

SCRIPT

ART CRITS: 20 QUESTIONS – Talking About Talking About: An Introduction to Visual Art Critiques – by Giles Bunch.

SCRIPT BEGINS: (PART 1 – THE PURPOSE OF THE ART CRITIQUE)

(Narrated scene)

(Muffled voices from waiting group)

Jheni Arboine: I can't believe we're late for this crit session again.

Giles Bunch: I'm sorry Jheni, I had to stop off to get this time-keeping device

Jheni Arboine: What, a calendar? How long do you think we're going to be here?!

Crit Attendant: What time do you call this?

Jheni Arboine: Hello, we are here attending this crit

Giles Bunch: Sometimes called 'critique'

Jheni Arboine: 'seminar'

Giles Bunch: 'convenor'

Jheni Arboine: 'jury'

Giles Bunch: 'show and listen'

Jheni Arboine: 'peer review'

Giles Bunch: 'scratch'

Jheni Arboine: 'discussion'

Giles Bunch: 'dialogue'

Jheni Arboine: They're called different names, and they take on different formats but they all refer to that situation when you're developing an art work and you show it to a person or group of people so that you can receive feedback.

Giles Bunch: The discussion that develops out of these situations is an opportunity for you to learn more about your own methods.

(excerpts from crits)

Roddy Hunter: So she's considered her visual appearance as part of the image, as a performer, hasn't she?

Giles Bunch: A wider context to your practice

Luis Ignacio Rodriguez: Who was the artist that did all those Apocalypse paintings?

Attendant 2: Oh yeah, erm, John Martin?

Luis Ignacio Rodriguez: That's it yeah, do we see that there?

Giles Bunch: And also to find out more about how an audience perceives the thing that you've made, amongst many other things

Attendant 3: I see that there are sort of two main lanes going on

Roddy Hunter: How is it possible to...?

Attendant 3: OK, to me it's like a pathway

(Narrated scene)

Jheni Arboine: In this video we'll be showing a few different formats of the critique, some of the issues and problems surrounding this component of art education, and some ways of improving it. But firstly, let's find out a bit more about what the critique is, and what it can do.

(Talking Heads – facilitators and participants)

02.11

Jim Hamlyn: Crits really are discussions around an artwork

Sean Kaye: It's certainly a way where you can have a group of students together so that they can learn from each other

Jim Hamlyn: And they're an opportunity to discuss a whole range of issues, meanings, associations, references, metaphors, problems, processes and principles of fine art practice.

Bernadette Blair: It's an opportunity for a practitioner or a student to actually discuss their work, and articulate what they have done in their work to their peers, to their tutors, to others, and for then those peers and tutors to have the opportunity to input into the further development of that work.

Roddy Hunter: The main purpose of the crit is to enable an artist to gain some kind of critical distance on their work, on their emerging work, so they're able to understand the different perspectives

Alison Jones: The most important thing is for students to have the opportunity to have their work discussed so that they get a picture of how the thing they have produced is being communicated – of what other people see.

Kyla Harris: If you're not honest with yourself about what you're seeing, or if you can't be honest with yourself about what you're seeing of yourself from your work, it's helpful to have people to come and critique it to show you how it's being interpreted

Roddy Hunter: And to realise that their intention is not the thing that is primary in the work but how the work actually exists on its own terms

Kyla Harris: When you make a piece of work so much goes into the thought, and the process behind it, and doing it, that you're not objective any longer

Sean Kaye: People will have opinions about the work, and they will, at the end of the day, have to make their own mind up, from those opinions, or informed by those opinions as opposed to somebody just confirming that they are doing something and that it is 'right'

Roddy Hunter: It means that an artist will be able to make decisions about the work that they may not have been able to make on their own

Miz Nakaishi: I normally prefer critical, negative side of a feedback because it just gives me more ideas, and more potential to move on to the next thing. I can always reflect that feedback to the next artworks

05.13

Roddy Hunter: I don't think it's a process by which they should be instructed in what to do next

Arthur Watson: If somebody has had a good idea but they're not quite sure how they can physically realise it, you know, they've approached it in one way and what they are getting from their peer group is all the other ways they could have approached it. If somebody says "Well, if I was dealing with that, I would have done it this way". They may say, "Oh yeah that's quite interesting, well, I'm still not going to change it but I'll think about that".

Kyla Harris: They're useful for also evaluating what other people are doing and learning from them. So learning from the resources that people give you in terms of examples, you know, who's work they remind you of, or vice-versa

Arthur Watson: So it's not just conceptual, it's often about ways of resolving physical problems, or problems of installation, you know, "I made this thing but I'm really not quite sure what I want to do with it".

Mark Dean: And over the course of three years the way they make work might change quite a lot and so a convenor is a way of testing that out, testing different strategies of yes presenting work but also making work. And obviously it's performative and there's a cross-over there but even if you're showing paintings, you can show them in different ways, and that will condition the response you get and maybe even condition partly how you make them.

Rita Keegan: A good crit is about trying to find why you do what you do. I think it's imperative for an artist to know what they do

Mark Dean: You have to develop the language to talk about it, it's a language that is partly informed by the discourses around contemporary art, which you might, you know, you read about, you'll be exposed to in critical studies, you go to galleries, etcetera, but I think it also, must be informed by whatever it is that drove you here

Roddy Hunter: Something we talked about today was: "Are you discovering what you're interested in, through looking at your work? Are you discovering what you're exploring? Don't assume that you know what you're exploring from the outset, and the job of the work is to persuade everyone else of your intention. What are you learning about what you're doing?"

Ann Hulland: So it's a discursive moment, in a constructive forum, that helps students get closer to making the better art that they can make

08.08

(Narrated scene)

Jheni Arboine: I can't believe it, look at this

Crit cutout 1: I was more interested in the form, of the horse

Crit cutout 2: Oh, yes, it's very horsey isn't it?,

Crit cutout 1: Yes, very horsey

Jheni Arboine: We've been listening to these two guys talking about this artwork for at least 40 minutes!

Crit cut-out 1: I like the way the piece includes the viewer, in its looking, in its observing the viewer, because as you can see, the seals are looking out at the viewer

Crit cutout 2: Yes, and the horse is also looking out

Giles Bunch: I know what you mean Jheni, you could say that they are really 'riding' the discussion; one might accuse them of being 'in the saddle' a bit too long; I think the way they are dominating the discussion it's beginning to 'nag' me...

Jheni Arboine: Yes, we should boil down their hoofs to make glue!

Giles Bunch: If only we could arrange the crit differently so we could make it more useful for us

Jheni Arboine: There are many different ways of organising crits, and it's important to realise that depending how you organise it, you could get different results

Giles Bunch: Regardless of where you are, whether you are practising artist, a recent graduate, an art student, or a self trained artist, it's important to use a critique in a way that's useful for you

Jheni Arboine: In part two we'll be looking at the different models of visual art critiques, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of these.

Jheni and Giles Bunch: We'll see you then

09.43