

**Conversation with PLATFORM at The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008 – St George’s Day**

**Participants** (alphabetical order): Dan Gretton, Dave Whyte, Ewa Jasiewicz, Gabriel Anderson, Gary Anderson, James Marriott, Lena Simic, Martin LeSanto-Smith and Neal Anderson.

These are some impressions and memories of that conversation from Gary Anderson and Lena Simic:

We had two pies. Three of us cooked them together. One meat and one veggie. Then we went upstairs to The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home with our beer and wine and tea and water.

We talked about British Prime Ministers. We defaced a Damien Rochford poster (free with the Guardian newspaper), from the first prime minister Sir Robert Walpole (1721-42) to Gordon Brown. Peterloo was written over the face of the Earl of Liverpool (1812-27). The Duke of Wellington (1828-30) was blindfolded, fanged and given a nose-bleed.



All photos by Martin LeSanto-Smith.

The Institute was introduced. Dissenting the Capitalism of Culture. Formalizing the familial to stop it seeming so natural. How the Institute is funded. A base for intervention where the base itself is also part of the intervention. A disconnect between how we live and what our views might be. Engels and his relationship with Mary Burns. His insights into the close relationship of capitalism and the isolated nuclear family unit. They never married.



Domestic Labour? Labour from home. Labour at Home. Labour and Dissent.  
We spoke about how nowadays you can work from home. Should domestic labour be paid? We talked about how labour is taken away from the privileged: the labour of tidying up, washing clothes, earning money. The underprivileged get to do all the labour. Labour can be a contemplative activity. Housework: creating mental space through menial tasks. The meaning of life whilst changing a nappy. For the educated, the privileged. We have no time; we're too busy; our lives are pure pressure. Leisure is corporate. Labour is everywhere a million miles an hour. Some disagreement.

Finance capital and its operations are not understood. It moves the world and only a tiny amount of people understand it. Where are people to turn if one needs to understand the functionings of a 'hedge fund' for example? It's shocking that only the super privileged know how finance actually operates. There was a suggestion of returning to Marx.

What can the privileged do to dissent? What have we done? What should we do? There was talk of Palestine and experiences of putting white, western, middle class bodies to use as shields against Israeli fire. Israel won't shoot if there's a white body in the way. Hemmingway was mentioned - the front line is the only place to be. Motivations of activists and the impossibility of altruism. Ego always plays a part. Body Politic course (run by PLATFORM) and a session on just this theme. A speaker's struggle with privilege. Heartfelt. Real. Meaningful because it was lived.



The children came in. They wanted to tell jokes. The atmosphere changed. They said that God created everything and were asked in return if God had created everything then who created God? The answer came a little later: God did, coz he can do anything, even make himself. The children stayed for a little while and went to bed.

We noticed, as the evening and conversation wore on, that the light was fading. After a brief discussion we decided not to put the light on. We sat in increasing darkness. The photographer stopped taking pictures. We saw black smoke from across the housing estate. Thought about going over to help. We joked that the smoke signified a Vatican Council decision for a new Pope. We took this opportunity to appoint Sid, the eight month old baby, as head of research for the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home. Earlier, whilst eating our meal, we had talked about the usefulness of uselessness. We drank repeated toasts to uselessness. Once again we toasted uselessness in the dark.



We had earlier, through email and telephone conversations, talked about how this conversation would be paid for. This would be an act of financial transparency. An embodied commitment to the kinds of arts practices we would like to see funded. We wanted to intervene in the usual secretive operations of arts funding. The money was counted out. £238.09 – the month’s allowance for the Institute. This was payment for PLATFORM for the conversation we had just had. It was counted out slowly and once counted, repeated. The conversation turned to funding and financial transparency. PLATFORM decided not to take all of the money. They decided to reinvest the amount in the Institute – possibly to fund a ‘chair’ for future activity or decision-making. There was talk of how funding of the position of a chair had always been a secret ambition. The money was handed over. 9p was retained by PLATFORM for the conversation. The rest recounted and pledged back to the Institute for further activity. The cash remained in the middle of the room throughout the rest of the conversation. Nobody really wanted to touch it. You could just about make it out from the sodium street light that was shining through the open window.

Taxis were called and the conversation continued until people left.

The conversation turned to Family relations and how un/comfortable we were with our close family (parents in particular) in relation to our work. There was an insistence on the vitality of some connections with family and a counter-insistence on family relations performing a particular kind of violence on individuals. We wondered how much our parents might know/might have known about our activities. There was talk about rebellion from the family as healthy. We joked that the children will end up as bankers or corporate lawyers. There was talk of the comfort zone experienced of not having family deeply involved in projects. The Institute wondered

The conversation ended with the ring back from the taxi firm. It was time to go. As the Institute picked up the money that lay in the centre of the room we asked a final question: how should we converse in the Institute? Does it matter?