

Yeah, it's definitely got to do with faking
such a framework – like you go there 8am and
leave at 4pm –

Uh-hm. And the dependency on the weather conditions and the time restraint of
completing this ahead of graduation just necessitates that you have to do it.

But it's also giving it relevance at the same time.
Like, if you just do something for long enough it somehow becomes
something that people take serious – in the best case! I mean,
others do that for years and years and it doesn't happen, and I think,
for example, Rebecca Quaytman was also interesting for me because she
had been working off the institutional and commercial focus for decades,
so not many people were interested in her work. Umm, what do you
do about it? She just started creating this framework herself – writing a
book about her own work.

I read in another interview about how she's really hated by
critics for second-guessing what they might say about her work.

'Maybe you can allow someone else
to do this work, or this is a process that can take place after the work, and you can
actually trust your instinct a bit more rather than – yeah, calculate everything and
anticipate everything.'

Yes!

But this is what I like about this process as well, that you don't have to have
– you know there can be a kind of poetic – not license, but like allowance to
give it a title that's borrowed from something that maybe has a chronological
ical or symbolic link in the chameleon, ... But

sip
(tea)

sip
(coffee)

sip
(coffee)

bread

effectively you have said ‘Oh I had Anna Atkins, and I had Rebecca Quaytman in my head –’

I guess what I’m saying is, something that might seem quite dryly umm like an exercise that you’ve set actually comes from a place of – yeah, yeah, a decision that maybe doesn’t make a whole lot of sense in some ways, – but now we can retrospectively look at it and understand it a bit.

Yeah, just trusting what you like, a little bit, up to a certain point, and then I think there needs to be a point where it takes up some speed by itself, and if it doesn’t maybe you just keep it for some other time. But somehow it just happened with this –

– I mean that’s the very amazing thing about working as an artist, but also sometimes a horrible thing, that no-one really tells you to stop if it doesn’t make any sense.

Yes! So I thought – in some ways this work sits very uncomfortably within a corporate office setting and I felt like there was a kind of resistance, even in this title ‘As a lover or a chameleon’ this sense of devotion in the work, how – it’s being driven by something other than the sort of motives that drive the kind of activity that takes place here, but actually I’m wondering now – there’s also, of course, a kind of burden with that, because it is work, but it’s yes – I’m just going around in circles!

Yeah, to describe it: it doesn’t bring any monetary surplus value – it just cost me money to do; it’s in no collection or anything that serves the public interest or whatever. It’s a bit weird how it’s all self-contained, as well, and I think these things become very much visible in this surrounding – that this is a work that’s been made just because I felt like I wanted to do it, and for ever how long I wanted to do it, and it makes me wonder how much space is there if you work in a team, for example,

sip (coffee)

sip (coffee)

bread, cheese

that other things get more important, of course, than your own intrinsic need maybe to – – do this in daylight or have a break or stop doing something. But at the same time, of course it's very rewarding to be a part of something – you might have your own little thing to work on, but you know it will contribute to a bigger thing – that I sometimes really miss in working in a studio.

Yes.

Just by yourself.

Yeah and being here in the basement is this ultimate articulation of the quiet vacated studio/office!

Definitely. We also spoke a lot about that it is a bit dangerous to go in the – like the cheesy abandoned, ghosty...

Yeah, yeah! I think you said it's already magic, and there's a kind of nostalgia.

Yes. There is dust on the windowsill. It almost looks like a very good contemporary installation.

Ha!

The magic kind of breaks as soon as someone unlocks the door. So it is a bit dangerous just going in here.

Being in here.

And leaving in a couple of... I don't know... an hour and...

I might take a toilet break.

Sure. We will never make it through it.

I know. Did you have to go upstairs?

Yes. I went back into the lobby.

[shuffling]

It's cold!

It was really cold in Edinburgh this week. Yeah, it was foggy. We have this – windows like this in the studio, actually it's not dissimilar scale, and it's Edinburgh castle immediately outside the window and normally the most spectacular view, but the fog came down so close to the window that the castle disappeared!

You have an actual studio space there?

Yeah. I actually got myself locked in the art college on Saturday night! It was maybe half past eight or something – and I think it's 24 hour access.

You thought.

Well! Talk about artists and [redacted] – over, over productive work ethic – 24 hour access studios!

[redacted] we have an ID card for access, but there's also – it turns out – a PIN, that out of hours in the evening you need both to swipe and then to enter a PIN. And I had departed through the [redacted] reception doors with the magnetic lock, and then there's a set of storm doors, but I could see through the reception doors there was a sign saying 'Turn the handle right to exit', so as I was coming through these doors I had this moment of [redacted], 'Imagine if I got locked between these two sets of doors!' and this door closed behind me –

Then I was locked in there!

What did you do?

[redacted] thankfully I had my laptop with me and it was still within Wi-Fi range and I just searched a number that I could call. And then the security guard came. she was very sympathetic and didn't seem perturbed by it at all.

[redacted] But in that [redacted] moment [redacted] – I was really exhausted and just like, 'I'm not going to panic, so even if I just sit here for a while and then make a decision, that's fine.'

Zen!

Yeah! There's really no need to panic. Worst thing is I'm going to sleep on this doormat.

Oh my god. How to make an already tiring day even more catastrophic.

Yeah. It was okay. Yes, okay I might just look at my notes because there was quite a few things I was...

I was also actually wondering if you as a curator had some ambition to add something to the space, or the take something away from the space [redacted] ? Like here, you know, because [redacted] definitely my main question

for today is: what does this do here?

Uh-huh.

And I've applied for it, but you've been the facilitator of everything and you've made this concept and I was also wondering about your point of view on the whole thing?

On...? Hmm.

Bringing artwork into a work environment.

I think working with this existing work, for me, made a lot of sense – this being a very labour-intensive work, and if I can offer you a fee for something that's already made – that makes sense to me! it's not purchased; it's not in a public collection; it's not publicly available, but that doesn't mean you can't retrospectively be paid for something that is here and still has more within it.

I'm interested in, you know, the potential of a work to kind of complicate time so I think in a workspace, whether that's a corporate context or not, that's not really something that happens. You're always moving forward, moving the company forward, producing something new, working to a new brief and deadlines, and I think that is also, drawing this back around to the environmental commitments of the project, it's tied up with a particular mind set or mind frame that is fundamentally what's problematic.

I kind of hadn't thought about it before this morning but I'm also wondering about this early 19th-century moment of – I don't know if I'm

right in saying that, maybe that's a point at which nature becomes this thing external – – it pre-dates that actually, but industrially looking at nature as suddenly this resource or this thing that is divided from the rational and the scientific and the productive.

Definitely.

I think somehow the cyanotype occupies this moment as well.

Uh-huh.

Yeah, and I think, yes, I had a resistance to make really any kind of exhibition per se in this transitional space of people just arriving for work, departing – and I've just been upstairs, the work is real! There are men in suits!

And actually this morning I had this moment where I was thinking – oh, the chameleon – the work attire and these people who camouflage themselves to this...

Yeah.

Anyway – where am I going with this? I think working with both you and Johanna I could see already in the sort of proposal that it wasn't about exhibiting things

it's quite exciting for me to look at a work like see it anew in a different context and what does it do to release it from that sculptural

installation, or bring it to Glasgow beside the M8...

Recharge it somehow.

Yeah, and I think I also recognised... with...

I'm just thinking about you both studying at the moment and this natural expectation that you will peak in the perfect parallel... You know, your practice will work towards this moment within the course. And one of the most reassuring things one of my tutors in first year of a painting undergraduate course, saying that that might not happen. You might make your best work in second year and that's okay if you're in this - it's for the long run. So I think that kind of permission to revisit work was exciting to me

You know, I think in some ways you could place – I don't know if this is fair really – but you could place anything in context with anything else and try and draw the connections between them, and that exercise in itself can be productive, but ... This isn't an installation that we have here. We just have the work on the table ahead of us.

Yeah, yeah.

and yet this context I think actually is a kind of slightly exploded space with these stacks of ceiling tiles, in which to kind of look through this stack of paper as well – an x-ray – we're scanning it.

I also think that like you say, you can see anything in rela-

tion to anything to some degree, but there's also things that gravitate towards each other maybe, or are especially suited make sense in a certain constellation somehow, and you just need to be aware of when that happens.

And I think that's what you've done in this work, and maybe at the point you're making it, bringing it to the basement of this space in Finnieston ... wouldn't have occurred to you, but it is kind of interesting I think, to be able to...

Yeah! And of course it makes me think about things, even if they are not visible to everyone, there is things getting moving like this here as well, I don't know exactly how many floors we've got here, but with over eight floors of people working really close to each other, and it's such a...

compact

...compact space of parallel activities and thinking and different types of work as well: There's a gym in the basement where people focus on physical work only.

Yeah, and a charity who will take surplus ingredients, and make children's dinners to donate, to address food poverty within the city and then, meanwhile, three floors up, you have a shipping company dealing globally with transport and communications and a lot of emissions!

Also waste!

As I've written before: It's dizzying, how these things coexist in one space, that is even designated to do that somehow. It also of course enables contact, so maybe it makes good constellations of things more likely to happen than people working on their different projects all over the space, I don't know? Might be very positive in that sense as well, that things that don't necessarily belong together are in the same place together. You have neighbours that you meet, in the best case, and talk to. Yeah, but also that seems very... curious.

I think also maybe in terms of your question about a curatorial motive for this, I'm always drawn to Dora Garcia documenting the Joycean society – this group of people returning to the same text over and over and for a work where you have sat and sat with this book, I feel like, oh yeah we could do this April every year and it would mean something differently

So I think it felt very fitting to just say 'Let's take time with this one work.'

What I also thought a lot about in this context is how to interact with the people who are in here. Because, right now I am not interacting at all really. We said 'Hi' to the security guard, but I was trying to imagine the other side of this how someone who is working here might feel about another thing to look at here.

on exhibition

Yes. It's almost... I'd feel overwhelmed, I think, with all these offers of stuff to do and it's almost like if you decide to just go home after work, it's as if you're missing out on something

You mean the provision of facilities that might be uhm part of what makes an attractive workspace are the things that actually demand more time of you – to attend the gym, to attend the exhibition opening...

I think this is partly, where my confusion lies in this context is that it's a semipublic space. People come to attend meetings and technically anybody could come into the foyer and look at the rescued office plants and an architectural model that is always there anyway.

But no-one does who isn't coming here anyway. It's all projections because I'm not working here and I don't know anyone working here, and I don't know – maybe it's perfectly fun to go and look at something after work. I don't know, but it's just – it's all someone else saying what to do.

And that's also how I felt about going into the offices and asking people to reproduce it, or look at it. It's like:

They're busy enough.

Yes, they're busy enough, and I have no idea what they might want.

Uh hm. Hm.

Yeah so I think going down to the basement is not only – I'm not trying to hide from what's going on here.

No. But we're paralleling it.

Yes. Stacking it!

Physically, stacking the paper and stacking up the work. Yeah. But then there's also a question about how this is public or not, but maybe that's available to a public that is not confined to the walls of Skypark.

Qu-ay. Yeah. Quaytman. I read a lot of interviews. So, um, she says, 'Art wouldn't be art if there were only one; then it would be an idol', which made me worry about this, this book! 'I work in opposition to the idea of one, even though at times it does feel like the long goodbye to the one and the best is a satisfying chord to play. The problem is how to live with art at all. I'm attracted to the idea of putting art away in storage almost more than living with it.'

Does she say she wants to put it away?!

Yes! She is attracted to the idea of putting art away in storage.



I mean that's the other thing – opinions can change...

Yes!

...and also the good thing about not having a bunch of collectors and institutions behind you wanting something from you is that you can also take this work again and look at it again, or I can even now draw on it – it's like just up to me what I do with it, you know. If I don't like it anymore, I don't have to keep it. That's something that doesn't work as soon as it goes public in a way. If you publish a book...

But sometimes you can even!

Twitter.

Yeah I went to the roundtable about the Janice Kerbel 'Sink' performance and subsequent exhibition, and somebody who was presenting at that had picked up on the slight grammatical changes around even the titling of the exhibition whether there was an exclamation mark or not, and whether it was caps or not. Yeah, in that conversation we were actually talking about the moment of sinking or something slipping through, how there's this slipperiness to the work that can actually seem really regimented – for the artist to remain unsettled and still be processing those decisions and making those changes. And ultimately there's a moment of print or publication – a moment of being public that a decision is made. But I think about this, retitling works in retrospect, where I'm not happy with the title.

Of course, yeah.

But to have realised that is – a relief!

I like that about photography though, that it is a sort of membrane so you – or that's how I'd like to think of it at least – it's always these bits and pieces that are sensitive to something, and some need very tiny timeframes and some need a bit larger timeframes to record something on it, but then it's got the amazing flexibility – like if you have a negative you can make prints of it; you can make it bigger; you can make it smaller; you can burn it; you can – this is paper after all – I can print on it. It is recording something on the backside as well. I took notes on it. You can see my nail polish on it sometimes. It's these – they are like little pieces of things that record stuff.

Uh-hm. But there's also, I think in this work, I wrote about being entangled in this moment of production – like, although you can change those things, the photographic process itself – the solution is active and then...

Fixed.

Fixed yeah.

That's true, yeah. It's funny by the way that cyanotypes seem to change very differently – to age very differently to silver photography. So they are a lot more resistant to changes over time, and you are even able to restore them a lot easier than the fancy prints that darkrooms produce now. Yeah!

So thinking about where the boundaries are in terms of imposing a current context of not exhibition, but seeing it here, what did you say in your email?

Was it that the body part that turns blue?

Oh yeah, oh you were talking about the literary space of the basement in relation to ‘catacombs and basements – literal and metaphorical space for counter-stories and parallel histories. Out of sight people hide, store, survive, become invisible, keep secrets there. This is where resistance operates from.’ And I wanted to pick up on that in relation to the closet drama as well – as being this literary form where – women used it more frequently and it could also become quite politicised because its circulation was determined by – not open to an unknown public, but would be distributed.

Passed on from one...

Yeah! Like Anna Atkins and her cyanotype books – the particular subscription.

Yeah, I went home that day when we met and spoke about why the basement and I didn’t really know why.

And was afraid all the time that I just chose it because...

...of the nostalgia.

Yeah, it’s just so nice and still here. Everywhere else there is just so many things going on. But I came home and remembered Alexander Kluge again.

Aha.

Who works in very fragmentary montage techniques and if you look at his books, which is a vast collection of tiny stories or particles of narration, he always places a lot in basements and under the

earth. I don't know, it might just even be people going to smoke somewhere because they're not allowed in their designated work area to go and smoke for example. Or people publishing, in Nazi Germany, from out of their – and all of these things and then suddenly it made sense to operate from this basement.

I think there's two things as well – it's a basement and those associations with being undercover and underground, albeit with a view the motorway, but I think there's this secondary factor to where we are here where it has this – yeah, we're in a place of transition and there's a kind of potential and there's this disruption to what everywhere else feels very plastic – but not in the elastic-plastic sense – plastic very literally.

Yeah, the superficiality is broken up here.

Yeah, we can literally see the supply of the ventilation and lighting and plumbing and even the – like you said the sort of skeleton of how those things are packed away.

Yes. It's also at the same time very much a room that refuses to work any more.

Yeah.

Isn't it?

Full of scaffold. But I think also that's what prevents it from being it's not a ruin. Like, we're not using this space with a kind of fetishism for that. Oh no, it's just halted production at the moment, and it's on pause. It will be occupied again so I think it's – that's why it's okay for us to inhabit that moment in it.

Yeah that's important.

Yeah. I mean that's really nice. We can get a photo of this afterwards.

Yeah we should.

Umm okay so systems of exposed ventilation and again sort of this obvious literary metaphor for the body as well so in terms of my biological response – and you are talking about the paper as a membrane – I said there is something about taking the skin into the sun, and the melanin, how our skin changes to exposure, but this is a familiar process to us, and yet here we get this almost abhorrent blue colour. – although it takes from the sky it is also – I don't know, I'm always like – cyanotypes, made with iron, why can it not have like a copper colour and be the kind of – this sienna?

A warm colour.

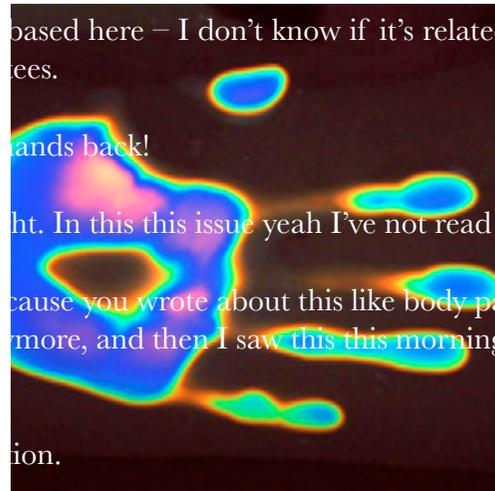
Yeah. And then I was thinking I guess about blood circulation and iron content in your blood, and your extremities, and being in the basement.

Yes this indicates – blue is a symptom of things being cut off and this is somehow also tying into your extended withdrawal of the book from the library

and turning it blue in this process. It takes on a slightly more sinister tone but in all that the basement also felt fitting to be like, 'Let's diagnose what's the problem here with the airways that's turning things blue.'

Yeah, then take the block away and make it...

Yeah.



This is not really fixed by the way - I didn't wash it properly. I can see it now. It will change a bit being exposed now.

Oh! How can you tell it's not washed properly?

It's a bit yellow, can you see that?

Yeah!

This is very beautiful... This is Edinburgh Castle in the fog.

Ha. This is your projection, yeah, you can think that if you like.

Haha.

The text came out really good here!

Yeah, and I'm still thinking whether there may be a second part after this conversation that might take into account a certain visibility as well, or interactivity with other persons in this space. But we'll see.

Yeah. Hm. I do think there's – not that these things need tying up neatly, but having been withdrawn from the library, I kind of feel like there is – that the work is asking to be donated into something.

Mmm. You mean remain as a whole and –

Yeah but maybe as a digital scan into something or – I don't know. Not that this – I think that this is an object, and is an artwork.

It's also that I could only do – make this work because the book had been somehow put into a place that I had access to. Well, that sounds a bit cheesy but like having finished this with the help of so many other borrowed things it might also feel appropriate to make it available again.

Yes! I guess that's what I mean – enter this into circulation of some sort, and I don't think that's quite what we're doing here...

Although this is like – I feel like this is another process of transferral or something.
This I love – this painting!

Ja.

Lifting from things historically – or letting bits... Do you think you –
is it that you
should email her? Or not.

That's what I'm not sure about. Like what's the point? Do I want her
approval? If she says she hates it then... what do I do?

Ha. That kind of ruins the work forever.

Yeah, and I don't want it to become a fan thing...

Yeah.

...too much.

Well I feel like this is the object speaking to the object of the book and yeah, it
complicates it to be you speaking directly to her. Having said that, I think, it's
always nice to know when somebody has thought about your work.

Yeah, it is! For sure. I thought maybe at some point there will be a fitting
opportunity for it. Or if it gets exhibited somewhere I could just invite
her. But to just let her know seems a bit pointless.

Yeah.

[2:15:13]

