



Gallery: MOSTYN

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In series: Glitch

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On Collaboration

As we hurtle towards the Test Risk Change Conference tomorrow, I'm determined to post at least one of the final blogs/evaluation that myself and some of the young people I've worked with at MOSTYN & West Rhyl Young People's Project over the past 3 years have talked about together.



This first one is with Peter Slania and our work together on the & : *On Collaboration* show at MOSTYN in 2015. It marked a turning point for us within MOSTYN's *Circuit* programme and built a strong foundation for me to support him out with *Circuit*, specifically as a mentor for his application and portfolio preparation to CSM, Goldsmiths, Chelsea, and a recent BA interview at Slade.

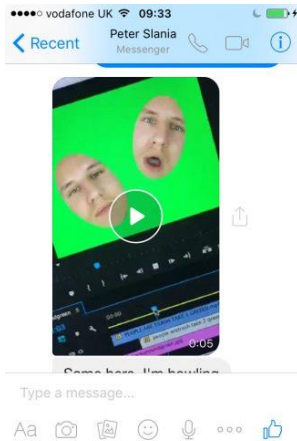
When Peter first asked me collaborate, he had no idea I was recovering from a serious illness and that exhibiting was the last thing on my mind. I was flattered, of course, but absolutely resisted 'finding' a piece of work that would fit nicely into his brief. In fact, I wasn't sure 'why' I would want to select a random non-site-specific work to fit

into the show. I really did not want to do it. But, because I'd worked with him on various projects at MOSTYN before, I knew how serious he was about making his work, how hard he would apply himself towards that end and how keen he was to learn everything he could about contemporary art practice. And Peter is nothing if not persistent. I eventually agreed, but only on one condition – I was absolutely not going to be in the arts facilitator role he knew me in at the gallery – it had to be a collaboration based on equality – one artist directly engaging with another artist. Peter agreed, unaware that it would be quite so tough and so rigorous I imagine. But we found our own way through it, using FaceTime to begin a dialogue until I was well enough for him to come to my studio.



FaceTime On Collaboration ©Jan_Miller_2015

And that's when my own learning unexpectedly began. Putting together work into timeline over a 25-year period was no easy reflection. I retraced my experimental Super 8 & sound installation steps from the late 80's & 90's, unearthed large projected, multi-screen pieces, colour-filled visual poems that I'd all but forgotten. It made me re-examine work I thought would, literally, never see the light again. And, by that action, I could see that I still had the same creative instincts, only now using different forms; there were the same themes, the same obsession with language, gender and class; the same response to landscape and light. I just did it differently. And I thought perhaps that the images would hold only a personal relevance, that they were very much "past", my hidden history, work I was proud of but which I imagined held little relevance in the digital age, even for me. But I was completely wrong. In uncovering my own personal arc of thought and time, then viewing it through a younger artist's eyes, Peter enabled me to see my work from a completely fresh, and quite radically differing, viewpoint. He made me look anew at so many aspects of the work that I took for granted. A private retrospective, but that was enough. And so began our collaboration, "People are Trash/You Talk, I Listen".



People Are Trash/You Talk, I Listen © Peter_Slania_Jan_Miller 2015

Peter wanted to make the video and I wanted to use a sound piece made during the 2015 eclipse as a time-based material underpinning the work. There were risks as we went along; originally he had wanted to make an installation but that wasn't possible in the show. He had to re-think the video within that context. And, since so much trust had been established by then, the final risk I feel I took was that I wouldn't see the video images until the opening. On the night, that was absolutely a risk worth taking – except that the sound was turned down a bit too low for my liking... but I think I always knew that might be the case and only enhanced the idea of 'eclipse' for me. Here's Peter's statement on the piece...

'People Are Trash/You Talk, I Listen'

04:19 video/performance/audio

This collaborative piece with artist Jan Miller was made for '*&: On Collaboration*' at MOSTYN in 2015. During visits to her studio, myself and Miller explored our differing backgrounds, conceptual ideas and image-making from 2 generational viewpoints; me as a young artist on Foundation and Miller as an experienced, lead artist on the Tate *Circuit* programme. We quickly developed a mutual, creative trust, allowing insights into the very early and vulnerable stages of each other's practice and in much more depth than was possible during the gallery workshops.

The video itself is based around dialogue between the two heads; one 'talking trash' in Polish, while the other head mumbles in English – a visual manifestation of the inner dialogue and the conflict between the two languages that are present at all times

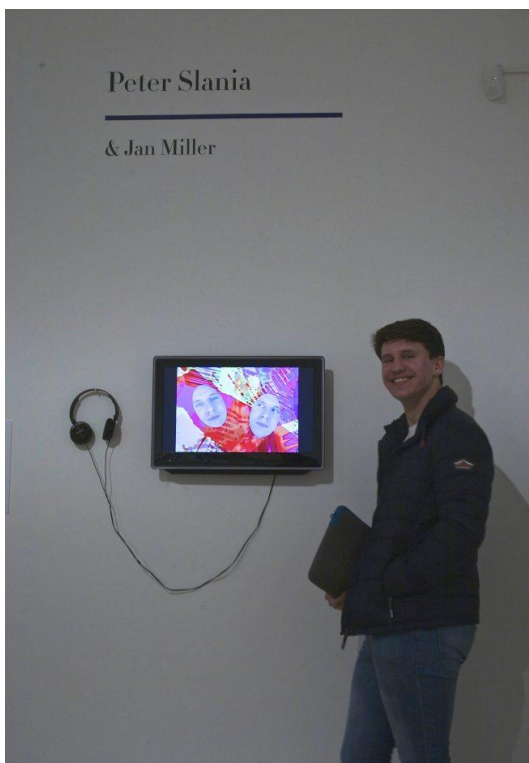
I suggested the idea of a cynical, parodic moving image piece based on the unnecessary things spoken to us by others – the "trash" we speak. Miller's soundtrack, made during the 2015 eclipse, underpins my visuals and I overlaid that with the sounds of rubbish being crunched. I used lo-tech editing techniques, such as green screen PNG and other basic techniques, to add to the effect of 'trashiness' and parody of the video.



Glitch VR Room ©Jan_Miller 2016

Further development

The video was developed into a Virtual Reality game for the 2016 GLITCH Festival in collaboration with artist technologist, Charles Gershom, as a main exhibit of the Tate-led programme at MOSTYN. The festival was organised by myself and other GLITCH members as part of the Tate *Circuit* programme which aims to engage young people in contemporary art galleries.



OnCollaboration_MOSTYN©Jan_Miller_2015

This is the first in a series of reflections by young people and artist Jan Miller at the end of the Tate Circuit/MOSTYN programme.

