



ROTOR with Siobhan Davies and Sam Collins (2010)

(automated transcript)

SPEAKERS

Siobhan Davies, Sam Collins, Gill Clarke and Audience

(Introduction: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021 over spare guitar chords)

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(2010 audio file begins)

Gill Clarke 00:42

We were quite International in our last half of the term. So it's wonderful to be able to bring the work that we're considering right back home to work that's happening right now in this building, and a kind of privilege to be able to talk to the originator of the ROTOR event in the building. And one of the commissioned artists, Sam Collins. We had a conversation last year that Sue had with so she has permission now to have a conversation with Sam. So neither neither one that is being interviewed. It's a conversation on a Saturday as long

Siobhan Davies

Did we set a precedent last year? With Ruth?

Gill Clarke

I think this might be even more democratic. Given your structure, so it's okay, thank you.

Siobhan Davies

Thank you. Can you hear me? Can you yell if I start drifting off into some sort of nether region of language. And the same with Sam, but Sam being a man has more potential, and my voice go? Higher? Okay, so I met Sam, and he's now going to have to help me in 19...

Sam Collins

That's a tough 2000 something 2000 And something to suddenly

Siobhan Davies

something, okay. And at that point, we were touring a work called Plants and Ghosts. And I needed somebody to help take it on the road. And I knew that I was looking for somebody with a strong artistic sensibility. Because although it's terrific, having practical people to be a practical person, and have a debate with me about what was going on, in a visual sense, and conceptual sense, was terrific. So that's how we met but he wasn't the artist for Plants and Ghosts. And very sensibly, I then proceeded to ask him to be the artist in the next three pieces. Is that right? Oh, clever. Which were Birdsong, in which he worked with the artist, David Ward, but was a definite contributing artists and how that worked. And then, In Plain Clothes, which was here, and then the Two Quartets is wonderful and my memory is completely fuzzy. But I know that's what happened. That's the right. That's the right order. Good. These were, in some ways, traditional pieces in the sense that they ended up not all in Plants and Ghosts was totally not in theatres, totally in places that nobody wanted to go to. But that was another thing. The others, we use theatres and ask the audience to come up on stage and saw the work all in the round. And In Plain Clothes was here and Two Quartets was went back into the theatre, by which time I was having a debate with

myself, that I did not want to be in theatres anymore. It's a long debate, and we're not going to go into it now. And the debate carried on a bit further, but there is a way of commissioning or not commissioning of collaborating with artists in certain situations, which is very different than coexisting with them. So ROTOR was a chance for me to coexist with other artists and Sam was an artist I was going to ask, just to clarify, for those that don't know, ROTOR began by me having the idea that I would make a form of score. Now I know the word score in dance now is dangerous with intellectual ideas and knowledge that in which we don't necessarily share that knowledge but we have an anticipation of what it means. But in my case, it was a top shot film of for artists that work involving themselves in a circle. And that the top shot would, to some extent abstract the dancers intention, character, intention, and concentrate us on the geography and the timing of whatever they did. And by concentrating it on that it felt a little bit more like a musical score, whose figuration is not at the sound, but the mark of the sound. So that in that sense, I was using the word score. And the idea was to pass this score to various artists that I had asked to come along. And I was very nervous that they wouldn't respond, I thought, if I sent this DVD of this map, this score, they'd all go, lovely, Sue, Great, see you soon, and that nobody would be interested. So I thought, well, if I'm worried about that, so I'll ask them to come into rehearsals. So they all came into rehearsals, and of course, did not see this version. But this version, which all had character, I'll explain the word character at a later time. So this is the situation that Sam arrived in. And my first question to Sam is not to explain everything in what you eventually achieved. But what were your first responses, your scratches with it? Your pre ambling before finally, making decisions

Sam Collins

I suppose you want to say is I, I actually filmed it from yesterday, as well, which was, which was really a really nice thing to do. But funnily enough, I, I found the knowing suits the intention of trying to film it from above as to as to abstract it, and to make it more of a sort of a score a pattern that you could sort of work from, fondly not having having filmed it. I, what, what actually grabbed me more and where I found, it had been more abstracted in terms of the movement, everything else was actually watching it in rehearsals and watching it in this upright version. I think, partly because I because I was coming into at that stage. And this is the end of last year before we filmed it, I was coming into rehearsals to to chat with Sue, and to see what she was doing, and also to talk about how we're going to film this and all this kind of stuff. And actually, so coming in regularly and seeing the the dance being rehearsed within this space, I would I would come in and see it. And in a way it started for me to form a bit of an abstract pattern than an abstract school in a different way of seeing it in rehearsal, which, which was partly to do with an aspect this is I suppose what my first response was, was that every every time I came in to see it, I was I was viewing it from a slightly different position within the room. And, and also that was I would see it at a different stage or something would have changed slightly. So for me, what struck me initially was this, that I was coming to see this, this, this mechanism and this, this choreography that was going, going on and getting worked out and everything else, but every time I came to see it, it was it was slightly different. And slightly different, because of how I was seeing it. And that I suppose was what what struck me differently. What struck me initially anyway, was kind of my first response to it. And I, I started and I don't know, I was talking about some the other day, I don't know whether it was because I was looking at it at some stages with the idea of filming it, which if I'm if I'm filming something, I'm giving it a frame initially to say something, but what I, what I started to notice and what's what stuck with me was this quite a hard thing for me to describe. But if I'm watching something, in this case four dancers moving around in circles in a three dimensional plane, if you like, if I if I start to sort of, if I start to frame it and view it and see it in this particular way, what I'm actually seeing as as opposed to sort of this, this sort of movement, where they're moving around each other is is actually this, this type of movement coming across. And that there between the between I've only got two fingers for dances. Between the relationship between between these, these these four, four dancers, which in a really abstract sense became sort of four full lines or four characters in my in my field that I was looking at. And even though they were sort of rotating around this way, though, for me they started to do to do this and to have this, this relationship with each other, which happened on a real on an orderly two dimensional plane that and it became a conversation between between these four, these four lines, these four, these four dancers in this in this in this respect that they were moving in and out of my vision. And obviously, with with the depths, they were, for me becoming coming forward that foreground and background in terms of how they were relating to one another, but it was very much, very much this sort of relationship going on. Which, which the more I looked at it, the more it got sort of weirdly abstracted to me in, in that sense. And then actually, funnily enough filming, it became something from above. I lost all that, and that, and I think, having had this experience, so that that's what ended up staying with me in the actual film from above, although it was really interesting. And to do that, that didn't grab me in the same in the same way as this, as this sort of relationship that was sort of forming between, between them on this kind of level.

Siobhan Davies

There was a moment in rehearsal, and we've gone round and around and around, and we didn't know quite yet there was a desperate moments in which we thought, how can we not go round anymore? And in fact, we stayed going round, how do we not going round and we thought that we'd, um, curve it and see if we could do it, the same thing just going backwards and forwards. So we tried that, but the curve got us, the certain got us and we,

Sam Collins

But I think that would be that would be if you if you weren't just going back and forward would be very, very different thing even. I mean, it obviously would be very different thing. choreographically. But even from in terms of how I was viewing it that if you were doing that, that wouldn't be as interesting to me as if you were doing this. And I was I was visually flattening for myself into this into this kind of plane that I was seeing this relationships

Siobhan Davies

and had to transfer information from one medium to another

Sam Collins

Yeah, and also the other thing that became really became really important was that which became really obvious to me, which is one thing I suppose that has stuck initially and went right the way through the sort of process of developing this work downstairs was that I because it was circular, then I became a fixed circle in a way. So that with the dark for dancers rotating around there, their four individual circles with each other, imagine the sort of in almost an orbit kind of thing. There was another orbit outside of that this fifth circle, which was me and depending on where I stood around that outside, I, that had an enormous influence on what I was seeing in the middle, which is I think, something new. You can get from rehearsals, but nothing was something quite, quite quite unique. Because if you mean if you're seeing a performance, you tend to get fixed into the spot, and then you do see it from one position. But if you can see something again and again and again, and you've got a decision about where where you view it from, and you can get up and move around, then for me, with this experience, it became it became very much part of it. And where I was viewing it from became important as important to what these relationships were between these things.

Siobhan Davies

But it also hearing the dancers because the dancers spoke all the time during the rehearsals about where they were in the line. I don't know if you've witnessed it, go on the website, and you'll see what I'm talking about. But they were very clear about where they were in the line. So the central person had, and I've done this part. And I have to say I look completely drunk when I do it. And it's very, very small circle. And so they, their physical and temporal and emotional state is incredibly different in the middle as it is to the outside. And if you choose to develop that, you start adopting the character of some of those roles. And occasionally we would change places, and the entire country was different. I mean, you literally were living in another country. And that was bizarre because all you were doing is moving one foot to the left and one foot to the right. But your experience in the circling was something so simple. Gave us so much so much information. I mean, it's shocking, we still haven't stopped

Sam Collins

I'm gonna ask ask you a question. Because I because I saw it from I was lucky enough to see the whole process and very, very early on from before we filmed it and then the various stage of rehearsals up until last week when it opened and here is there were there were various stages during that process where where the piece in front of the the title changed so you can use them as kind of markers but it started off as the score which is what we filmed from above. And then you went and worked on it and it became became the knot. And then what was presented last last week and what we've ended, what you've ended up with is, it's called a series of appointments. And one question I suppose, I had in talking about process and sort of development is whether whether you see those, those three stages as three separate works within themselves, whether The Score is one worked The Knot is another, series of appointments as another work or whether they are just one work, which had different stages of development, right the way through and then and therefore there is A Series of Appointments, the final, polished piece at the end?

Siobhan Davies 15:41

Good question, because I hadn't really asked myself that I think the score, the one film from above, is a different piece that I intended that it should be seen from above. And I tried to make it in that imagination, even though I was on the ground level with them. And then it was made and during the making, to begin with, there's an engineer involved in the project who made the silver piece and we asked him, and a physicist, and anthropologists to come in, and they all are giving information and I'm not an astrologer, that's Venus. I mean, that's Virgo, isn't it? What's the other one? And astronomer, thank you very much, an astronomer. And we asked them to give us information about circularity. So that there were all sorts of early maps and plans in which you know, God knows we were planets and flow patterns. And in fact, Ben Tyre, who did the flow pattern came in and taught us about flow pattern. He's he's quite shy. And so I didn't, I wasn't quite sure if how much information he would give. And at one point, he obviously had his shoes off, and he had these very neat socks. And I don't know why I always remember he's very neat socks. And he's he stood up and said, Can I have the dancers for a bit. And two hours later,

he sat down, and he had organised choreograph the dancers completely and utterly in the idea of different flow patterns. And it was, that was phenomenal. But when I went back to the work and tried to put in the golden mean, from the physicist, and the flow patterns from Ben and the astronomy from Robert, I was reaching a point in which there was too much information too diverse, and no tension. And the one way in which we were able to create the kind of tension that seemed necessary in this rather tight little what's the word secure, encapsulated world was we started to look at knots, the making of knots. So we bought sailors books on knots. And, and started to argue, because if you have four people trying to tie a knot, you can, all I can say is that you argue the entire time because this guy, no, I have this piece of rope, I am bringing it through you while you turn over me. And she's coming under, and then I slip out to the side. And then we resolve it by pulling it. All of this happened, except that there was no rope and there was no pool, we had, we had no tension because there was no trace. But the tension did happen because of the concentration on the very complicated pathways. So that was Knot and parts have not went into Score in order to provide the tension and the complicated pathways. But when I came back into the studio and looked at the work this way round, I didn't think it fulfilled itself as at a fully character level. So in other words, all the negotiations that we had during the rehearsal, all the arguments, all the discussions, all the mini societies that came up, and one person would approach making the knot in a completely different sociological way than another. I mean, I'm really talking about different. So I thought, Is there any way that I can bring that more to the surface? So take the abstraction away and make quite sure that even though in the intensity and the never ending-ness have never been hardly ever being able to stop while you're in this cycle of magnetism, periphery, vortex? Can we still find within that pattern, human endeavour, human moment? So that was Knot and then I call this one

Sam Collins

on the last one and missed the whole transition.

Siobhan Davies

It wasn't really a transition of title because not felt rather self? Well, it was an internal description, I wasn't actually sure that anybody else on the outside would know it was knot, I wasn't even sure if I wanted them to know it was or knot. Whereas it did look like a constant new series of possibilities, potential possibilities of meeting or not meeting of having magnetic pull or repel. And so it ended up being called A Series of Appointments, which partly comes out of a very fantastic book called lines by a man called Tim Ingold. If you come across him, I know Jill nosing. It's a fantastic book called lines. And at one point, he's talking about lines and mentions, I think at that point, Paul Clay and his walking the line and how dots become lines and how eventually they become a series of appointments. So I still haven't answered you whether they're three separate pieces, I think, two separate pieces, and three titles and three titles.

Sam Collins

Fair enough. Because it's interesting is the word or A Series of Appointments, as a series of possibilities, yes. And the idea of the idea of a line and a dot. Because I suppose my, my next stage, I suppose in from taking that, that early, early thoughts I had about the choreography then, and what I was viewing and then thinking further about what I was going to do with that information. What really, what really interests me was this idea that this the, what I'd seen the score, or the Knot existed almost as a series of possibilities as it existed as a potential that all these relationships were going on and buzzing around each other. And all this was happening. And that until until I came and, and saw this and observed this from wherever I was within the space. For me, it didn't, that none of those relationships were fixed. And in, I mean, it's sort of, for me, it tied into ideas of quantum physics, and the idea that until you until you see something it's not, it's not certain that it's not fixed. And for me, this became a kind of strange, not a metaphor, but a strange kind of mechanism that reflected that idea that, that everything, all these relationships between these four dancers, in between myself all existed in this, in this sort of higher hub of possibilities within the choreography, and then when I came in, and saw it, I then that that act of seeing it, then pin that down to one, one set of relationships that that existed. And it's sort of in a way, you know, like the, you know, the, the, the idea that the whole thing was a line and then when I when I came in saw it that that became a point on that line. And then if I came and saw it later on, it became it was a different point to what it was earlier in the piece. Which is sort of what I suppose I, I then tried to try to feed back into what became, I suppose the the core idea of what I wanted to do downstairs.

Siobhan Davies

So what was there a pre, was there another stage? Before you got to choosing a minor film from the 19? I'm not actually sure when it's from the

Sam Collins

1940

Siobhan Davies

Okay.

Sam Collins

1941

Siobhan Davies

So was there a, was there a moment before choosing the film? Or did you know,

Sam Collins

Ah no, the film, the film was the last the very last thing that, that that appeared I don't know how many of you actually seen this thing downstairs that I'm talking about. But the I mean, in terms of how it developed the first thing that was there was the mechanism. So that from this idea of of having this, this central core a possibility and then then a sort of outer outer ring of sort of fixed certainties of what fixed viewpoints if you like, then I I sort of developed the kind of mechanism that was going to do this. So this idea that there was a room in which an event was taking was taking place and that the the room itself would would fracture that event and throw it in a whole bunch of different possibilities which is essentially what the four projectors and the mirrors hanging in the middle of doing they're taking for its it's the same event going on on all four projectors a different time on each one and then the the simple act of this, this mirror setting in the middle then breaks it up into different parts and throws it onto different parts of the wall. And then what you see on the screens is sort of a fixed viewpoint if you like and that will always be different depending on when you see it and and whether you're watching screen one or screen for screen three or whatever and so that will that will develop really quite with it with a, with a with a pace and with a with a logic to it that I sort of understood. And then I ran into this problem that took most of this year to resolve was what that actual what that film was and what that what that what that event was, and in a way, what became really clear was actually that not that it wasn't important, but it wasn't the, the mechanism and the whole, the whole structure was far more important than actually what that what that film was, and all that film needed to do was was was backup this experience and, and feed into that experience, but it wasn't. So the the film, which is Alfred Hitchcock suspicion from 1941 is, is in a way just there to support this, this mechanism and this idea that, that within this, this core is this event that is full of all these potential relationships within it. And that by choosing a viewpoint around the outside, you're you're fixing one, one result and by being in that room, and then hearing what you hear your your experience as an observer is fixing down what that what your experience of that is.

Siobhan Davies

So it's in a way, it's a little, it's a demonstration a bit about how the mind works, the mind is given fragmented information, and we have a tendency to make sense of it by bringing it together.

Sam Collins

Yeah, yeah. The by, by, by consciously observing something, you're, you're you're giving it a form and you're giving it you're giving it a certainty that that's what you've seen. And then therefore, that, that for you. That's what it is, even though it potentially could have been a whole bunch of other things within, within explore, the person that's on that side of the room, as opposed to that side of the room gets a different experience of what they're, what they're viewing purely by where they are and their relationships and what's what's sort of going on.

Siobhan Davies

I mean, from a choreographic point of view, because that's the word I love using I'm gonna go, I'm gonna look at it as a choreographic potential. But it's, it's a fantastic use of fragmentation, which is very hard for us as physical players to do, because we're on the on button all the time. So if I put my arm up here, I inevitably have to put it somewhere else. And in the doing of it, that's not a fragment, because it has a, it has a completion. Whereas choreographically This is so delicious, because it deals with the choreographic concept of editing. And I just wish I could edit next, but I have to do this bit.

Sam Collins

Because we have we've spoken about that a lot in the past, the idea that a dancer can't, it's very, very hard for a dancer to edit, but whatever they, whatever they do has to have something even if it's even, it's just the the thought that's in before the movement has to exist. And there has to be a way of getting from here to here. They can't just suddenly be I mean,

Siobhan Davies

it's the kind of art delicious problem, but it is it's something one can go for a few years forgetting. I mean, I certainly forgot it at one point, I just thought that I you know, have to you have to do all of this. And then then you suddenly go, what are the things that you can do that help you not dwell on this interim moment? No solution yet, but trying, and then observation. And

I think that's the only thing is that I feel some work like that, that work downstairs, forces me to observe the moment. And then the moment again, but in a slightly different way. And then the moment again, but in a slightly different way, which I think sort of really draws concentration.

Gill Clarke

Like you could say about status, making the dots as you are coming to the content of it is what is the mechanism? Like that content is so light with tension.

Siobhan Davies

Yes,

Gill Clarke

that that also holds us I mean, with particularity of the gaze, and we're looking, suspending action in a way in the timing film feels like it feeds into all experienced as well, the tension

Siobhan Davies

and making and bringing forward anticipation and questioning, not

Gill Clarke

Not giving us satisfaction on the top not resolving.

Sam Collins

Yeah, because there was something that had to whatever it was, couldn't couldn't resolve, because it because it needed to sort of almost exist in this sort of suspended suspended time where that just I suppose whether the title of that conversation evolved comes from the conversation just keeps on going round and round and round and and I edited that particular scene in a way that I took out all the all the specifics of the conversation and the bits where it actually goes somewhere in the end where you you know actually what they're talking about. so that it can just continue to go round and round and round and round. And, and so when when you when you see it when you enter the room, that's the start of the session. And when you leave, that's the end of it. And that's what you take from it. But the thing just keeps, keeps going around around just nuts to why it was that that film or that Euro film, it was, it was something about the time, that particular time, and that was from the 1940s. And it's this idea that it's that it has it has an age to it, and it has a longevity to it as a film is very different if it had been a film from last year. And the thing that does, it's over different, it's of a different age, and which gives it a time element that was kind of important

Siobhan Davies 30:45

Why was it important but I mean, I'm sure I can see why it was important. Can you explain a bit more about why that was important?

Sam Collins

I just I wanted it to feel like it had a longevity, I suppose that it had something where were that, that this this event could potentially mean wasn't wasn't something that happened yesterday, that it's something that that was sort of almost archived within this room. And you were sort of coming to see it and it was still going on, it had some legs. And it was also I mean, a lot of it became very much sort of form following function in a way and that, it for me, it had to be black and white, because the black, when when you do put a colour film in that thing downstairs, it's it's way too psychedelic, and it's just doesn't work. So it had to be black and white. For me, it had to be of that era. And there was the content of it, the fact that the context of the fact that it's a conversation around the dinner table became really interesting and important to me. And that's what I ended up trying to find was was a conversation around the dinner table involving four people. Because there was something there's something very there's something that linked for me anyway, this idea of sitting around a dinner table and this conversation going on in the four people within it having a different viewpoint of what was actually said, There's something quite familiar and quite, I suppose quite choreographing for me, that, that experience in that in a way that wasn't overtly choreographic, because they don't they don't move they're sat down the whole time. And the like Joe was saying the choreography is actually the the glances and the looks that go which which are amazing and Joan Joan Fontaine, and that's got two lines and the whole whole scene, but she's the main character because she she just doesn't has these looks and this and this movement about her but given the context you see it in and her relationship to the other people around the table as a different meaning every time that it's lined up with something else.

Siobhan Davies

I want to look like Joan Fontaine

Sam Collins

From, from my, my perspective, having worked with having worked with Sue as a as a collaborator, on set on previous projects, and being given the privilege, thank you very much to, to work on something. Something was outside of the the singular piece, I suppose work on something that was that was my own in this context. For me, it hadn't. That was that was a really interesting experience. But I wanted to ask you how, for you this was a different experience of being because in this case, you were you were a commissioner, more so than a collaborator than a collaborator. And that you were making a work that you were then asking others to make work about that wasn't, wasn't all going to end up as one piece in the way that if you're making a dance piece, and you have done in the past that all the collaborators everyone is feeding into one, one work, whereas in this case, it was very, is very different because you were working on your work up here and everyone was feeding off that but going away making their own things and I I wondered how how that felt for you within the process of making this and also how that whether there still existed a feedback loop in the same way that I know there is when you're sort of collaborating

Siobhan Davies

Well, at this present time, it seems the most exciting way of working because several artists work do not have to exist in a confined space they can they can move they can they can move outside that space now. I have to be very careful because this is still within my embrace. It is in this building. And I set the project up so I must be very careful to be honest and go okay. It is still within the curtilage of work that I've sort of tried to trigger, but I very, I like the idea that dance is a generator of ideas that it's simply not a conduit for ideas to pass through, or a support system for other arts to align themselves with in a rather structured sense, or I liked the idea that people would come into the studio or see something, and that it would be gripped to their thinking it would be great to their emotion, it would, it would give them a reason to make. I don't like the word inspire it sounds too, out there. But we all need reasons to make and a lot of the time we just sit down and think and wait and find that reason to stand up. But should you be in a situation where somebody's thrown you out a little bit of spit? And said, Can you do a bit of grip, not spit, but quite quite some just throws out something within the curtilage idea. And I realised that and then, because you in, I didn't completely witness the works being made. Alice Oswald, the poet, came up on one rehearsal, sat incredibly silent, shook my hand at the end and said, the poems will be with you in a month. Well, that was a lot of exchange went on in there. Now over that month, she realised that her first response a bit like Sam's was not the one that was going to work. And she was going to do a series of poems and she, I asked her, rather shyly, I mean, she's a rather formidable poet. And she's down there in darkness, and, you know, sort of got sight romantic images of her being in sort of dark within the wind and the rain and the storm and the nature and of course she emailed back. And so that's exactly where she was, she was in a house in the distance with the rain and the storm in the wind. And she wrote all of this stuff. And she's she was beginning to send me stuff about wind, because she liked the fact she'd felt the dancers move in the studio. And, and the impact of the shift of elements in the studio, she found really exciting. And she tore all that work up. So I didn't get the poem in a month. And about five months later, I got the story of someone. Yes, I think. And I'd rather sort of, you know, tenderly emailed her and said, Well, you know, be lovely to know anything about this. And eventually, she sent back information we that we then had a couple of open discussions we had, we had one for the ceramic, or ceramic symposium, how delicious that a poet and a choreographer ended up in a ceramics symposium, but we did. And she turned around and said that her house had been a home for a young man who could only walk backwards. That was his psychology, he could only walk backwards. And she had found that out, and she wrote the poem, using the pace of the work, the circularity of the work, the wind of the work, and eventually, she had found that somebody had lived in her house and not lived very long, but could only walk backwards. But so this was an email exchange, apart from the ceramic symposium, and she came up to record the poem. But this distance did not take anything away from learning over a period of time and looking at a lot of other poetry. how

intricate intricately The thing is phrased. I mean, they are thinking at the atomic level of where you put consonants and vowels, not just about subject matter, of course, I was terribly keen on that. That's not where she commits consonants and vowels. link length of word, like the sentence where the sentence length where the end word links to the next word on the line where it doesn't, the amount of breath that is necessary. So where the punctuation is, and that she likes people to extend their breath a little bit in this rather than have the ease of punctuation which would allow them to have breath and, and suddenly, I was in touch with all of this other possibility and that was extraordinary. Now just talk about one other work which was the Clare Twomey piece this ceramic piece. And I do I don't, I didn't play uh, well, I met her through Cape Farewell and she had done something with the Cape Farewell, and we were in discussion a lot. And I just loved her physical sense of being in the room with the physical idea of clay. And that she, she, and when speaking to Edmund Devala, talking about bodies of clay and moisture and the muscularity of it and the cycle of it. And her original idea was to put tiny slivers of

ceramic tiles underneath the dancers feet. And as they circled every single time, it would be crushed, and dust spread. So I am fed back from that at high, again, an idea of renewal and destruction and the physicality of her being in the room or her object being in the room with us that would not normally be there. And over a period of time, she came to the filling that water the bowls with water. And I went through every stage with her and was in her at that point, rather new smart flat, in which we were filling bowls of clay and they were being destroyed, everywhere with water going down her rather pristine wooden floor. And judging timings and judging against like breath patterns of how the density of the clay will absorb the water and exactly how long it might take to break or how much variation you could have. So detail again, so in the three works, that just been speaking about the level of atomic detail that each artist brings to their material to their medium to their conceptual thought. That's what gives you feedback. And if I can let them do exactly what they want in this moment, that is the moment I'm going to learn the most because they haven't had to adjust anything to me. In a way, letting them be, has taught me more than anything else. And I would believe it will teach us maybe the wrong word. It exposes us to the gap between works between mediums between material, and in that oscillation that moves from one piece of material, one artistic thought to the other, that's when we start picking up on knowledge or whatever, you know, emotional feeling or form.

Sam Collins

I'm glad because it for me having having done both having collaborated closely with with you on projects in the past and having this experience because I I was very conscious that I suddenly, I mean, initially I was around for rehearsal. But then I've as as we've got closer to, to now that in the last few months, I haven't haven't been I wasn't in rehearsals anywhere near as much as what, what I have been on previous projects in the past. And for me, I needed to do that I needed, I needed to separate myself from there was nothing. Because I was trying to work from this response, then, in a way I've had that response. And the work had gone off in another tangent that I needed to go off and work differently. And we're in work just on on my response and not not because constantly coming back to the to the router but

Siobhan Davies

because we can we can adjust each other. And I think in the traditional collaborative sense, which of course is delicious, the adjustment. I mean, it can be delicious, but it can also take you what my my word is it takes you off the can take you off the bone. And that sometimes being taken off the bone is really good because it puts you into an illogical situation that you learn from. But sometimes the challenge of trying to, to discover the thing itself without being drawn back into the magnetic force of maybe the original work of Don Patterson, the poet said something which I really liked when I was talking about this idea to him. And he said how wonderful it is that when the sister arts temper each other. And I thought I liked that sentence because I think maybe what's happening in this building is that we aren't adjusting to each other but in some ways we are tempering each other by each other's understanding of the material that we use, and looking at the time. Do we have time? I got one more question for Sam but I don't have to ask it because it's really off the ball because maybe we should open it up. Okay.

Sam Collins

I'll give a short answer. I think it's a bit of a okay.

Siobhan Davies

Sam is a is a visual artist. He has also supported and helped other visual artists to make present their work. He has worked in the theatre designing for Richard the third in a company whose name I've just forgotten

Sam Collins 45:07

Sulayman Al-Bassam, which are not meant to know.

Siobhan Davies

Okay, fine. So he has had to have dialogues with a theatre based artists and more visual based artists. And my question is, how is your dialogue different? And how do you do you have to adjust to one person's use of language and expectation within that language to the other group? Yeah, it's tricky.

Sam Collins

Actually, the funny the font, I was trying to think about what the, what the different dialogues are, and whether I do respond differently working between between theatre and dance and the art world and, and actually the thinking about it, that, actually, the thing that strikes me is actually they, it's not so much the differences, it's the similarities. And that actually, the, what has enabled me to be able to work between all the different different contexts is actually the similarities I find that exist within them. And there are, there are very obvious differences and differences in detail, but but actually, they're all whether I'm working with a with a, with a theatre director, or with a choreographer, or with an artist trying to realise something or

design something or whatever else, it's fundamentally about, about making something and about an idea, and how you how you bring that idea to fruition. And it's, and I think there's, there's a different emphasis outside of the details between between the different art forms, but the, the core of it is, is still the same. And for me, the the dialogues ended up being being quite quite similar, in a way rather than different that, that you're essentially talking about ideas, and how to how to how to bring these ideas forward in some form or another, and if and how to support these ideas, I suppose is the the other crucial thing and if it if it appears on the stage, then then it's set design, and that's forming a function there, if it appears in the gallery, then it's, then it's an artwork, and it's forming another function, but, but of course, they're all they're all actually quite similar, which is, I think, partly probably why there's this dialogue that that you set up within this building, and this idea that of you laying a seed, which is essentially choreographic, and then everyone being able to respond to it and having this, this feedback, and, and actually, the, the show, if you like, as a whole, the exhibition as a whole has a coherency about is, is because all these other words, all these art forms can actually talk to each other and the dialogue is at a ground level very, very similar. Other than really boring things, I can't think of differences.

Siobhan Davies

I think it's fascinating how the material that we work with, adjusts how will the actual material whether we decide as choreographers to work solely with the body. And then if a certain point that I'm talking about me at this moment, I think I worked for a long time worrying about this and what to do with it. And it took a while to start extending the idea of this towards space and towards time and towards other kinds of connections. So my by fault, I allowed my material to in some ways to hold me back or maybe I need to learn a lot about it. And then I look at other people's material like clay and what Claire Twomey has done which is which is break help the amongst artists who've broken down the idea of the perfect pot or the object objectified pot and moved clay as a as a live material into places and breaking it and powdering it or making it into a quite theatrical gesture and I hate saying these things without giving you examples. There's a very beautiful piece in which he was in Huguenot London house of Spitalfields. So with no electric lights, so light coming through Gorgeous Georgian glass. And she didn't she was offered the chance to be in this room and there was a table there with chairs. And some, you could put pots and you could put tables, I mean, you could put plates and knives and forks on it. And she just covered it with Wedgwood blue dust. I mean, which is the most extraordinary blue. So in this light, this blue dust shimmered on this table with these objects slightly being washed by blue as the couple of weeks passed. And that was she took it so far away from objectified parts into this blue dust. And so she, she followed her material through to a different place. And I just found that incredibly exciting. So not to be drawn back by our material, which might well in my case was my body for a while.

Sam Collins

But as I say you've done something similar with this because you've you've gone so far away from in the same way that Claire went so far away from the pot, bringing down to just being about the dust. With something like this. You've gone so far away from from dance, it just being dancers walking around in a circle. It's a similar.

Siobhan Davies

Why is it such a heave, when it's your own medium, you're getting chest pain? So reaching chest pain. Do you have any questions about it?

Gill Clarke

Also what you spoke about this? In line?

Siobhan Davies

Yes. Yes.

Audience

Also restricts how far you can break it down.

Siobhan Davies

Yes. Yes, then that's true. That is true. Is there a question or a thought? Or desire? Yes.

Audience

Might it might be that you've answered it already in how it's very clear how your initial response is colour in a way by having a specific objective in mind when we're looking at that point in terms of thinking about filming it?

Sam Collins

Yeah, possibly. Possibly. In hindsight, I think it probably could probably fit into it. But I tend to look that way. Anyway, I tend to be very aware of what

Siobhan Davies

I couldn't hear.

Audience

Because I tend to look that way as a filmmaker. Yes.

Sam Collins

I suppose some tin because I'm not a filmmaker. But I, I tend to look to be very aware of my own perspective, when I'm looking at things. And I think it's something I think it's to do with being being aware spatially of what I'm looking at and where I am in relation to it as well. And that, that tends to sort of, for me tends to sort of frame frame things. So I don't know, whether

Gill Clarke

I was curious about was that all the other artists commissioned, we're coming fresh to this strange thing that happens in the studio, or the abstracted view from above, but, but it feels like quite a few of them. Their response was really tempered by watching something in process, yes into action. And that is so familiar to you. In terms of your daily observation, that the scenes work and of dancers that work, and it feels like in the past, in collaborating, you've been concerned with a visual environment that has its activity, but I'm just wondering if it's something about you're looking into supply and whether there was some kind of shift for you in, in sort of stepping back in a way, or was the permission that you were given to separate from this thing? Or how hard it was to see it as strange because it was

Sam Collins

Yeah, it was, it was hard to it was to be honest, it was it was quite, I find it quite difficult to to make that jump from observing something and and then making something within the context of what I've observed. So that we, in terms of in terms of the of this in terms of how what was seen before, obviously seeing rehearsals, but I'm looking at it slightly different because I'm, I'm looking at what, at this space that they're moving through the dancers are moving through and what potentially that space should be. And, and it was a very, it was a very different experience just to look at, at the dancers, and what, without any real concern about what it was that they were moving through, it was just about about them. And it's, and I did initially find it quite, quite difficult to, to, to think about creating something that was completely outside of that, of that realm. Whereas behind it because of that, that previous experience of being in rehearsals and seeing the dancers, but but my response always needing to be to be to occupy the same space as what I was what I was seeing. And it is an it is really difficult. And it's very, very nice to be free of not having to worry about the dances, tripping over the chairs and the table falling through the space.

Siobhan Davies

But it's also a set kind of, I mean, aren't our minds having to deal with things like that all the time having to, you know, we experience something second by second, which are, in fact, separate, separate elements in our lives, they may, they may all come a day, but they are there. And they are attached because you're the one that sees them, or you're the one that lives them. But we are so much passes us by all the time. And then we make those links that we were discussing the our mind likes to make links, or likes to make gaps, links or gaps. But we're doing that all the time. So it just seems a sort of celebration of that's how we that's how I think maybe I'm just weird. seriously worried. I'm wandering around seeing everything in his broken down forms.

Sam Collins

You're not the only one

Gill Clarke

Well that's alright then

Siobhan Davies

another question or something? I like this way of working? I think I'd be I think I'd probably have to

Sam Collins

have a holiday first.

Siobhan Davies

I might have a holiday first. The next. The next things that we are doing is I've asked Matthias Sperling. And in some way I'm involved, but I haven't quite worked out what it is to work with Claire Barclay's piece that's on at the White Chapel. And that will be turning up next March. And then we are in the early stages of I asked for dance artists to work with. Actually, it is at the moment, only three visual artists stroke performance artists, as commissions. So I, I chose the visual artists. One is a performance artist, with the idea that any of the dance artist could refuse my choice. Absolutely. But I felt that I was it was part of my help, I hope to offer them one or two artists. And those have now started and that's going to be that's going to be in the Arcola theatre, but not in its theatre structure, but in its new structure. So these are different manifestations. So it's not like ROTOR but they are coexisting. And the fascinating thing is, partly because I have done this, and maybe the Victoria Miro project last year, I anticipated a conversation I thought they might have, which I probably shouldn't have, but I did. And and it's partly why I asked Sam that question about different dialogues. Because then what there has been moments in which the visual artist has probably weighted themselves more to a conceptual thought. And the dance artists weighted themselves I'm not I'm not saying they didn't have conceptual thought to it, but waited themselves more to process. And when those two conversations were in the same room, they felt as if they were very different stages of mutual development. And that felt something I'd like to understand more. Because the the the the dancer had conceived something and the visual artists were definitely going through a process, but the timetable was different. And that I mean, of course we haven't got there yet because we've done it yet. But at the moment that timetable is quite different

Audience

I have a question to say the like throwing things around so By the grace of my personal views what made you what inspires you

Siobhan Davies 1:00:10

me to go out of the chair? No, no, no. No, I can certainly sit in the chair for a long time. No my nickname is Buzz because apparently I buzz around a lot doing actually, I do have terrible I know exactly how I'm going to answer and it's really awful, I love watching other people work. That's terrible. But there is an element of truth in that I actually do. I like the idea that inherent in our medium, there are plenty of things that bubble about that we don't always that we can't necessarily always grasp. But that if you try and release that bubble of activity, and get and find a group of people curious and interested to pay with it to ride it to find out something through the processes that happen then something delicious can turn up and it's because of the medium that we we exist in and I find I find our medium intriguing, partly because I don't think it's recognised for it's worth and and partly because maybe it hasn't had the time. And partly it hasn't had the background history. I mean, I know it does have background history but it's not always tangible for everybody to get hold of. So I sort of feel we could be on a really good moment because it feels right there's curiosity from the other art forms there's curiosity from other people provided we don't go down the health route too much sorry it's a bit of a deep just hear the government going is it healthy sorry, that's just a moment deep provided we keep it we we display its intelligence and its forms and its delight. I think we've got lots to do and go home and have supper is that alright to you? Okay, are you happy? Is it now? An autumn evening and go home to your fireworks that you didn't do on? Friday this is true. Having sparklers with what

Audience

are different of the week than the one I was that somebody came in. Oh yeah, that was delicious. That was lovely. That was wonderful, isn't it there

Siobhan Davies

was more different Victorian mirror which we were in a gallery last year and there was just a funny story. And lots of very quite different people came in but lots of visual art people and a few try and be subtle Sue. Try not to say something you will regret a few people with very very good heels and very, very good handbags. Okay, is that subtle enough? And there was a woman who came in heels like this and immensely great handbags and shopping bags from places that you and I can't even look in the window. Okay. And she came in one door and she walked straight across Deborah and Henry and everybody else out that way with the handbags and she turned around and she walked straight back out again. I really liked her I thought she was terrific, well, they just they just come straight in. Yeah. Which is so sad because you need because you don't you I can't remember who told me you can't you don't see us. You census but you don't see us unless Elspeth comes out and says, Why are you mopping the floor so you mustn't treat you that way? Because my 99 year old grandmother who said she rang me up that night and went now I know you like Gill a lot. I know you respect her. Why are you asking her to mop the floor and I hadn't I had to go round on on Monday and explain it to her because she still you still really affronted? Sorry, I'm sure we should stop.

Audience

Your original one of the background is visual arts. But my question is in your career how do we see that background influencing your work? And now is it more influence now than before, like you bring, you said you don't want to collaborate with different artists. Your visual arts background

Siobhan Davies

I have to be very honest and said, I went to art school for a matter of months. And it was in the 60s, and we were on strike the entire time. You know, I think we have to be a bit steady about this. But I, I did have a visual art background in the sense that I, my parents were at that time, in a position which they lost that position in which they collected a lot of art. And I was incredibly lucky as a child being. And my godparents lived about listening to conversations with visual artists of the 1950s at really amazing people. So in in that sense, it was there. And in that sense, I suppose I've always gone to galleries to be to be completely absorbed by what I sense or feel, but also read. I mean, the other arts are just fantastic. We just have to be so careful that we don't limit ourselves to the one that we get drowned in. Because the others are terrific for us, as we must be terrific for them. So no, sadly, my art school background was fairly

Sam Collins

because I, I would describe Sue as an as an artist, foremost, to me, you're an artist that works in choreography, more so than think so that it gets back to this sort of similarities between the different things that you're that it's an it's a it's a discipline, it's a material, and it's a con context in which you're working, but it's still still working as an artist. Somewhere more like Claire Twomey downstairs is a ceramicist, which is an artist but that just happens to work in ceramics.

Siobhan Davies

It's fascinating when our medium is that odd balance within us about where the medium sits in, in our artistic endeavour, and when and sometimes it rises above us and slightly overwhelms us and sometimes, of course, it's the thing that helps us and takes us forward I know we should stop Thank you, Sam, very very much.

Sam Collins

Thank you

Gill Clarke

Well I have the sense that you've probably all been to ROTOR already this week as well.

Siobhan Davies

Could you get other people to come too?

Gill Clarke

It's on five to nine Wednesday, Friday

Siobhan Davies

And it's not always as expensive as it says.

Gill Clarke

Especially if you're a student,

Siobhan Davies

especially if you're a student.

Gill Clarke 1:08:19

Next week, we have Scott deLahunta and he's going to talk about choreographic objects, but he's interested in digital media can help in creating traces of our thinking, as well as archiving our objects. It's worked on synchronous objects objects for for sites to is a conversation around series digital archive. He's been working a lot recently with Wayne McGregor on some choreographic thinking tools. So he's going to come and share his thoughts about all of that. Thank you. Thank you

(Outro: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021)

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