

HP_CCT_HTC_Interview_29_Sept_2017

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KEY:

Cannot decipher = (unclear + time code)

Sounds like = [s.l + time code]

I1: = Interviewer 1

I2: = Interviewer 2

R: = Respondent

CCT1, CCT2, CCT3 = Other CCT colleagues

O1, O2, O3 = Other persons connected to CCT

EC = External Consultant

I1: Interview with [R], [I1], and [I2], 29th September.

So, [R], what does the term contemporary art mean to you?

R: Oh, my goodness.

I1: I know, it's a bit of a showstopper, that one. If you want to come back to it, then fine. Off the top your head?

R: It's two o'clock in the morning, [I1]. [Laughter]. Oh God. Can I have time to think about it?

I1: Have you had any previous experience of... lets' start with the second question, and let's go back to that one, alright?

R: Yes, go on.

I1: I'm going to ask this one, okay. So, can you reflect on the experience of the commissioning process, so far? So, that is writing the artists brief, the site visits and the initial invitation, how we got to artists. If you can cast your mind back, have you got anything that you can reflect upon?

R: I think, once we had got our head around the brief, it was fairly easy at first to determine what we wanted from it. I think, we thought it would be a battle, I think it's fair to say, because we are a very specific site. We are very different to the other sites. It wasn't. It was easy to negotiate that added element of really making sure that the community were engaged, and its co-collaborated. It was easy for us, we thought it would be different.

I1: In what way?

R: I thought it would be quite prescriptive. You have an artist, and this is what the artist will do. Yes, it will be site specific, but you won't really have any kind of say in how that works. No, it was a pleasant experience [laughter]. Which was good. Actually, [CCT1] and I had many conversations, about we would be quite nervous, if we say this. Actually, it was fine. I think, we could have that open and honest dialogue which actually meant that when we came to write the brief, we felt confident to say, we need this, this and this. If that makes senses.

I1: Yes. So, [over speaking 0:02:28]. So, you felt we were going to tell you what to do?

R: Yes. I, personally, and with [CCT1], yes, we did. I don't think we knew what to expect. It's new for the Trust, and for us. It's very new. It's a very different process. I think, because I hadn't been engaged in the early conversations, because it had been someone else. I think, some stuff can get lost in translation. It's good to have that continuity all the way through.

I1: That's good. So, you felt that the artist's brief reflected –

R: Totally.

I1: – the Holy Trinity [over speaking 0:03:05]?

R: What we needed from it, so it would fit into not only our delivery plan, but our vision for the space. That big ask of involving the community in co-collaboration and co-creation. Which is a huge part of where we need to go. So, for us [I1], it's perfect because it gives us evidence that we can have contemporary art in the space. That we can tell stories in a completely different way. I think, it's going to be a bit of a step change for the Trust. It's exciting. It's good to be part of it. So, yes...

I1: What about the site visits? You remember how we got to the artists, we got that big list. What about the site visits?

R: I thought the site visit was really useful. It gave us a good feel for the artist, and who might be good to work with. Who we might take a bit more time and understanding, to get to know where we were at. I thought it was good. It was good to see their reaction to the space, because I'm not entirely sure that they got how beautiful, but unique it is. How maybe cut-off it is, as well. It was super important to get them there, so they could see the challenges of the space and the area. Definitely. I thought it was really good, really beneficial.

I1: We didn't have a lot of time. They did seem to...

R: We didn't have a lot of time because we did a tour. [CCT1] and I just talked forever. Actually, that was good for them because they got a really good feel for the space.

I1: Okay. What about the interviews? Can you remember those interviews that we did? How was that for you?

R: The interviews were great. I really liked seeing the presentation and hearing the ideas. We tried to come to it with an open mind. Obviously, we had met people, we had a bit of a feel how they might work with the space. I think some people were surprised in that interview, which as good us. It totally challenged what we thought about and who we picked in the end. We are incredibly happy with the decision. So, it just feels right.

I1: I am going to ask you a question, I'm going of a piece already.

R: No, no, it's fine.

I1: Is that, it gets back to what that first question was, about the contemporary art. Did you have any preconceptions about what was going to come your way?

R: No, absolutely not. In terms of art, no. To be completely honest though, we did think – I don't think this now – that we might have been driven down a particular pathway, with a particular artist. That's just a personal observation. That you potentially had in mind people that might fit this space, because of the site. Obviously, I don't feel that now, at all. No.

I1: Was it surprising, what they came back with?

R: Some of it was, yes. Some of it was, like, no, seen that before, that's boring. You know what I mean? Certainly, Matt's idea was great. It was just instantly, yes, this will totally work. So, yes.

I1: I am just remembering, we were all on that interview panel, weren't we? [I2], you were there.

I2: And the site visit.

R: Yes, and the site visit.

I1: We had very different –

R: Very different.

I1: – artists, picking up very different aspects –

R: Very different things.

I1: – of it.

R: I really liked some of the ideas around the threads and stuff, but the execution of it, I'd never seen that before. It was really good for us to have them on site. Obviously, to have that more in-depth information at interview, just changed things a little bit. I had time to think about it. It was good.

I1: Good, okay. How would you reflect your working relationship – if you think ahead – what do you think it's going to be like, working with the artists and the research team, as part of this?

R: I think Matt is going to be great. I've had a couple of conversations with him on the phone. We've actually had some in between short-listing and interview, he was actually emailing us for more information. I feel that we've got the beginnings of those relationships already. Which is great.

I1: Yes. Has he asked you for more research?

R: No. Not since he was appointed, no. I suppose, the concerns for us are about how we do work now, going forward. How much time he needs from us. We can work it through with him. He's a very good fit.

I1: You are saying, how much time, you mean literally, how much time? Resource?

R: Literally how much resource, yes. So, that's a concern around the kind of relationship, I suppose, but it's always been a concern. It isn't something we can't work through. I think we can work it through. I'm quite confident to talk to both you and Matt and say, this is not going to work. Or, actually we can help with this, but we can't help with that. So, I think that's fine. I feel comfortable in just picking up the phone. [I1], this is not going to work [laughter].

I1: So, you think...?

R: I think we will be fine. I think we've got that professional working relationship. It works well. Because, we've had the time to get to know each other. To talk. It seems like it's been quite a long process. I think, that's been good for us. To get to know one another, so we know where we are coming from.

I1: Not rush in.

R: To not rush in, because the one big worry is, we don't want to feel that it's done to us. That we just, maybe it was just using the CCT site because it's part of the research. Actually, it doesn't feel like that, I have to say. It feels like we're part of the partnership. We are a true part of the partnership, and it will be beneficial for both of us.

I1: Good. That's good. Thinking back, what were the best elements of the commissioning process, so far? Anything that might be improved upon?

R: I loved meeting the artists in the space.

I1: You did?

R: I did. I loved meeting them in the space. It was really good to see it through their eyes. Contemporary art is a new thing for us. Art in historic spaces is a big step change for the Trust. I think, it's scary. We are playing at what we think that will be. It's good to see it through other people's eyes. Not just through a heritage sphere. It got what we wanted to do, which was actually really heart-warming for us. We are taking a little bit of chance with The Canny Space. Trying to interpret the stories in a new way. Not the normal historic boards. Actually, for me, it just... I've been pushing this creative story telling thing, it's cemented that you are not just completely bonkers. There is something in this because other people can see the beauty of the space, and the stories you want to tell. They came up with some great ideas. Maybe not all of them, that we thought, mm. But, they were all great ideas. That was the best bit, by far.

I1: Do you think we should have made it a longer day?

R: I think we should have made it a longer day, yes.

I1: I put words into your mouth then.

R: No, I was going to say that, actually. You didn't. The one thing that [CCT1] and I both talked about, was we would have liked longer. We would have liked to have done that tour. Normally, we take two to two and half hours to do that. We also thought, if we did it again, we would have done a tour of the area. So, it puts it context of all Sunderland. You can see where it fits within the community.

I2: There was that urge to go off afterwards, wasn't there? To explore a bit.

R: There was that urge to explore a bit. I think, it's important... actually, the week before I went away the north team were up looking at the space. For some of them it was the first time. We did the tour of The Canny Space, like we did with you, with the history. We also made them stay for a tour of the old East End. Then we met in the pub after. Which could have been good with the artists. Because, then we talked about their initial thoughts and feelings of the space. The pub conversation was very different to what it was during the workshop.

I1: Yes.

R: That's the only tiny thing that I think we would have got more stuff out of it. It's a small thing.

I1: More of social at the end?

R: More of a social at the end, definitely. We have got the most beautiful historic pub, that has just opened. It wasn't open anyway. It takes about 40 minutes to walk around the tour. Then to go to the pub, with a view of the river. Actually, yes, I could see that maybe working. You do talk different, when you are not in your work space. That's the only thing, really.

I1: Yes. I agree. I think so too. Okay, I am going to hand over to [I2]. We've got to section three. We can go down this contemporary art thing again.

R: I do know what it is.

I1: We will come back to it, don't worry. You are actually bringing it into the conversation.

I2: Right, okay. So, just at this point I am going to ask you a bit more about this project and your overall approach, well CCTs approach to site interpretation at Holy Trinity. So, if you could talk a bit more about how you think the two of them work together?

R: Kind of marry. I think, with this project it's very different to what the regeneration team have done in the past. If you take our last, second from last project, Kings Lynn and also Walton, there is a lot of text in the space. There are a lot of screens in the space. A lot of touch things and all those stories. Which, you know, is what you would expect to find in a heritage site. With Ipswich, so St Marys at the Quay and MIND, the regen team started to think a little bit more creatively. That was because of [EC], the Interpretation Consultant, who is probably on the same vein as me and [CCT1]. We are a little bit more creative, a little bit more bonkers, than the normal CCT staff. We have started decided to look at, not only what the site will be like when it's open, because I think that's as far as we get, CCT. I probably shouldn't say that. What it will look when it's open, but we considered the fact that what we are trying to create is a visitor's destination. The audience is really difficult. We want people to come back again, on a daily or weekly basis.

The other thing with this site, was we were very conscious that we have got two separate audiences. CCT has its own set of audiences. They are the normal kind of heritage audiences, church geeks, people who are interested in architecture, normal audience, heritage appreciators and family visitors. So, in the back of our head we have always got that. That will be covered by the literature that CCT developed. What we wanted for CCT was to have a step change. So, we employed an Interpretation and Activity Consultant. After nine months of working with [them], we've took that back in-house. What it was doing for Canny Space was just very traditional. Making us a bit like a country house with lots of text, and lots of labels. We decided that the story we wanted to be told would be co-created with the community using arts. That took some convincing. When we first started talking about the arts, people thought the building was going to be full of paintings. So, we had to convince them and talk to them. Actually, no art is music and it's dance and spoken word. It's anything that anybody want it to be. Then when it's co-created with the community, my God, that's scary for them. Actually, what happened at St Mary at the Quay, was the lovely [EC] created the most beautiful tables, as part of the interpretation, but the permanent fixtures with the community. I think, people have started to get that they can have some art in historic spaces.

I2: So, by people you are talking about the people within CCT?

R: The people within CCT.

I2: Or just conservatism?

R: It is, totally. They are conservative. They've done things a certain way for a long time. Yes, we've got an art strategy. Yes, we are trying to get contemporary arts in historic spaces, but I'm not entirely sure that we know what that is. Or the people who are leading on that, actually know what it is. What we are talking about now within CC team is a pilot. Canny Space is being looked at as a pilot for contemporary arts. So, the bid we put into the Arts Council is being seen as a pilot. So, there is a bit of pressure [laughter] to get it right. I don't actually think we will get it right with this project, but I think it's a good start.

I2: So, with Ipswich how did... did that happen as [EC], a person?

R: It happened organically with [EC], a person, yes. Because of [EC], [they were] amazing. [EC] was an external consultant, but [they were] an artist. [EC] lives in the city, [EC] loved the church and the history. [EC] was just the best appointment ever. It is down to people and place. We haven't always got it right, as in our Activity and Interpretation Consultant didn't get it right for us. We had to bring it back in-house. [CCT1] and I rewrote it. Yes, it's not 100% great, but actually it's much more reflective of where we need to be. It's a lot more hands-on. There will be no bloody labels or text.

I2: [Laughter].

R: Bloody things. There will be no text or labels or anything.

I2: So, I know you are sort of answering the next question really, which was how far this is a new departure really, specifically for Holy Trinity?

R: Yes, totally.

I2: CCT, really from previous activity. You've answered that really. How would you see this project, as a successful project? What would that mean for you?

R: I think, if we get... if we attract a different audience. If we get people coming to specifically see the exhibition or, what we've been doing. If we open up a dialogue with those people. Even if they say, "God, this is crap. What to hell are you doing? [R], have you lost your mind?" Quite often I get, "I hope you are not going to fill this space with pompous art shite. (Over-speaking 0:18:39) not mine." I'm like, "Well, what is that?" Things like, "How do you know you won't like them, until you try them." I am excited by what it means for this space. That people will come and have a look just out of curiosity really. If that brings a different audience, then that actually, very selfishly, benefits us. Because, we are trying to build our audience. I see we've got that local audience that we have just started to work with, really. It takes years and years and years, to form relationships with people.

Then we've got the city wide and the regional audience that we need to tap into, for the sustainability of the project. Things like this exhibition will show us whether this is something we should follow up, as a route we should go down. If it doesn't work, then I don't see that as a failure. I see that as something else we've tried in

the space. Something different. It just doesn't work with this space, but it would actually still work for CCT. So, there is lots of learning, I think, for us.

I2: Some of the things you were commenting on there, really tied back to that very first question that [I1] presented you with. In terms of what –

R: I know. I was just like, that's a question, just like, poof! It's very early in the morning. (Over speaking 0:19:54). I've had four hours sleep.

I2: – you referred to, at the beginning of that question, people talking about, not just paintings or other paintings, or what you are putting in. In your mind, what kind of art were you envisaging in the space, do you think?

R: Honestly, when we first started talking, when we first had the conversation, I was like, oh I'm going to fill it with pictures.

I2: Right.

R: Or paperclips. I know that sounds a bit crazy. Pictures are the first thing that I normally think about when you talk about the arts. Rightly or wrongly. Obviously, [Partner's Name] went to this exhibition at the Tate, a couple of months ago and it was all around paperclips. I was thinking, 'Oh, it's got to be somewhere in the middle.' Oh, I don't know. It was in the Baltic. The same thing was in the Baltic a couple of years ago. One paperclip in a room. It was like, five paperclips, then it was a million paperclips. It was only on for a week. [Partner's Name] was like, "Do you like it?" I was like, "No." Then I was so... it was really strange for me, because I don't normally go, no. I'm dead, "Well, you know, it's interesting." It made me go into the mindset of the local community, who are thinking actually, no. Actually, no, that is crazy, what are you doing? We did stay quite a bit, it makes you think.

I don't really know what I thought we would get. I know what I hoped, we didn't get. I think, during the process, we were frustrated and disappointed with just one or two of the ideas. Thinking, 'Actually, this is not what we want. This would be totally... not go down well with the community.' That's not just us being quite narrow minded. I don't know if knew what we'd get, but I'm dead happy with what we have got. It's different, it's quirky, it tells a story.

I2: When you have these conversations with the wider CCT, do you think... how do their opinions or attitudes or contemporary art?

I1: What do they think?

R: I think, it's difficult because we have an arts strategy, that was written by somebody who has now left. The person that wrote that strategy, obviously has ownership of it, but also had a very set idea of what that looked like. It was very much driven by one person's view of contemporary art. I think, the strategy still exists, but isn't as important to us, in the way that it is written at the minute. I think, we are committed – certainly the development team – as a team to look at visitor engagement and audience development. How we do that, and what that means is down to them. Definitely, contemporary art in historic spaces, and certainly places of worship, is one way to do that. It's actually been passed onto somebody else.

It's tagged onto a job description. There is no one person who has responsibility for it.

The one thing that I've been banging on about, unfortunately, our CEO has left now. [They were] like, I get where you are coming from, to have a dedicated person, not looking at this in isolation. To have them looking at it across the whole estate, because we have the most amazing resource. We have 352 very unique sites, that as a collection, as an estate could really do something amazing. I think, it's scary for us, [I2]. I do also think that the person who is picking it up, who is [CCT2], it's just another thing to add to her job description.

I1: As a resource, it's...

R: It's just not working. We get it. [CCT3] is so excited by it. If we can get funding for a worker, or two workers, we would run with it, and roll with it. But, it's capacity and resource. It's also a little bit of, the development team are doing this, and they're doing that art, we are just getting on with our normal job. What we need to be doing is having a conversation with the wider team about – this is something I am picking up with [CCT3] – how it might work for the commercial managers? How it might work for the community fundraisers? How it might work in terms of conservation? So, that everybody stops thinking about, this is my role, I'm the conservation officer. Actually, this could really help. Does that make sense?

I2: Yes, it does make sense.

R: We are all so busy doing conservation or commercial management or regen. When, actually we need to see the wider picture, this could really help us to...

I1: To integrate all of the... across the board into programming?

R: Totally. Programming and the different teams, just this, this, and put it out there. At the minute, it's still one team and one person, thinking this will be good. We will put an application here, for that. [R], is doing that. Actually, what we need to do is have a conversation, "How do you think this would work in your region?" There are three regions, we are not having any conversations. We are just having conversations with individuals.

I1: So, I'm quite interested in a strategy being written, then it not... It's all very much having a strategy, but actually the reality?

R: The reality of it is, when a strategy is owned by one person, and very different by that one person. Who, you know, very tunnel vision, I suppose. This is my idea, it's going to work, you're going to do it. Then that person leaves. What you have got is a strategy that's been adopted, and nobody really wants to take it forward, because it's not right. People who are left behind, feel it's not right. So, where we have got to with the strategy, is we are relooking at the strategy. How it really does work. What's really good is, it's not just one person submitting a strategy to SMT. Actually, the conversations are happening at an officer level, which is at the end of the day, you have as many chiefs as you want. But, it's the Indians that make it happen, isn't it? [Laughter]. I am trying to be tactful. I hope that was tactful.

I1: No, that's true. What you are saying is, it's vulnerable. Strategies that are written by one person –

R: Strategies are vulnerable.

I1: – are vulnerable. Actually, it has to be integrated within the whole organisation.

I2: It's back to that sort of ownership thing, isn't it?

R: It is back to ownership, which is why [CCT1] and I are totally driven by the idea of immersive theatre, and the contemporary arts. Story telling being done. We had to make sure that everybody owned it. We've had numerous... the regeneration team own it, as a team. Obviously, we are transient, so if we move somebody will pick it up. I think, the north team... we are really careful to involve the north team as well, because once the church is operational it actually moves to them. So, at the very beginning they need to own the fact that this church is going to be totally different to a normal gateway church. Which all the interpretation is done centrally. When the literature changes, it changes through the referees. Whereas, this is actually going to have... it's much more embedded in the community, and things will change. We've actually written in the HLF bid that for three years of ongoing support for artists. So, there will be commissioned artists every year, for the three years of HLF funding, hopefully, beyond that. So, it constantly changes. That was very different for CCT as well, because we normally get interpretation budgets, done in a closed space. You open, and you've got this, and that's it. Well, that's boring.

The north team are actually on board with it, which is really good. The CEO knows what we are doing here as well, so he's behind it. It takes time for change. People don't like change, do they?

I2: No, not very often. [Laughter].

R: It's like trying to change the culture of an organisation, from within. I'm the token northerner trying to do that. I think, they think I'm bonkers.

I1: [Laughter].

I2: Shall I just ask you a little bit more about 'audiencing'? I know we've talked a bit about this before. Can you elaborate a bit more on who you see as the audience for this artwork? I know you talked about these two audiences before. The heritage visitors, and the more embedded in the community. Perhaps, can you elaborate on those a little bit more for us?

R: I think, we've got fantastic relationships with Sunderland Culture and the Cultural Partnership, and the University, the College. I've a seat on the Cultural Partnership Board and the Partnerships Board. So, the people who are going to be coming to see things like tall ships, or who are engaged in culture as practitioners, and/or their networks are an audience that we can tap into, that we are already utilising anyway. We would hope they would just come and see it, for

the sake of supporting another cultural organisation and/or me, because of that network, and because of the relationships. So, that's one audience.

There is a real emerging cultural renaissance in Sunderland. The City of Culture bid goes in at 12 o'clock, retweet if you can. [Laughter]. Even if the City of Culture bid doesn't happen, what we have got is a really beautiful relationship that will continue to drive the agenda of culture. Obviously, Sunderland Culture have just become an NPO, a great place to [s.I skim money 0:29:36]. So, they're trying to drive the city audience and the regional audience. So, I think, that's quite an easy one for us to tap into. We won't do it straightaway. It's still going to take... whether it happens with this project, I just don't know. I think it could take a lot longer than eight or nine months.

The local audience is really difficult. I think they want things on their doorstep. They want things that are low cost, or they're free. But, they want things that they've always done, that they're comfortable with. They don't want to step outside of their comfort zone. So, when we are talking to them during consultation, about what do you want, it's the things you always get. There's been no surprises. We've had to lead them a little way and say, "What about this?" Show them examples of what's happening elsewhere. Pictures on their iPad. "Oh, that's a good idea. I never thought of that." Our local audience is going to be a difficult one to attract, but we have made some really good inroads with local organisations. Outreach is going to be key to whatever we do, whatever Matt does, whatever anybody does in this space, really. I think if we can tap into the organisations, locally. Even if we get them to say, within your programme this week, would you bring a group of people just to come and have a look at the space. See what's in it. Give us your feedback.

I'm not sure it's going to be as easy as opening the doors and sitting there for hours. You could end up with two or three people. It will have to be a bit more of a targeted approach, with this. A lot more proactive, a lot more outreach. I do think it's doable. I wouldn't have pushed for Holy Trinity to be one of the sites if I didn't think it was doable.

I2: Obviously, I know this will emerge more when Matt's made the work and things. In terms of how they might engage with the artwork there, the visitors, that's one of the questions. I'm not sure if you will be able to elaborate on that more, at this point. Any thoughts on that, what Matt has described so far?

R: I think, looking at what Matt's described, yes, there will be the interaction when the exhibition is there. So, it will be listening to, or looking at, or just sitting and feeling. I'm not sure exactly what it will look like. They will be immersed in it. But, for me, I think, what he was talking to you about, actually working with different groups is more about their reaction and engagement with them. I suppose, for me, I'm interested in that bit of it. Rather than just [s.I as [CCT2] said to you 0:32:29] interested when it's in the site. For me, I think, it's really important to see how people engage with one, with temporary art and two, with somebody who is outside of the area. That's a huge ask. They are quite wary of people coming in. Then what the relationship between Canny Space/CCT and the artist is. How that

develops, because that will give us food for thought when we start to commission artists from 2018 onwards.

I1: Yes.

R: Does that answer your question?

I2: Yes, it does. I think that's really interesting point. This sort of insider/outsider thing.

I1: Yes, I do.

I2: How much they trust and accept people coming on.

R: Trust is a huge thing. Honestly, I've been in post four years. I was incredibly lucky. I moved to Sunderland 25 years ago, [narrated personal details]. I was in the [Armed Services name]. They give you six months off, paid leave, to work in civvy street, to try and find your feet. I worked... I volunteered in a youth project in the heart of Hendon. I kind of got to know that community really well. When I had [Child's Name], they offered me a job. The first three years of working in Sunderland, I worked in the heart of their Hendon community, [Name of Organisation], for three years. I think, they thought I was bit weird. A bit posh. Now, I'm a bit posh and canny. Canny and a bit posh. I think, actually that has taken me 25 years to get that label. I'm actually quite happy with that, because there are some people who get the job, get given a job for all the right reasons. Because of their competencies and their qualifications. They just don't fit, because it's a really difficult environment to work in. I think, you've got to put yourself in their shoes, a little bit. I don't always agree with everything that they say. Probably, 90% of the time, I don't, but I do know where they are coming from. I've been around for so long.

What's been really difficult for us, is people from CCT have found it quite difficult to come from the London, of the Cambridge office. One, you've got a completely different accent. I suppose for Matt, that's not too bad, because he's local. That's not why we choose him at all. It's a huge bonus. It's taken a little while. [CCT1] is the most lovely person ever, but it's taken them a good year and a half to trust [CCT1]. Realise that [CCT1] has got their best intentions at heart. I suppose the biggest thing is the historical aspect. They still see that as theirs, even though it's in the care of the Trust. They've still got a sense of ownership. They don't want us doing things to it that they don't like. So, I have to be mindful of that. Not that we are not going to anything that they wouldn't like, because we certainly are. It's about... I'm quite conscious that it has taken us four and a half years to build up this relationship and trust. We are still not 100% there yet. We will not get there until the building is reopen and they've seen that we've not created some sort of night club. Do you know what I mean?

I2: I know what you are saying.

R: It's a long, slow process. The idea of putting this piece of work in and seeing if that will work in the timescale is quite scary. It's just a short moment in time, really.

I2: Do you think that the artworks will... How do you envisage that having the artworks might enable some change then [over speaking 0:35:59]?

R: I think it will encourage conversation and dialogue. Seeing things in a different way. I'm happy to have that conversation with them. I think it's important that somebody from CCT is there whenever we can be. To just capture some of that dialogue. Just, if they are saying, "This is shit. Is this what's going to happen?" Like, "Why do you think it's shit? Do you not like it? Do you not think it's a beautiful interpretation?" Well, obviously I wouldn't say interpretation to them. But, do you not think it's a beautiful way of telling the story? I think it will encourage them to come and look and to talk. Even if they don't like it. If we've got cake they'll come. They will, they'll come anywhere for cake.

I2: It's getting that conversation going.

R: It is. It's about conversation. It's about getting them in there. I suppose if 99% of visitors who come in go, I absolutely don't like this. This is rubbish. I don't want to see any more of this. We've got to listen to that, as well.

I2: Yes.

I1: You know what occurs to me, actually? Just a note to self, is that as we go through this commission, is actually we need to be very mindful of the people, what they call the front of staff, or person –

R: Front of house person.

I1: – front of house person needs to be –

R: Yes, I agree.

I1: – of utmost importance.

R: I think it's important. That person, no matter who – it won't be the same person all of the time – those people have an in-depth understanding of not just the artwork, and kind of where the ideas came from, but what the purpose of the research is. How it fits into what we are trying to do for Canny Space. What we are all trying to get out of it. That might include some of our really lovely elderly volunteers, who are 80 and 75. They have to... who open the church constantly to visitors and will continue to do so next year. We need to be mindful that they know why that piece of artwork is in there, as well as people just coming to see the space because of its beauty.

I2: How many volunteers have you got?

R: Well, we've got –

I2: Are they part of a group or are they very different.

R: No, they're not a group at all. Because of the fifteen years of angst. We've got three lovely keyholders. They are our main volunteers. Then we have... so it's

[O1], [they're] lovely. [They are] younger so, maybe 30ish. [O1] works for [Name of Organisation], which is literally 5 minutes' walk from the church. Loves everything to do with the church and CCT. [O1] not only is a keyholder, but [they are] also a volunteer. [They] will literally come and help with events, [They're] coming to help us with the decamp and stuff like that. [O1's] amazing. [O1's] absolutely brilliant. Plus, [O1] runs-[Name of Organisation], was set up by the women of the old Garths. So, it's very much community driven. If you go in there, they'll shout at you for all sorts of things. They've got loads of different groups. [O1's] very good at bringing people to the space when we've got stuff on.

I had an art project, actually, in the summer holidays. Very low-level arts. They came... [O1] took them around the blue plaque trail. They did some brass rubbing on the blue plaque trials, and they used our new sign, which is beautiful. It's got brass rubbing on the outside, to do some work and then tweeted it. So, you know, it's art is a new thing for [O1], but [O1] is totally on board with whatever gets people in the space, gets people in the space. [O1's] amazing.

We have two members of Sunderland's Old Township. SOT? Yes, Sunderland Old Township Society. This was based in the church and had been based in the church for forever and ever. They were asked to leave by CCT, about ten years ago. They are now set up in the school next door. Their aim and vision is to preserve the story of old Sunderland, especially centring around the church, the characters and the Rector Gray, whose monument is inside there. They are a cantankerous old bunch. The average age is probably 70. There's about nine of them. They are very vocal. They shout a lot. They shout at me constantly about the organ. Not to take it out and not to do this. How it should always be a church. They have been a really difficult audience to crack.

The two keyholders, which is [O2], and [O3] are okay. They get what we are trying to do. They get that we are trying to do it for the good of the church. [O3] will get the artwork, because [O3's] in the Minster choir. [O3] loves art and music. [O2], not so much. [O2] will probably be thinking, 'What to hell are you doing in my church? You are making more things for us to dust.' What [O2] will do, is bring people into see it, and let people in. If individuals want to go in, they can just ring [O2] up because [O2's] so proud of the building.

We also do have sporadic groups of volunteers, who will... if we put on an event, say, an open day, or whatever it is. We would potentially have volunteers, but the difficulty is they come because of people and place, rather than because of CCT. They are not yet CCT volunteers, because I asked them. They come because they love the space, or they come because they owe us a favour. One of the big things for next year, is that whoever comes into post with the north team, has to start developing a really core group of about 20 CCT volunteers. Because the staffing model is so lean that, that space will be done in work with two or three staff. So, it's a big thing for us, next year. If we do get people in the space who are interested, actually, it opens up avenues for volunteering. So, it's a win-win.

I2: Right, okay.

R: Sorry, I was probably (over-speaking 0:42:19).

I1: No, no.

I2: That's really useful.

R: I don't know whether you want to look back at the –

I1: Yes. Let's go back to that one.

R: Go back to your question.

I1: We've got two more questions. We are on time, so we are okay. We've just got two more questions. You have actually answered it as you've gone through. Which is your understanding of contemporary art. You were talking about going to the Tate. So, you know, you alluded to what you thought it might be. Do you want to go back to that?

R: Yes. We can do, yes.

I1: My next question would be, what is your previous experience of engaging with contemporary art? Well, you obviously go to galleries.

R: Theatre, concerts, music.

I1: You do that. What's your personal interest in it? What do you think it means? What does that language mean? Is it helpful?

R: For me, it's a new thing, sort of culture and heritage. I'm new in the heritage world. I've only been – this is the first time – for four years. I came from a totally different background. As children we were never given the opportunity to engage in culture, or the arts. We went to tap dancing, that was it. We didn't have the money, I think, it was fair to say. We were very poor, we didn't have the money. As we had children of our own, [Partner's Name] and I were both – [Partner's Name] is from a completely different background from me – incredibly conscious that in order to give the children the best start you need to see the world in a totally different place. You need to have opportunities. We let them do anything that they wanted to do, in order to... they tried dancing. We took them to the theatre. We took [Child's Name] to ballet when [they were] tiny. Actually, to see ballet first, before we let [them] do it. Stuff like that. That purely was influenced by marrying [Partner's Name], for starters, it was part of [their] background. Also, that sort of need to want to make the children see... we live in Sunderland now, obviously we're from the south originally. We wanted them to get a bigger view of the world. Does that make sense?

I1: Yes.

I2: Yes.

R: It was always centred on the children, always. It's probably been in the last ten or eight years, that we thought, actually this is for us too. When the children no longer need us. What we've enjoyed doing is – you'll think I'm quite crazy – [Partner's Name] and I have a date night. We have for ten years, every month. We

go and see and do something different. That might be learning to kayak or scuba dive. It also might be going to see something that is completely out of our comfort zone. Like, going to the Tate to see paperclips.

I1: [Laughter].

R: I can appreciate, but I don't necessarily like. I know it's all about telling the story. For me, that's what it's about. It's about telling the story of the world, and people's thoughts and feelings on that in a different way. I guess, what it boils down to is what you like. I love musical theatre. I just love it. I think it's a great way, a really happy way of telling a story of a set place or time. I also really appreciate quiet music. They just had this great exhibition in Sunderland, which was in a caravan. Story telling in a caravan. Just really intimate, with eight people. I was like, actually I really love this. It was really lovely. It gives you the chance to sit there, to unwind. It's a break from normal life. That sounds bonkers, doesn't it?

I2: Is contemporary art, music and theatre?

R: It's everything. It's music and it's theatre and it's spoken word. Yes, it is art but it's lots of other things. I mean, I'm working with the most amazing group of women called the Sangini, you've probably know the Sangini women. I went just to meet them, I'd heard they were amazing. I've met [Group Member's Name] a few times. I went to meet them on a Friday morning, they were doing the most amazing work with textiles. Anyway, I got talking to them about the church. We ended up inviting them round. They were saying, "We'd love this church. We'd like to help you tell the story. Can we do it with textiles?" I was like, how we are going to tell (unclear 0:46:51). What's transpired is we've actually... I've commissioned them to make 30 story telling cushions. So, the brief is very open. We would just like 30 cushions to hang around the apse.

So, instead of 30 chairs in the space, which would look ugly so, the children can use when they come in. I've been working with them, giving them pieces of research, looking at the old textiles that are in the church. I was thinking, this is actually contemporary art. Also, for me, it's also contemporary art that we can use in this space. That can stay in the space, as well. I guess, that's only been the last six months that I've thought it can be something that's permanent in the space. It doesn't have to be something that you go and see once or, can just be in the space for a short amount of time. Does that even make sense?

I1: Yes.

I2: It totally does, yes.

I1: I think what you are saying... what do you see the value of bringing art into the heritage context?

R: I just think it gives you a completely different outlook on the space. It attracts completely different audiences. I mean, we know our audience inside out for CCT. You get heritage appreciators. People who like to tour old churches. We get families who are looking for something different. What we don't get is a lot of young people. I think contemporary art could actually bring us a completely

different audience. That's not to say old people, like me, don't come and want to do it. Actually, we are not good at engaging with young people. I am excited to see actually how Matt's exhibition might relate to some of our contacts with the universities, the college in Sunderland and some of the young people from the youth projects.

I1: Okay. What do you think might be – thinking ahead – you've said some of this in what you're saying – what do you think the opportunities and the challenges that you can see ahead? You kind of alluded to some of this.

R: The challenges are audience engagement and they always will be.

I1: Right, okay.

R: Just getting people into the space.

I1: Okay.

R: I think the other challenge is linking the story. So, our most recent conservation story to the story of why the artwork is in there. It might be a bit so, you actually said you are trying to raise money for the building, but you've got this in here. Do you know what I mean? It's like...

I1: Money?

R: Yes. It's like, we are trying to conserve the building by this. It's part of putting on things like this to attract people into the space, which then keeps the roof on. So, it's that. Also, I do think it's about linking those stories. This is not just going to be a building that you come and visit. Actually, this needs to be a building that you come and immerse yourself in the story. The only way you are going to truly enjoy the experience is by coming along and participating. If you want to come and look at the architecture, there will always be a place for you. If you want to come back, then you need to integrate into the programme. I think that is difficult. We've tested a programme for two years now. Some things have worked really well, and some haven't. There's been a real nervousness about local people. What we've found is people are coming to events from outside their local area. Even if they are paying tickets of £10, and we are subsidising it to £2 for local audience. We are still not getting that interaction. There is still that, this is not for us. That's the biggest challenge. This is not for us, thing.

I1: Okay.

R: The opportunity, I think though, we've agreed with Matt that it will be co-created and working with different groups. They will feel ownership of it so, you've already got an audience that is going to come and see it. Even if they only see it once, they'll come with friends and family and parents. So, that's great. I think that's a huge opportunity. I suppose, what I quite worried about at the start, is we would come in and somebody would do it to us. Do it for the space. That just won't work in that community. That's a huge opportunity, definitely.

I1: I was speaking to Matt yesterday. His work does have a responsibility to it, to the community.

R: We've got that from – obviously you can't have your favourites all the way through – we got that from the very beginning. It just feels like a right fit to us. [CCT1] was whooping when I rang [them], to tell [them]. So, you know. [Laughter].

I1: [Laughter].

I2: [Laughter].

R: So, there you go, that just tells you.

I1: Okay. We are nearly at the end. Can I just ask you a question that has come up? What do you think heritage thinks to you?

R: Oh God.

I1: I know, it's a very open-ended question.

R: It is.

I1: What does it mean to you, personally?

R: To me? In terms of the asset, or in terms of heritage in general?

I1: In general.

R: When you first look at it, heritage is about going and looking at something that is old. That tells you a story of identity and time and space. Actually, what I've discovered from doing this job. It's much more about that. It's much more about culture. It's much more about identity. It's not really about place. I think, we are as an organisation, we are still hooked up on heritage assets. We have an estate. Actually, for me, it is, yes, we've got the most beautiful heritage asset in the East End. We've got some amazing stories to tell, about people and about place. So, for me, that's what heritage is about. Also, I think, what I've had a bit of a tough time to start with, but not now is, we were fully fixated on the age of the asset. So, this is a Georgian building. We love the Georgians. There is always a place for we love the Georgians. Heritage is, for me, in that building there is about seventeen, eighteen, right up to yesterday. Because, today is a story, tomorrow. That's still part of the journey. So, that's what it means to me now. Totally different to what it would have meant four years ago.

I1: Interesting.

R: Is that it?

I2: Unless you've got anything you want to ask us?

R: No, no. I definitely don't. Did I give you enough?

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I1: That's great.

R: Cool.

I2: That's brilliant.

[End of recording].