

Recreating the Conditions for *Long Film For Ambient Light* (Anthony McCall)

12 noon Friday 16 March - 12 noon Saturday 17 March, 2007.

Teaching and Learning Cinema (Lucas Ihlein and Louise Curham)

<http://teachingandlearningcinema.org>

Interview 01: Friday 16 March, 2007, 1400h

Lucas and Anne Walton

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Lucas ...so I've got all these questions here – we're just learning as we go but Lizzie gave us a little lesson in how to do these kind of things, so pretty much what we're interested in is, as specifically as possible, what kind of experiences you've had as told in your own way, without too much kind of shaping by us - but if you feel like breaking that up into something, like some of the questions could be like, 'describe what you felt or what you thought as you first came into the room' and then tell a story from there. If that's what you – if that comes to mind easily?

Anne Yep, and if it doesn't you'll prime me with some more questions?

Lucas Yeah, and maybe look at what you've written down there.

Anne Right, so – but you've got a number of questions there.

Lucas There are other ones there.

Anne But that's the first one?

Lucas Yeah, that might be enough.

Anne There'll probably be a few errs and ums in this.

Lucas That doesn't matter.

Anne Well actually what I, I wrote – I think the first thing I wrote was, ('arising?'), and I put that under 'feelings' – I have trouble with distinguishing between feelings and sensations, that's a tricky distinction; but yeah just a lift I'd say, when I walked in, because of the space and...

Lucas What do you mean by 'lift'?

Anne Oh just a – it may just be something as simple as the height, the amplitude of this space but it's – I guess I just mean something in me you know, responded to the height, so a feeling of you know, wanting to meet that somehow I guess, wanting to rise to the occasion, and it's just – it's really vaulting, yeah I couldn't help but, you just can't - I couldn't help but feel that as soon as I walked in. And I suppose that's a bit cathedral-like. And, and I also felt a kind of smoothness, that I was entering into something very smooth. And that, I think – I don't know if you want me to sort of try and work out where that came from, but the light has something to do with it, and the, all the grey tones in this place. And of course the relative emptiness of it, apart from – it sort of had a slightly clinical feel I suppose

when you walked through, because I very quickly noticed the apparatus, not that there's much but there's you know, three tripods and a fan and they're metal and, you know they just seem to set some kind of a stage and then I couldn't help noticing the curtains, and you know, some notion of 'theatre' - although realising pretty quickly they were just here and probably aren't intended to (inflect?) the space. Also I think I really quickly felt myself inside a structure – that's a really dumb thing to say because it is you know so overtly a structure with all these strong linear elements and, but I guess you know, as far as this being an event that's - somehow they're woven together, the physical structure and the structure that you, you know that this event is...

Lucas The time-frame work?

Anne Yeah, yeah, something...

Lucas Like the way this room is a space framework?

Anne Yep, it resonates you know? It seems to really resonate with the notion of intervals and spaces and – it's a kind of, it's a very beautifully carved space, carved and carved-up space, there's lots of repetition going on in it, of things across surfaces and – what else do you want? And I think you might have seen me quickly notice, I mean there are some nice little ruptures that I noticed – you know like the, I quickly noticed those pencil marks, graphite marks on the wall and I wondered, 'how did they get there?' they're up that high and it just, it really caught my attention quickly.

Lucas Just because there's so little other stimulus, I guess.

Anne And because it seems very hand – you know, inscribed by the hand or by some kind of - I don't know, I guess I straight away thought of people who'd been working or maybe doing some kind of measuring or, when it was, this space was set up the way it has been with all these concrete sections, and it's because it's, it was, it's sort of in relation to the blurb on the wall too, I couldn't help but notice it. It's that sense a lot of the time of things jumping, just – I wanted to attend to all the little detail and then I started to feel sad that I can't stay long enough to really comb the joint, even though at first glance you know you think, 'well there's not much to look at here', but when there isn't much perhaps that's been put here I start to want to look at, 'well what's here already?' Like I, the recessed, all the little dotted recesses...

Lucas In the concrete?

Anne Yeah in the concrete - I'm not sure what purpose they serve it's something to do with the making of those...

Lucas (inaudible) the moulding of the concrete panels...

Anne Yeah. It's almost like a, it's like a musical score or something, it's like – and, and how – anyway I'm sort of – I feel like now I'm looking at very formal stuff when you're really more interested in the feelings and stuff.

Lucas Well you're interpreting, that's fine, do that, but as long as you maybe keep that in mind when you keep on going on your formal interpretive spiel, see if you can wind your feelings into it in some way – like how it is you came to that. Because I think we jump immediately into that kind of formalist interpretation, right...

Anne And description.

Lucas But we got there through things like vision and pulses of sound and air temperature and all those kinds of things that we then discard as we, as soon as we've used them to come to a conclusion or something, so I guess part of what we're interested in is those things as well, not even as instrumental things just as kind of – because we think you know maybe they'll be useful in some way to talk about the nature of this work, because there's not really much else to talk about. I don't know...

Anne I quickly felt some kind of a longing to, to be here – you know for much longer. I think I've already said that.

Lucas I like the use of the word 'longing' in that way.

Anne Yeah - what?

Lucas Well because it's a long film and you wanted to be here longer, so you were longing.

Anne Yes it's a long film and I'm only here for a, the sort of...

Lucas Tropfest version.

Anne ...just a quick glimpse. So yeah I feel regretful.

Lucas Do you have a sense that something else might have happened for you if you'd stayed, if you were able to stay longer?

Anne Yeah.

Lucas What do you imagine?

Anne I imagine some of the initial romance and those positive feelings would start to be challenged. But I mean if I'd set myself I guess the goal of staying for the 24 hours I think it would have been, it would be challenging. I started wondering about you know – I guess there's no rules but whether there'll be lots of conversations will happen, you know is it a social space? Or is it more of a you know, each person going inwards more, more of a meditative space, and what determines that? What will determine that? Because conversation can be a great way of passing the time.

Lucas Sure, as it would if we brought in a carton of beer.

Anne Are you going to do that?

Lucas No. But - yeah or if we put in, you know played the radio or something – I mean there is no rule, but – and I think other people being in the space is very much a part of it so conversations are definitely you know, not discouraged.

Anne No well you can't really, can you?

Lucas And I think the work runs the risk, that's – it makes itself vulnerable to being used in ways that people want to use it, whether that - maybe two of our punters show up at the same time who haven't seen each other for ages and they just gab on for the whole time and then leave, but that's a kind of valid experience as well. But perhaps the spirit of the work is something different from that, it's much more about – well I don't know, what do you think it's about? Attending to the subtle changes in light and in our own kind of mental headspace or something, isn't it? Over that time?

Anne Yeah I was going to say something about attending – yeah that's right, and that does make it a bit like meditation because it could be that all those things I said earlier about you know, noticing this and that, and that's about looking for distraction.

Lucas A bit...

Anne Perhaps.

Lucas Yes it is but it's also you know, it's like you doing a scan of available stimuli in order to then settle or something.

Anne Yep, yep, I mean maybe because – I said to Louise maybe because you've introduced the pencils and the paper and invited the kind of you know personal observations about one's feeling state to be made, I can't, I just can't help, I just start you know, almost starting to turn to writing and I want, I feel as though if I stayed here longer I'd probably want to do a lot of writing and just write from, as much as possible from a state of relative emptiness.

Lucas Like about something coming from this moment?

Anne Yeah.

Lucas Rather than useful writing.

Anne No not useful writing but just a sort of flowing writing I guess – how are we going?

Lucas It's two minutes to two.

Anne Do you want to ask me some more specific questions? I mean it's a bit of a ramble isn't it?

Lucas Not really, I think that's...

Anne I'll just say, the light bulb is – what does it make me feel? It's kind of – the light bulb is this – I don't know I mean that's just me analysing a thing in the space again but, it's – it is very electric, it's very, the 'thing-ness' of it is for me very strong.

Lucas It's very, it's a generic light bulb isn't it?

Anne It's a generic light bulb but it's a very sharp point in the centre of the space and I feel a bit scared of it.

Lucas We frosted the windows but we haven't got a frosted light bulb have we?

Anne Did you think about that?

Lucas We just took what they gave us but I liked it.

Anne No I think it's great that it's like that, it's really crackling.

Lucas You can really see the pulse of electricity going through it.

Anne That's right, and maybe it's much more of a reminder of something you know, a flow?

Lucas Yep, well cause it's like electrons running through a wire which makes more sense to us than how a fluorescent bulb works, perhaps, which is something a bit more mysterious.

Anne You mean those tube lights?

Lucas Yeah, the gas and stuff.

Anne Yeah.

Lucas What about the other, the two elements that (recall?) – you know part of the score of this piece is the frosted windows, the statement and the time drawing on the wall. Now those two other elements, did they affect you in any way? Did reading and looking at those things do anything, or...?

Anne Yeah, oh look I just feel like, what they did for me was to make me feel supported, I guess, in being here. Or maybe I just mean, maybe it's just another factor of structure.

Lucas What do you mean by 'supported'?

Anne Well, it's a kind of explanation – you know, it helps to frame the experience for me and give – I wouldn't say, it's not clues, it reinforces – particularly the long scroll with all the time intervals, it's like it's preparing, somehow preparatory for you know my time here and...

Lucas I think it takes the pressure off, like when you say it ‘supports’ you it takes the pressure off trying to come up with some sort of – you know like when you see art, you know the whole thing about whether you get it or not?

Anne Yeah.

Lucas Otherwise this work could be seen as a very kind of tricky avant garde gesture, couldn’t it?

Anne Sure, and I imagine for some people it still will be that, with what’s here. But I guess because I’ve got a bit of preconception about it, a bit of information beforehand, that I, that’s the way it affects me.

Lucas I guess that’s partly the reason we wanted to actually stage this, because we had a sense from McCall’s writing that this piece wasn’t just a stunt, it wasn’t just an art world stunt you know like Yves Klein or Manzoni or someone, it was like serious, that we wanted to test out this thing about attention span and stuff. I’d be interested to maybe talk to you again in another week or even when you get back from your (drive?), you know because it says in the statement about this mental residue thing, about sometimes having an experience even if it’s short affects what happens in the next couple of days, you know like it might stay with you or it might affect the way that you have your weekend, and it would be interesting to know...

Anne Well I know, though.

Lucas ...because what he does on that time scroll is he has, like he carves out today’s section in his cycle, which involves yesterday, the day before, tomorrow, the day after - like going on forever basically, so it’s just this little slot of time, and so even 24 hours is too short in one sense but what that means is that when this finishes you’re, like you’re on your own, and what happens next? And so it would be interesting to see if – yeah.

Anne It’s quite Zen in that sense then, isn’t it?

Lucas Well I think so, yeah.

Anne Very Zen, just attending to the present moment.

Lucas Yeah.

Anne Well I guess yeah I can imagine having been I’m going to go away and you know it’s almost like I’m taking it with me, my consciousness of this slice of time in this space that has been carved out and it’s here, and I don’t know I entered it for a brief moment – it’s almost like a stream or something, you know? I dip my toe into a stream and then I go away – I know the stream’s there I know others are going to come to the spot that’s sort of been carved out for actually getting right into it or whatever, you know, amount of immersion you can have. It’s a bit daggy, perhaps.

Lucas No more daggy than our ‘feelings, sensations and thoughts’ schema.

Anne I might just add, just for the record – it's a long record so far – a little while ago Louise commented on, she was really struck by the austerity of this and I thought, I said, 'yes' - although for me austerity has a harshness about it which I don't feel, yet. But perhaps in 23 hours if I was still here I might but for me there was actually more of a, just to contrast that with more of a sense of generosity in this space that I feel.

Lucas And I - well for me also that harshness may be affected by the way the room is inhabited by the people who are here, you know I think it will become less austere because people's stuff will start to kind of, will grow in here you know, and we'll be sleeping and stuff, and...

Anne Yeah I hadn't thought about that – yeah, of course.

Lucas There may be a moment when we don't worry too much about keeping it tidy any more.

Anne Yep, I can well imagine that will be the case with you guys. I'm very glad to see it at this time, when it's so pristine and unsoiled by human...

Lucas Habitation?

Anne ...habitation. I'm glad all the food's outside.

Lucas You should go and...

Anne Yeah I know because I don't want to be booked.

(END OF RECORDING)