

**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 02: Friday 16 March, 2007, 1440h

**Louise & Lucas**

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Louise            So my first wondering is whether McCall was having a joke with the light, and whether it's the 'ideas warehouse', the light coming on.

Lucas            The light bulb.

Louise            And I liked the thing I read, one of the recent comments, the recent articles spoke about him having this very Protestant austerity in these pieces, I think it was the one reviewing his downward-projection piece, in (inaudible)...

Lucas            The recent one.

Louise            Yep and I find that really interesting because that's part of my heritage, that kind of internal Methodism; and I think he was quite, I get this impression that McCall has an interest in making the activities of his art practice somehow some development of his life, you know, some actual kind of Methodism, and I find that, I'm really interested in that, so you sort of put yourself through these paces that develop qualities in yourself that would benefit from development. So for you and I making this piece, or staging this, eventually all the little details will be taken care of and we'll just be sitting here for a little while.

Lucas            Well in a way you know, because this morning was a bit crazy, it was like life normally really, racing around, setting things up, getting things ready – not really being present in time very much, and in fact although I was here at twelve noon and started the timer, in a way the film started whether we were ready for it or not.

Louise            That's right.

Lucas            In a way it didn't really need us to be here to start because it just...

Louise            It just started.

Lucas            ...the time clicked around and, and it started. But we didn't really start attending to it until we'd kind of finished doing all those jobs.

Louise            No but I had the same sense as you and I didn't mind that - I was wondering if I should rush down here with the notes on duration so that they were here for 12 o'clock, and I thought, 'no actually it's already begun', we've done all the attentiveness to, to allocating this span, and for me and my relationship to cinema one of the big things about cinema is that what you do is you set aside – it's just that thing about the event, you set aside that block of time in which that's what's going to take

place; that's the difference for me between watching something on DVD and going to see a movie.

Lucas            Oh yeah that's interesting because the movie will start whether you get there or not.

Louise           Yeah.

Lucas           Whereas the DVD relies on you deciding to sit down and – I also find that it's much harder to sit there and watch a DVD because you have, in pressing 'play' you essentially, you're inside your house where you have all your other distractions and you're choosing to clear them all away for a short period of time - it's not easy to do, it's much easier to go somewhere and have, and pay someone to do that for you.

Louise           I also find with things that are difficult to watch I won't persist because it's, if it's hard...

Lucas           Oh because you have the choice to turn it off if you want to.

Louise           Yeah, yeah so I'll turn it off, so...

Lucas           But in the cinema not.

Louise           No so I had that experience really, really clearly with the first ever Chantal Akerman film I saw which was the one about the telephone ringing, and the whole film was about this woman waiting for the phone to ring, and it's pretty much just a wide shot in her room, waiting for the phone to ring. And at the time I found it the most intensely excruciating experience of my life but it was also one of the most rich experiences I've had, because I chose to continue with it and it has always resonated with me, because it was basically a somatic experience, it was in my body, you know? It was my own experience of that you know, extended duration thing. And it's really interesting because that book, that Dominique (Nogay?) book that I photocopied yesterday, that '(Eloge du?) Cinema', her analysis of experimental film is really different from the American and the English language analyses, because she talks about cinema's duration, she talks about expanded cinema and those chapters actually follow each other so she's, there's a whole different way of thinking about this stuff that we, that my training, my film you know, film analysis doesn't kind of bring, and I think something about that whole business, I kind of need the event, you know? And I think that in terms of (straight cinema's?), like it's really - and I think it's becoming increasingly pertinent, this business about the shared communication. But this is interesting because our whole, the whole concept is that the shared communication has got to be really dispersed, but what's going to happen I reckon is that we're going to be really, really, really clearly remembering the events that have happened, you know the things that take place, the conversations that take place, because there's not going to be a whole condensed hour and a half's worth of tight...

Lucas           Yeah.

Louise I can really feel myself pitching myself against the time span, and I (don't really know if I like that?).

Lucas What do you mean 'pitching yourself'?

Louise Oh it's sort of, you know I'm kind of stretching out my areas of interest so that I'll kind of engage with that 24 hour span, I've sort of got this sense that I'm setting my activity scope, cause I often seem to, it's showing me that I often seem to be sort of mentally programming myself around the activities that I have to do in the next hour or the next half hour, or – you know whatever the next activity is I'm sort of plotting it against the time, the available time.

Lucas So time becomes your enemy, or at least someone, like someone you have to negotiate with rather than someone who's a friend.

Louise It's interesting, (because my step mother?) said that to me before. So what about you? What's happening?

Lucas I feel quite relaxed because, probably because I know that I've got nothing that I have to do until tomorrow lunch time, so I'm quite happy to just be here.

Louise It's nice isn't it?

Lucas You know, that thing that John Cage said in that lecture on nothing is always really important for me.

Louise What's that?

Lucas He said, 'it's not irritating to be where you are, it is only irritating to feel that one would like to be somewhere else'.

Louise Mm.

Lucas And you know I guess it's just a structural thing, you plan to not have any other engagements in this period and therefore we just really are here and whatever happens happens. You know we've set everything up, we've got all our documentation equipment and we've got some sketchy process for chatting with people about what happens, and you know I think it's all going to be – it's all in hand.

Louise Mm.

Lucas So there's really nothing to worry about.

Louise No, I'm not so sure that it's worry that I'm evincing but it's – yeah it's really, it's a very – it's kind of - it's like public transport; one of the things I love about catching the train is that your time is accounted for.

Lucas Yep, you hand yourself over to the...

Louise            Yeah and I just love that, I love that sense of not have – that’s my favourite thing about travel is the transit, because there are no demands on you in that role of passenger, all you do is just sit there and I find it the most free time, so many good things I’ve, I’ve found myself doing in that - you know sort of little drawings and little writings and I always feel really – it’s a really free headspace. Especially that Melbourne Sydney trip.

Lucas            Yeah.

Louise            (They’re very nice?), it’s kind of like one big train trip which is why I would really like to not have to actually – I’d kind of be quite happy if, if really we don’t have many visitors.

Lucas            Yeah I was thinking about that, like say if – because McCall’s you know, he’s a big international art star, he could have been invited by the MCA to come to Sydney and do Long Film for Ambient Light there and imagine like how there would be so many people coming and going, it would make it a bit more challenging; I don’t think it would make it any less valid, I mean it’s still within the scope of the work, there’s no prescription as to how many people are allowed to come and go but it would definitely make it a bit more difficult, perhaps.

Louise            I really would love for them to do that, because it would be extraordinary to experience that after the experience that I anticipate that we’re going to have; you know that we’re currently, right now, that we’re having.

Lucas            And perhaps rather than considering the stream of visitors to be a distraction, you know, maybe they are the film.

Louise            Well they are.

Lucas            Like, as we sit here and they walk in and they come and they talk to you and that’s, that is the thing.

Louise            Well the thing – the way I see it is, it’s like music, you know? My whole conception of that whole business of really what contemporary music is all about, it’s all about just creating a space and making people pay attention to it, and it’s really just about creating a space in time and then you know people have various levels of skill in inserting events into that space and various ways in which they arrange them, and you know they happen to be directed towards, you know your focus is meant to be on your ears but it’s kind of – I don’t really, I think for most people it’s – I suppose for some people they really are tuned to what that experience of listening is all about, so I kind of feel like whatever, anything that - yeah I agree, it totally is the work. I mean for me whatever happens in this 24 hours - so part of my actions list in this 24 hours is that you know I spent the first half an hour upstairs in the photocopy room and coming up and, walking up and down the stairs and talking with (Tallulah?) about the tea cups and you know sort of – you know that’s my first part of the event if you like, and in a way it’s a model that I really, it’s a whole way of thinking, you know me trying to contain my life and my day job and all that stuff, (a lot of that?) ways of thinking about that has been to just be thinking about it in a continuous space, but somehow it hasn’t really worked very well for me - I don’t really know why but I

like the idea of that kind of continuity, you know that you're not trying to put markers around your life and say, 'this bit is about that, this bit is about this'. And you know this particular moment that's happening now, where we've got this real softness, right? It's beautiful.

Lucas            I think when we record we should start each recording with the time.

Louise           That's a good idea.

Lucas            What's the time now?

Louise           I don't know. There, it is 20 to 3.

**(end of recording)**