

ARGUMENT
Agrestal Resource

#1.0

Just a word and a definition I want to give a this point: agrestal, a botanical adjective meaning growing wild in cultivated fields.

How do you spell that?

A-G

Like a poppy.

Yes.

A-G-R-E-S-T-A-L

Growing wild in?

Growing wild in cultivated fields.

#1.1

I was having a conversation with another artist, Anna Lucas, about how a resource sometimes has the sound of something like a box with things in it, a repository of stuff, of information.

Let me

Sorry

I have it here. The ... here: a stock or supply, a source of help or information. Yes: an action or strategy which may be adopted in adverse circumstances.

An action

or strategy which may be adopted in adverse circumstances.

Yes. From Old French dialect ressourdre: rise again, recover.

#1.2

But my interest has been something which would be like a respondent, something that you might take into an exhibition with you that would serve as a kind of respondent when you're in with a group of works and trying to build a relationship. So what it perhaps displays is less ... I wrote down a sentence on the way here: That it doesn't show teaching it shows a kind of learning.

So would you suggest that some resources show teaching? Display a kind of teaching model to teachers to use in the gallery?

Yes.

Or set out to teach?

Or set out to teach. In a way that ... Yes.

#1.3

This is a word I'm trying out. Instead of making an Evaluation I might make an Argument.

Okay.

Which I looked up, the word argument, and it has two meanings I like: a reason or set of reasons given in support of an idea; a summary of the subject matter of a book. I have a book by Flaubert with a preface, called an Argument, by this Lacfadio Hearne, a nineteenth century translator, writer, who lost the sight in one eye when he was a boy. His other eye grew really big. Really oversized from reading. And he's described in the introduction as the ideal reader of this particular novel with his massive eye, which grows with his erudition: all the references, the idiomatic language, registers on his oversized, oversensitive retina. And I wanted to have this slightly absurd image in mind, of this

fantasy eye, as I'm trying to work out my role as an artist employed to look at artist-made resources within the museum.

Right.

Well so I wanted to call what I'm making an Argument because I'm advancing a point of view and also making this summary of conversations I've had about resources that in a way could also be a preface or prelude to something else.

#1.4

I hope to speculate on what a pop-up, very responsive resource might be. Or a resource. This is the conversation I was having with Anna Lucas. She came up with this brilliant portmanteau word for a combination between a respondent and a resource: a resource. So we're aiming at an Agrestal Resource.

#1.5

Twenty minutes. Okay. Okay. Sorry, I was hoping. What time are we finishing?

Half past six.

No.

If we're going to do the questions.

Oh right.

I thought we finished the whole session at seven thirty.

Seven. Isn't it?

I thought it was seven.

I thought it was seven.

So.

So.

#1.6

Yes it's like an advantage or frailty built into the self-led resource that it doesn't always live with the thing that occasions it. That it has to be self-sufficient.

Autonomous.

The nature of a self-led resource is that it's handed over and that tends to be the last point of contact.

Yes.

So you need to see examples of how it operates?

I suppose they're slightly invisible.

Is there something essential in that disappearance? Because you're taking the artist out, there isn't that live situation in which there's contact, that this is exactly what the resource stands in for.

Yes.

Yes.

And there is an economy at work too.

Reaching larger numbers.

Yeah. It's an interesting risk and proposition, an artist-made resource, in terms of how it configures the absent artist who made it.

#1.7

So in a conventional gallery education set-up you have a group of people, a group of visitors, an artist and another artist's work.

The basic set up.

Which we might take or adopt as a principle.

#1.8

The key is the word resource. It's a resource, it's not a piece of art, it is a resource and therefore it has to be useful.

Used and useful.

Exactly.

For me, I'm coming at it with a ... For me there's a question about what's useful. I might think that provocation is important, or that a challenge is important in the context of a museum where actually there is a lot of explanation coming from a particular point of view, formed through the discipline of art history, applied to a collection of work that has been acquired according to obscure criteria. Whilst that provocation may not be useful in an obvious sense, it doesn't constitute a series of activities or Ways in.

Yes, that would assume there is an *in* to an artwork, to art. That's the wrong metaphor isn't it? I'm not ... Art doesn't have an interior. That transposes the architectural structure of the museum onto the discursive field of art, and seems to naturalise that relationship. Between art and museum. So there might actually be a polemical challenge within resource from an artist's point of view, which is absolutely to dismantle a background of usefulness based on a notion of art's interiority.

#1.9

And a resource is

A piece of art.

Yeah.

But in a context, in the purview of Learning. That the only demand I think you can make of an artist making a resource is that the *question* of their learning is displayed.

The question of their learning?

Learning as practice or learning as desire. These words. I mean how do artists learn?

#2.0

So it's definitely pushed me in different ways both in terms of how this turned out and what I'm doing now. I'm sure that wasn't their intention for it to be so influential on my practice.

But could it be? I think they did have that intention because they wanted us to begin with our practices. That came through in the first meeting. Though they couldn't necessarily have anticipated how it would turn out I think they had an appetite for something like this and you could say that almost inevitably if you're going to ask artists to work from their practices

And put two people together who have quite different practices.

... that it would in some way be reciprocal.

I guess it's interesting in a sense that ... as an artist there's a need to pay rent. There are easy ways. In some sense working individually on a traditional teacher's pack, which I have done for some galleries, where they've got a format, you know: 'We want you to choose four artworks. We want you to come up with four activities aimed at this age group and they must touch these bits of the curriculum.' I'm going away with my invoice paid and the teachers are probably happy because they're getting what they're expecting but in terms of moving me any further ...

Well you could say that's applying a skill which is derived from your practice as an artist but it's not necessarily using your practice as something active. And it is ... it should be. Well you aren't learning. So the resource is just ordering information in a fun way. Like the skill you're applying is not even from your work as an artist at all but it's about being resourceful which, let me ... Here: having the ability to find quick and clever ways to overcome difficulties.

#2.1

I think one of those questions is where the artist is. So in a conventional gallery education set-up you have a group of people, a group of visitors, an artist and then another artist's work. We were talking a bit more about the resource that's a learning resource and the resource that's a teaching resource and where the artist's practice is in relation to that. The artist, the artist who's made the resource. A theory that I'm working with at the moment within this body of transcripts I'm producing, not a new theory but something I'm just trying to hold onto, is the idea of these resources or the idea of gallery education ultimately being about artists revealing or performing something of the way they work with artworks as material, other artists' works as material. So what you're displaying, you know, what you're showing is your learning, how you grasp and grapple with other artworks. And I suppose my question, what is educational about this resource, is what's educational about that process? The teaching resource, which I would say is at the other extreme, where you might be able to take the artist's practice out altogether. A curator could write a really good resource telling you what this means

And that's what traditionally was being produced. Tate was producing that twenty or thirty years ago. A recipe to follow almost.

#2.2

I suppose when you have an artwork, an artist and a group of people and you set up an engagement, you can see it working. With a resource it's often handed out and you don't necessarily see it in operation. So it's more like asking how does it operate.

#2.3

I don't. The word interpretation. Maybe interpolation. That might be ...

Interpolation.

As an activity. It is more to do with ... With inserting something. So, okay, interpolate: Insert something of a different nature into something else. Also: interject a remark into a conversation.

I like that. Insert something.

From Latin, refurbished, altered.

And interpretation ... interpret: Explain the meaning of. Interpretation: the action of explaining the meaning of something. An explanation or way of explaining.

Right.

#2.4

From what I understand from knowing you and what I know about what you do with your work, it's very important that the artist's practice comes through, doesn't get buried.

I think that is the case.

I think it is.

I would hope that in the resources that is the case. But it is more about the artist being there but in a user friendly way because they've adopted a language that is more educational.

#2.5

Yeah. It's an interesting risk and proposition, an artist-made resource, in terms of how it configures the absent artist who made it. Both artists, really: the artist who made the resource in relation to the artist who made the work being resourced. Configuring the dynamic between those two figures, revolving around the museum, is so loaded. It becomes a question of different authorities, doesn't it? And the role of Learning, I mean the department of Learning at Tate but also more broadly, how learning as a process or movement is distributed between these authorities.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Well, I don't ... I mean, do artists employed by Tate to make resources to resource the work of artists represented in the collection have anything to display or perform of their own investment in that relationship that could be viewed as educational? Beyond the adoption of a language that is already, in advance, understood as educational? If the answer to that question is yes, and if the artist-made resource takes the form of an artwork, does this object, the resource-artwork have any peculiar properties that might do something to the integrity of the concept *artwork*? Maybe I should assert this, I mean, not as a question. I feel this trouble that the resource brings around its identity, around the movement of learning, around the figure of the artist, the artwork, art practice, in the context of the museum, that this trouble is the singular educational vitality of the artist made resource.

#2.6

It is that thing about intersections, isn't it. We're not bringing people in and putting them in a room and letting them get on with making a sculpture. It is about bringing things together and how that melding can be fruitful.

That's really the crux of it. That.

Maybe it's about the not knowing. Maybe it's allowing a space for one to go into the other in both directions.

Yeah.

Yeah

And it becomes problematic if there isn't the interest to allow that to happen to your practice. So it is just wanting to bring your artwork into Tate. That's the thing we're trying to avoid. But if actually our practice has asked questions of an artist's practice and vice versa it's created a new space.

#2.7

So

So

I've come up with this question, which I don't like. Its formulation. It's not. But ... So the question is: What is your learning desire?

Right.

As the question that an artist commissioned to make a resource for Learning at Tate can be asked. As a minimum entry into the bargain being struck, you know, between their practices and yours. That the question demands the artist's desire—I don't know how to put it—becomes embedded within this situation.

Okay.

Right.

And I've been wondering about it recently and I think that this question is already being asked. But more poignantly, I mean ... it isn't being asked outright like that because then it becomes too blunt or dulled. But I think it is being asked by your commissioning process, in the way you conduct this really extended, difficult, intricate conversation between artists, teachers, the collection, Tate, funders or sponsors and whathaveyou, curators and then also one another, within your own collaboration which you've elected over a more conventional jobshare. I remember the conversation we had at the start of this research project when you invited us to continue our involvement and laid out some areas of interest, or things that had been thrown up by the resource we made that could be pursued, and you, you know, asked us to determine how or what we wanted to be contracted for. You didn't outline a project and ask us to deliver it and you made that clear. This was a decision you made about how you wanted to conduct your own collaborative practice and at the heart of that is this constant dialogue. So you asked us to be involved in formulating the project, its language, its timescale, its scope. And I know this is risky because it doesn't have those clear outlines laid down in aims and objectives, budgets, delivery schedules and so on. It is hard to account for, to evaluate. But I think it is risky but

not at all capricious. It is a direct result of the material you're trying to work with, which can only be captured or mobilised in this way.