

## The Artist Interview in oral /art history (Leeds 5-7 Apr 06)

Ellen Tait

### CALL FOR PAPERS

The Artist Interview: contents and contentions in oral history/art history

Session at 32nd AAH Annual Conference

5-7 April 2006

Leeds University

Conference organiser : Fred Orton

Chairs: Jon Wood (Henry Moore Institute), Rob Perks (National Sound Archive,) and Bill Furlong (Audio Arts)

Deadline for papers: 11th November 2005

With more and more work being carried out on contemporary art and on artists who were active after 1950, the artist interview has increasingly become an important source of information for scholars. The artist interview can be accessed both as text and as recording. There is a growing literature of material in transcribed and published form: from Katharine Kuh's *The Artist's Voice* (1960), to Patricia Norvell's *Recording Conceptual Art* (2001), Kersten Mey's *Sculpsit: Contemporary Artists on Sculpture and Beyond* (2001), Sandy Nairne's *Art Now: Interviews with Modern Artists* (2002) and Judith Olch Richards' *Inside the Studio* (2004). There is also a growing number of archives of original recordings, accumulated through the important work done in the last few decades by organisations such as 'Audio Arts' (est. 1973) and the 'Artists' Lives' project (est. 1990) at the National Sound Archive.

Since the introduction of the Phillips audio cassette in the early 1960s, the widespread availability of recording equipment (and then other digital communications technologies later on) has meant that scholars - and anyone with an interest in art, for that matter - can not only listen to recordings (and read transcripts), but also easily conduct such interviews themselves. This has also meant that artists too have been more easily able to speak for themselves - in conversation and on record - and bypass critical and historical assessment by a third party. Such developments are facilitating

the rise of oral testimony from the margins into the academic mainstream. Oral history is an important component of inter-textual thinking, forcing the reconsideration of other documentary sources and drawing attention to the mediated nature of interpretation. This strand aims to examine the ramifications of these issues and consider the artist interview as an interesting place of intersection for art criticism, art history and histories of contemporary practice.

Papers are invited that look critically at the complicated status and function of the artist interview, recorded on tape, film, video, DVD etc. and that address one or other of the following areas of enquiry:

**The artist interview as an emerging critical genre and the historiography of this format (from the questionnaire to digital recording).**

The problems of 'missing' content - and how we deal with the differences between the edited and unedited, the spoken/heard and the transcribed/read.

**The 'authenticity' of the artist's voice and the character and directness of the spoken word**

The role, position and expertise of the interviewer, and the dialogic relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

**The artist interview not only as primary source, but also as a work of art in its own right, inseparable from artistic practice**

The application of oral history, as a research tool, in the museum and gallery, conservation department, archive and library.

For further information please call Ellen Tait on 0113 246 7467. Please submit abstracts (c.500 words) to [ellen@henry-moore.ac.uk](mailto:ellen@henry-moore.ac.uk) or by post to Ellen Tait, The Henry Moore Institute, 74 The Headrow, Leeds, LS1 3AH by 11 November 2005.

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