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## PSYCHOANALYSIS AND ARTISTIC PROCESS

**Martin Creed**

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**Abstract:** This is the transcript of a talk given by Martin Creed at the conference ‘Making Space’ at University College, London, in 2012. At Martin Creed’s request, the transcript includes pauses, hesitations and audience reactions. Further details of the conference can be found in the editorial of this issue.

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MC: Pughff!

(Coughs)

MC: I don’t really know what to say, I wish I’d... I wish, I wish I’d prepared something.

(Laughter from delegates)

MC: Don’t... but I did... I’ve tried preparing something, you know as... before, and usually I don’t like what I prepare, you know? (pause) Er, don’t like prepared things. Eh, but, (pause) er, em. I, I, I, I’m, I, I am into psychoanalysis.

(Ripple of laughter among delegates, getting louder)

MC: I do, I go and do it, you know, as a, as a customer,

(more ripples of laughter)

MC: you know, (small laugh) and er... so I feel terrible... being late today...

(Laughter)

MC: I'm late because my car broke down but er... my analyst would say 'why did your car break down?'

(Laughter from delegates)

MC: You know, 'why have you got a car that always breaks down?' but I love that car and they don't make cars that shape any more. It's a Fiat Coupe, and it's from like the 90s and it's got... it's got these kind of... it's got a weird blobby shape.

(8 sec pause) Em, I used to... I had my... I used to have a psychoanalyst before the psychoanalyst that I go to see now, I didn't *have*, I used to go to see a psychoanalyst before I went to see the psychoanalyst that I *do* go and see now, and he died, er, when he... about er after I'd been going to see him for about 5 years. And (pause) ...but there's two things he... that I always remember that he said to me: and he didn't really say very much, you know,

(quiet laughter in hall)

MC: so...

(laughter grows)

MC: In fact he only said these two things,

(gales of laughter)

MC: (chuckles a little) he said... one time he said, when I was trying to decide what to do about something, I was in a tizzy about it, and er... as I often am, and I find it difficult to decide things, and I don't like committing myself, you know, but er... and he said 'if you don't know what to do don't do anything'.

(Quiet ripple of laughter)

MC: And er, you know that's something that's really stuck with me, I try to...

(gales of laughter)

MC: I try to live by that motto. And the other thing he said to me that I always remember if, um, that it's not, um, (pause) if I can get this right... 'It's not a lie not to say something'. (pause)

(Ripple of laughter)

MC: Because I think that I used to think that I had to say everything, you know, and that it was dishonest not to say every little... not to try to put into words every little feeling that I had, and I would often... I think... I think I had a...and I often felt guilty and um... I still do quite often but not as much, er, but... so... it was a helpful... that was helpful advice, you know.

MC: (10 sec pause, clears his throat in the middle) but often... I often... (ghost of a chuckle) I think I often talk about him, you know, I think I talk about him to the analyst that I go and see now... quite a lot.

(Quiet laughter)

MC: I'm always telling her about him, how good he was

(loud laughter)

MC: (laughs) ... and how, em, he never, how, you know, he didn't speak as much as she does

(more laughter)

MC: (chuckles) aah! But I think that it's difficult to.. I think it's very... I don't know... yeah... I was going to... I thought I might do a song because I didn't, I wanted... I thought that, I don't like deciding beforehand, you know, what to do, because then that feels like it's like fake, because, deciding... if I was... I feel like if I wrote down what I was going to say today beforehand it would be like, it would be like going out on a date but deciding what you were going to say beforehand, you know. And em, I think it's difficult to put feelings into words (pause) em...eh (pause 5 secs during which delegates laugh), how long is there left?

(more laughter)

MC: how long?

Woman: about 14 minutes

MC: really?

Woman: yes

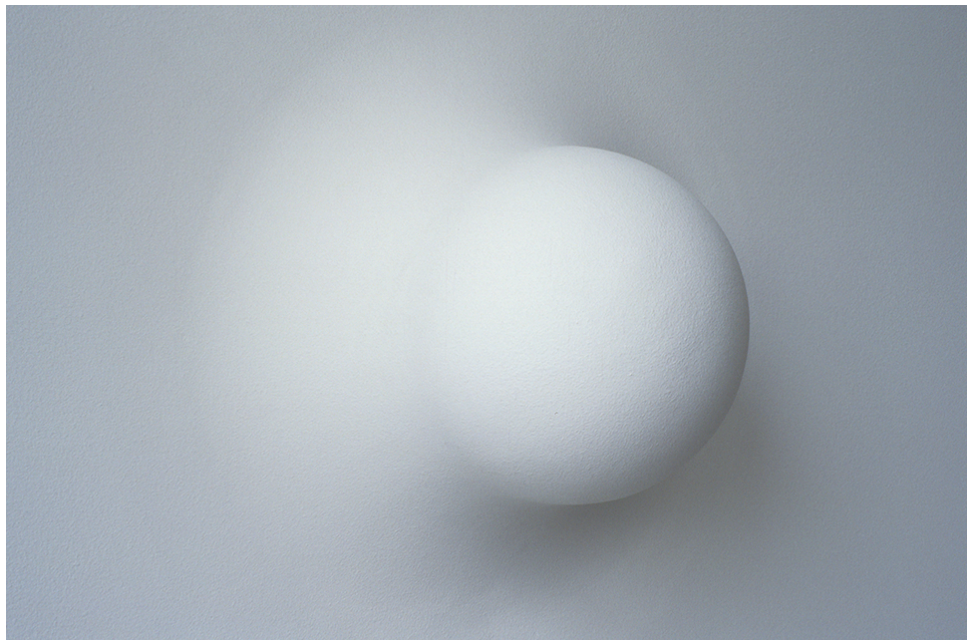
(laughter)

MC: But sometimes time just seems to fly by but

(laughter)

MC: (little snort of laughter), (11 second pause, picks up guitar, 7 seconds, kicks or steps on something 4 times, plays a few notes) er a while ago I tried to write some music, I started trying to write some music because I thought the sculptures that I was doing were, well they weren't good enough. I didn't like them. I thought that the sculptures that I made... I went through a process which ended up with this thing that was a certain shape. And when I looked at that at the end it felt like the sculpture didn't have... visibly in it, the process which I'd gone through to make it, you know. And I think that's the case with most visual work is that, is that like...

especially something like a painting or a ... the thing you're looking at is the bit that's left over at the end after the person has finished, you know. So it's like the sediment at the bottom of the glass... and I, and I, I didn't... I got frustrated feeling that... you know, I wanted to drink the glass of wine not just look at the sediment. And so I thought that maybe if I tried to write some music that would be a way of trying to put... because a piece of music happens in time, em, it would be a way of trying to include the process that I'd gone through, in the work. Em, because I'm, I'll try to show you, I'll try and show you (long pause, he moves away from the microphone, goes to laptop to bring something up on screen, scrolls through thumbprints on screen, pause lasts 40 seconds, points at screen) something like this:



*Work no. 102, 1994*

(comes back to microphone) um, er, when I made that I went though, er, (chuckles) a process that ended up with that, ended up with that and once I'd finished that, er.... Oh no... I kind of... I made... the way that this came about was I was doing paintings at art school and I er... I thought the only reason I'm doing these paintings is because I'm in a painting department at art school, you know. So I thought, okay, I won't, I'll try, I won't, I won't do that... I'll just try to make a thing, not a painting. I'll try to make something without deciding beforehand what I'm going to make, and, er, um. So I thought all right, but I don't know what to do. What can I do?

And where would I put it? So I thought all right I'm going to try and make something for people to look at. And I thought if something's on the wall, you know, it's easy for people to look at. So that was the first decision I made, to try to make something for a wall, and I was happy with that decision. And then (clears throat) I thought right what can I make on the wall? And I thought well I don't know what materials I could use, I don't mind, like, there's... I couldn't find any reason to use one particular material rather than another. So I tried just to make something using the actual surface of the wall so I designed this... I designed this shape that comes out of the wall, and it's like a bell shape basically, it comes out at a tangent from the wall, comes around and goes back. And I decided on the size of the shape by taking a roller sleeve, like a standard painting roller, and making sure the curve was bigger than the roller itself, so that, so that the work is easy to paint over.

(Ripple of laughter)

MC: because at that time I was doing a lot of painting and decorating jobs, and I was always... it was always a pain to take the pictures off the wall, paint the walls and then put the pictures back up. So I thought it would be nice to make a work that you can just paint over.

(Laughter)

MC: Em, and er... and the colour of that work would always be the colour of the wall itself, so... that was the process that I went through privately, that ended up with that thing on the wall in a gallery, and er... but what I really noticed was that people didn't see what I'd done, they just thought it looked like a breast, you know, or a willy, or a stomach, whatever, you know. And I... I don't mind that really, because I like breasts.

(Quiet laughter)

MC: but I thought oh yeah, what they see is totally different from what I, from how I... you know... from what I... except I see the breast as well

(ripple of laughter)

MC: but what they see is... it was unintended... it was not consciously intended anyway. And eh... so I thought, that... so I thought oh yeah, but maybe, maybe I should try and make a work... like maybe in a piece of music I could ... like if you watch... if you listen to a piece of music it's like, it's like listening to the thing being made, you know, rather than just seeing what's left over at the end. So, I'm going to try and do a song which is the first song that I really tried to like, write lyrics. And I thought I'll try to write about how I feel, and em, but the problem that I saw was that I didn't really know how I felt, you know. And I think I often feel like I have a knee jerk reaction to something, so I feel like I don't really trust my feelings because one time I feel one way and another time I feel another. And... I feel like it's easy to kid yourself about things, especially when you're on your own, you know, in your own little room, working. I think it's easy to kid yourself about things because you're, you're a king in your little world. So I, I didn't, I didn't, I don't, I didn't and I don't really trust myself, and so I thought I'd try to write a song, I thought I'd try to write the exact opposite of the way that I felt, because I thought maybe if I write the opposite of the way I feel it'll be more like I really feel. So this is called 'I like things'

(Strums guitar intro and sings)

I like things, a lot

I like things, a lot

I feel very well, I feel very well,

I feel positive, I like things a lot

I like things, I like things,

I like things, I like things,

I like things, I like things

I like things, I'm happy!

Happy, happy,

Liking, liking,

Things, things,

Yeah, yeah.

(Applause from delegates)

MC: Ach, how long? 5 minutes? (plays a few notes on guitar again, puts on mouth organ in holder and plays a few notes, puts capo on guitar strings, leans in to mic and says) If you're feeling bad and your thoughts are sad, pass them on to someone else

(ripple of laughter)

MC: (plays guitar and sings)

Pass them on, pass them on, pass them on, pass them on, pass them on,

(mouth organ) pass your bad feelings on, pass them, pass them on. (mouth organ) pass them on, pass them on, pass them, pass them on

(mouth organ) pass them on. (Rhythmic guitar and staccato mouth organ)

(Applause from delegates)

MC: (plays guitar and sings:)

I'm the one for you, I'm your two.

You're the one for me, you're my three.

We make one two three four five,

You make me laugh, you make me cry,

You make me try, you make me sigh,

You make me lie, you make me buy,

You're my sign, you're my time,

You're my rhyme, you're my nine.

One, two, three, four,

Five, six, seven, eight, nine.

You make me talk, (chuckles) you make me think,

You make me smoke you make me drink.

You're like depth, you're like height.

You're like light, you're like sight.



You help me see, you make me free,  
You let me be, you make me me.  
I'm the one for you, I'm your two,  
You're the one for me, you're my three.  
I love the way you do things,  
And I love the way you don't.

(Applause)

MC: I think that's... is that it?

(Ripple of laughter and applause)

### **References**

Creed, M. (1994) *Work No 102 - A Protrusion from a Wall*. Plaster, emulsion paint. 46cm x 46cm x 23cm