

**KD:** Kathy Dalwood, chair

**MD:** Mary Doyle

**PH:** Paul Hedge

**KD: We're going to talk about the various kinds of opportunities which artists might apply to or submit work for such as open submissions exhibitions, competitions, residencies and commissions. Paul and Mary will give us some insight into what it's like being in the selector's role.**

**So first question, what is the starting point for artists when they are considering making these kinds of applications?**

**MD:** You have to look at the criteria to see if it's something that interests you and consider how you would benefit from the experience. If it's a major commission or residency you really have to think about whether its going to extend your experience and your work in some way. You get a lot of people who apply for things and you think 'why did they apply?' it is just so inappropriate for them.

**KD: So that's a problem you come across when you're selecting?**

**MD:** When you go through the selection process there are a number of artists who are not that suitable and they get rejected straightaway. I know it takes so long to put an application in. It's a lot of work, a lot of time and in some cases you have to pay for it. And you know that some people are not going to get a chance. So consider what you are doing first. Make sure it's something you really want to do. Then you'll make a really good application.

**KD: What kind of preparation can artists make in advance of submitting for a competition, or other types of opportunities?**

**PH:** I think the key thing in the art world is that a lot of things are done on a social level. Find out who is selecting. For instance if you're applying to East [annual selected exhibition at Norwich School of Art], find out whether or not the judges that year might be sympathetic to your work. I think it might cost you about £15 to apply and you if think they won't be interested in your work, then you're flushing £15 down the drain.

Also think about whether a competition is appropriate for your work. A lot of prizes certainly favour painters, especially of the watercolour variety, I've noticed. So if you are a water-colourist then you are in luck. If you make colossal installations with piles of trash, there are

probably not so many prizes for you. But there will be something for you. So I would say get out there and have a look at the prizes before you apply.

If you're thinking about applying for Prospects Drawing Prize next year make sure you see it this year. Try and get a feel for what the prize is about. The BP Painting Prize might be appropriate for some people and might not be appropriate for conceptual portraits. You'll get a feel for what particular competitions are offering, because of A) who is the judge and B) what the shows look like.

If you're going for commissions, you'll probably find that art consultants will be involved in some way. And they will be hugely impressed if you've done your homework on them. One of our gallery artists was selected for a Safeway supermarkets project recently. They did some research about Safeways - nothing to do with art at all - they found out what their gross turnover was, who was the Managing Director, who was on the Board of Directors, all that sort of stuff. It actually helped with being a successful applicant.

**KD: What about artists actually approaching people they know are going to be selecting? Is there ever a situation where that can be allowed?**

**MD:** That's a tricky one. I think if you know someone on the panel well enough you can go up to them and say 'this is something I'm considering, is it worth my while?' It's not something I would say you should do every time but you should at least look at who is on the panel. If you know what their taste is or if you know that half the panel is interested in painting and you are a video artist, you know that you haven't got a chance. So it's research and research into the history of the prize.

**KD: I guess people could think that regardless of what the judges' own personal interests were that they would put those on one side when it came to taking on a judging role. Perhaps people have the perception that judges have to be fair?**

**PH:** Well I think there is a sort of fairness, but it comes over a period of time. Prizes go on year after year after year. And if you are being asked to select a prize you assume that people are interested in your taste. The other thing is that generally you have to curate a show out of all the stuff that you select so you've also got one eye on what it's going to look like in a gallery because the last thing that you want is a huge big dog's dinner making you look like a complete idiot. You're going to select some things that you think will make an interesting show so you've got your eye on not just individual artists but the overall look of the exhibition. And maybe by looking through slides you'll come up with a concept for what the show is

emphasising this year. And maybe it will be work to do with the body or commercialism and how it has affected the art world etc.

**MD:** At Prospects for instance it seemed to be thousands of applications and it was three days in a dark room with hundreds and hundreds of slides. And there were so many people doing a specific type of work that you can't include them all. You have to gauge a piece against what's been selected so far or what you think works well against another. But there is lots of similar work going on and it's a gamble, really.

**KD:** **So you're both saying that you can at least put the odds a little more in your favour if (a) you have thought through whether this an appropriate context for your work, and (b) you have researched the back story as much as possible, looked at the selectors, looked at what has gone before in that exhibition, or that residency etc. And in the case of residencies or commissions when you meet the people involved you should be equipped to not only talk about your work but to show some understanding of the commissioner and their organization.**

**Can we talk about the agendas and hidden agendas at work in these situations- how can artists get to the bottom of it all?**

**PH:** The art world is completely clandestine and there are all sorts of political agendas going on all the time. It's as well that you know all this stuff and that you don't think it is all fair. It's not. It's not fair and it is better to say that now so that you can deal with the rejection really easily. I spend my entire time in the gallery with younger artists that I work with, dealing with their sense of rejection about things that they have no control over and that are political. At one point I said to a lot of the artists I work with, it's actually better that you don't apply for things but wait for a while until you've built your career up a little bit. Then, maybe apply for things because artists can get on a roll where they're selected for all sorts of things.

And then of course there are times when they're not selected for anything. I can't tell you why except that there are all these decisions that go on behind closed doors and quite a lot of them happen for no particular reason - fashion - I think that is probably the best way of describing it. I just think it is human nature. People favour certain people.

If I said to all of you 'Select some people to put a show on together' you will probably choose people within your circle of friends. And you would probably choose work that you admire but could also get access to. And you might involve ideas that interest you personally. And those rules are probably just expanded a little bit for the selection of prizes. But I think friendships play an enormous part.

Being aware of particular works and particular artists and horse-trading between commercial galleries - all those things play a part in how people are selected for exhibitions.

**KD: You mentioned friendships. Would artists be right in assuming that a judge would favour an artist submitting work, if they knew them personally?**

**PH:** Yes

**MD:** Yes probably. I've been on panels where I know artist friends who have applied.

**PH:** I wouldn't always select them but generally if I'm interested in that particular sort of work I probably would. It's not like some kind of evil plot against people trying to get into competitions but if you've got a particular agenda and you like particular things then it seems quite normal that you would select it. It would be ridiculous to say I like that but I won't select it because it's by someone I know, so I'll select this thing over here that I don't like!

**KD: When you put it like that it seems so obvious. I'm sure I'm not alone in having equated selecting panels with a court of law where you expect judges to be completely impartial. But it isn't a court of law and so all these liaisons will have an impact.**

**MD:** Sometimes you get a disclosure thing asking 'if you know any of the artists let us know before the selection panel starts' and then you can leave the room when their work comes up. But this is more likely if you're on a panel for an artist's award or grant.

**PH:** The problem is the art world is so small.

**MD:** You don't tell anybody because you want to be able to support your friend. So you just don't let on that you know the person.

**PH:** So it is a big evil plot!

**KD: Taking together all the kinds of events we're talking about - competitions, art prizes, commercially sponsored open submission shows etc - how do you think they are viewed in the art world and, secondly, if artists win or are selected for them, does that have a positive impact on their career and profile?**

**MD:** I think they are all good things. There used to be only one painting prize, now there's more and therefore more opportunities for artists to show their work. I think they do offer a

useful opportunity for artists to profile themselves. If you're not having regular exhibitions or aren't represented by a gallery, they can be the way for people to get to know your work.

**PH:** I've got very mixed opinions about them, I have to say. I can understand it from a commercial sponsor's point of view. They might want to promote their brand by attaching themselves to an art prize and artists are pragmatic about that. They get something out of us and we get something out them. And I think it's very much down to the artist how they use a prize to promote themselves - a point which a lot of people don't take very seriously.

Artists that I've worked with tend to think they are going to get a lot more from being selected for a prize than they actually do plus the whole procedure happens much more quickly than they realize. They're selected for a prize and it's over in a month. They have a little exhibition and it might be in a really obscure place so no one gets to see it, which is quite often the case. So the ones that everyone wants to get into are obviously in the prime spots - the Turner Prize and the Becks' prize at the ICA - because their work is going to be seen by a much broader group of people.

But I know quite a few people who've been selected for competition show like Becks and although they haven't won the prize, they've actually done a lot better than the prize winner because they've used the situation more to their advantage. They've hung out in the ICA bar showing people their work in the gallery and making a real effort that month to make sure that everyone they need to see the work gets to see it. They get all the critics down there and all their contacts down there. Don't expect the sponsors or the selectors to do a lot for you. The selectors may send out cards to your contacts, they may not. So it's much better that you write a personal note, send it with the card and say, 'come to this, I'm in it'. Even if you have to arrange a minibus to take them there, make sure they see your work in that context if you think it looks good. If it looks terrible, don't! It's any way you can get on basically and an art prize might be that but you really have to work at it.

**KD: So in itself, winning a prize or whatever, isn't a passport to fame, success and money?**

**PH:** It isn't at all. I think it is essentially, generally a huge disappointment to artists. Of course it's very flattering that someone selects you for something which makes it all the more disappointing when your work arrives in the gallery and nothing much happens. It sits around there for a month and off it goes. And then you're back to square one. I personally believe that a longer-term support system for artists is better - people who are rooting for them over a long period of time.

**KD: So can we come on to your experiences selecting - the number of entrants, how you view the work and discuss it etc?**

**MD:** When I selected for Prospects I think there were 5 judges and about 300 entrants which we got down to seventy. It was videos, CDs, anything and everything. There was a form, a CV and up to ten slides and a small written statement. We were stuck in a dark room for three days and we were only supposed to be there for a day!

We would go through everything pretty fast and each of us wrote down a 'no', a 'maybe', or a 'yes'. So you go through the first stage quite quickly, then you all get together and say 'right is there anybody you want to reject straight away?'

**KD: Do the rejects really jump out at you?**

**MD:** Yes. You wouldn't even get through all their slides. As far as two and that's enough.

**KD: So there's a pretty wide standard of work?**

**MD:** Yes, I think in open submissions there always is. A huge range of quality of work and so obviously the better quality work stands out immediately and goes through to the 'maybe' stage. And the extremely good quality gets through to the 'yes' and is short-listed. But it actually got quite hard to include a lot of yes's and we had to cut down because of the size of the space.

**KD: How did you do that?**

**MD:** With a lot of difficulty!

**KD: What kind of arguments and discussions did you have?**

**MD:** Well it's all sorts of things. It's the size of the work. I mean that shouldn't determine whether or not the work goes in or not but obviously some are quite big and you have to try and find space for them. But there are other criteria. For example some people put proposals in to do something outside the building and we had to see whether it was feasible. So we'd discuss that for a long time and decided yes it could be. You decide it case by case. Would it cost money? Would the artist provide materials? How long is going to take to make etc. And then there is the question of whether you put in one or two pieces by that artist if they are both very strong works. Do you just put one in? How does it fit with all those others that have been selected? And like Paul says 'does it make sense as an exhibition'?

**PH:** I had an experience much like the one Mary's described, in a darkened room in a Belfast Chamber of Commerce with lots of dark wood. There was myself, a selector from a power plant in Toronto and an art history professor from the University of Ulster. We started off by being very conscientious, ploughing through tons of slides of sculptures carved out of tree trunks on chairs in the back garden. There were lots of those sorts of slides. People must have thought, 'I must apply for this - what am I going to do? I've got this little camera, I'll photograph (the sculpture) in the back garden.' There were tons of those. Not very impressive when your looking at ten of them.

So we started off by looking at all ten slides but by the end of it we knew in the first moment, no and that was the end of it. There were about six hundred entrants. So we had tons of stuff to get through and I'd say a good eight-tenths of what we looked through was complete crap. Things that even your mum wouldn't be impressed with. Then there were some interesting things there. Amazingly, in the little bit that we had left, there was enough to select about five shows from. So we had to be quite tough actually.

The practicalities did make a difference. I know Mary says the size shouldn't matter but if it won't go through the door then it won't get in. It's as simple as that. Some people had put in things that were ridiculous. We had two days to put this show up and someone proposes to put a million threads through the gallery! It's not going to happen, however interesting it was. So good work got submitted and good work got rejected. And very, very noisy things got rejected as well. Just from the point of view of the people looking after the show - they said 'if you select any of those really noisy things we're going to kill you!' It was interesting and very hard work and at the end of it we had to hang the show. It was a very gruelling week from what I remember of it, which was lightened by the fact that we were in Belfast and there was some very good Guinness in the evening to be drunk.

**KD: What are relationships between selectors like and how do you resolve disagreements?**

**PH:** There are all sorts of battles and strange clandestine goings on. You're thrown into a situation with two or three other judges who you've never met before and they might have a completely different agenda from yours. It's sometimes like horse trading 'You can have him in if I can have her in'.

**MD:** Yes. That does go on. One time a selector said, 'I don't want that work, if that piece goes through I'm resigning!'. She was so adamant about it. But of course there was a compromise

in the end. She got one of her mates in and the others got one of their mates in. It was worked out but it got quite argumentative, but quite funny as well.

**KD: What about looking at video? Do you look at the whole video, or a fragment?**

**MD:** Well if you've got an hour long video, I don't think most panel situations are able to view something that long. It's best to show clips. It's good to have a show reel of a number of videos and provide a longer version as well.

**PH:** Whatever you're presenting - slides, video, other information - you have to think about the people who are going to look at it. If you're submitting a video you stand much more of a chance of getting in, believe me, if you've made it easy to watch. So high quality video, reasonable editing and possibly a show reel would be very useful.

**KD: Can we talk a bit about commissions and residencies. That's a longer selection process isn't it, and you get to actually meet the artist?**

**MD:** I was involved in putting forward two artists for a residency in Durham which is set in a very isolated clerical community. It was a fantastic opportunity and rich in lots of ways but the artist had to give up their own studio and move there for a year. I found it really difficult as selector because I was going through lots of people thinking they would be great but I knew they couldn't do it because they've got (a) a kid (b) too many other commitments or (c) they have exhibitions coinciding within that time period. So it was difficult to find two artists who I knew had a good chance and would have got something out of it.

Another thing selectors take into account in relation to residencies is if there's a teaching commitment attached. You've got to think whether the artist has experience and even if not, would they give value to that university or school etc.

**PH:** I think probably one of the key things about residencies is that if the artist has to move a long way away it can be a very lonely experience. There's always an agenda and people will want you there as a local resource. So apart from the ecstasy of winning some time in the studio where you don't have to think about rent etc there are other issues to deal with. Artists that I've worked with have ended up going home at least two days a week out of loneliness so they don't actually get the best out of the residency. Because they are used to a particular structure in their lives and they don't get that when they go somewhere else.

**KD: Could you give some advice about presentation?**

**PH:** Make it easy. Use the format that the rules state. If it's photographs or slides, try and spend a little bit of money on getting the best person to take the photographs of your work. Out of focus 35mm slides of things propped up on a kitchen table in the back garden do not make you look like you are a real contender, whereas if you employ a person who knows how to take a great photograph of your work you can actually improve your chances.

Make sure your work is packed properly and in the way that they suggest. Work quite often gets damaged when it's submitted to open submissions - as some of you will have already probably noticed!

Most submissions are by slide - which is very difficult with a sound piece. How to present that in an environment that is complementary to what you do is difficult. Actually some people really benefit from slides. The nineties trend of big billboard brash stuff really benefited from slides but if you make subtle, ephemeral work slides don't really help you, I have to say, for open submissions.

**MD:** I think that's the problem with open submission competitions and exhibitions. There are some very delicate works that gets passed by. But equally, to be fair to the artist, somebody might say 'hang on a minute I can't see that properly, it's too fast, let's go back'.

**PH:** I think it's when you get towards the end of the process, once you've weeded out a lot of things that visually are not doing it for you, you get time to go through the more subtle stuff and things you've selected. Actually quite a lot of the subtle stuff does get through because anyone who's selected an open submission exhibition before, realises that it's difficult to see that on a transparency or slide and you might pay it a little bit more attention as it's going through.

**MD:** Another thing to remember, If you've got a CD generated on a Mac etc, find out what facilities they have because there is nothing worse than not being able to see the work.

**KD: Is it important to know the size?**

**MD:** Yes, it's absolutely crucial to know the size. And insert a sheet with numbers and titles which will cross reference with the slides.

**PH:** It's always quite useful to know if it's a big work - put a hand or a person next to it.

**KD: What about written statements?**

**PH:** Short, succinct and to the point. Just think about what's going to make your work stand out amongst six hundred people's work. Don't go into lots of detail about, say, constructivism about the body. When you read through all this stuff as a selector it's amazing how similar it all is. People who are living at a particular time, their concerns are, not surprisingly, quite similar. So it doesn't really impress you a lot when you are reading through tons of artist's statements. I think no more than two paragraphs of explanation about very core concerns of the work, no more.

**MD:** If it's not clear what your work is made of, then include that, but keep it very short, but not too much about the theory of your work. Because it drives people mad.

Member of audience: I hate doing it. What's the point? Why do I have to do it when I submit work? If I didn't do it would you still consider the application?

**PH:** You don't have to do it. I think that's quite a good idea personally, I'm all for it. No one cares what's written unless it's really important. Frankly when you have to get through eight hundred slides, no one is really interested, they just think, is that thing visually interesting and commanding and will that look good in a show.

**MD:** Sometimes you read a statement and you look at the work and neither of them connect. You think, is that the same artist? That's why you have to keep it very clear and to the point. And if there is a query about how the work's made and you think it's important to let people know then do include that.

**KD: What happens when you are all in a darkened room? Does someone read out the statements?**

**MD:** Yes usually. In one case there was somebody reading out all the statements as the next artist came up and it was a bit like seeing a bad image projected, it was just so turgid. It was a bit like, 'oh just forget that'. It put us off the work straight away.

**PH:** I suppose there was the entertainment element with some of the statements. But some people took themselves way too seriously and we didn't select their work generally.

**MD:** But it's different for commissions and residencies. You have to put forward a proposal about what you might make or why you want that residency. And that's quite crucial, the written side of things.

**KD: Could you both give one final piece of advice?**

**MD:** Think about it like this, if you were on the other side and you were looking at your application, would you be interested in it ?

**PH:** Weigh up very, very carefully whether you think prizes are worth applying for at the stage of your career that you are at. That would be my general piece of advice.

**[After the initial interview led by Kathy Dalwood, Paul Hedge stayed on to answer questions from the audience]**

**Q:** I've just finished an MA and I'm thinking 'How do I get representation?' How do you feel, as a gallery owner, about getting unsolicited packs through your letterbox?

**PH:** I'm OK about it but I do tend to not look at them. Before any pack arrives on my desk, generally it's arrived on the gallery manager's desk and she's looked at it and probably filed it in a pile of things that I need to do in about five weeks time. Generally she'll send back lots of stuff before I even know it's arrived. Not because she's mean or heartless but generally she knows what we're looking for as a gallery. Most of the time we are not looking for anything so a lot of stuff goes back. If it does land on my desk, I normally put a personal note in and send it back myself. I think in the eleven years that we've been operating I've only ever selected one person from complete cold calling. And he was introduced to me by somebody who I'd met at a dinner party, who'd met him at a dinner party and sent them along to show me some images. But I can only think of one person in the entire time that I've been running a gallery that I've selected from open submission. I have an idea of what I'm looking for. Most artists, however good their work may be, might not fit into that. I try and do my best to explain that when I'm sending the slides back and on the note put, 'Great work, thanks so much for sending it to us but not what we're looking for at the moment. Do contact us if you are in group shows etc.' Because I try to get around and see as much of that sort of stuff as possible. But generally as a rule I think it's a waste of time for artists to send out their slides to galleries, commercial galleries. Much better to get to know the artists that work with that gallery. Make friends with them and get them to give your slides to the dealer. Much better!

**Q:** Do you ever see anything as part of a selection that takes your eye? What does catch your eye?

**PH:** Quite often yes, when I've been selecting group shows, exhibitions or competitions, I can think of at least one person that I've included in a show that I saw in an open submission exhibition. I included him in a show because there is no pressure on me. I'm not being sent something and then being phoned up two days later asking, 'Did you get this thing? Was it

any good and are you going to represent me?' I'm just looking at thousands of slides and I can think, a year later, 'That would fit in with a group show I'm curating.' I'll take a note of it at the time and a year later I included him in a show. But no one where I'd think I want to represent this person. I think that's something to bear in mind if you are sending things out to galleries. Galleries have agendas and it is nothing personal and it may be that your work is extremely good but just not particularly fitting into the agenda the gallery has.

**Q: And how do you feel about people calling up and badgering you?**

**PH:** Generally they don't get through to me. As I say, nothing personal, it's just that the gallery manager won't let you speak to me - it's as simple as that. And she's been told by my business manager that Paul's an old softy who'll speak to anyone who phones him up and be nice to them, but he hasn't got time. He ought to be dealing with the artists we do represent and selling their work. So most people don't get through to me and that's probably true of most galleries, I'd say. If you phoned up and asked to speak to the Director at the Lisson Gallery, you won't get through to him. You'll speak to a gatekeeper there.

**Q: (First part of question is inaudible) Do you fit in and go to various shows?**

**PH:** Yes. I try to go to everything if I can. I'm always looking out for various things that would fit what we are doing. I'd say we've been running the gallery for eleven years and during that time I've been looking for someone who works with photography that we could work with. Quite a few have been what we are looking for and we have recently found someone. And it has taken that long to find the right person who fits the bill, for what we think will fit in our gallery. And we have a view of the gallery, which probably isn't too different from a lot of galleries, that there is a commercial imperative because we are a commercial gallery. So we sell work, but that isn't the only basis on which we have taken on artists. We are looking for a whole team of people that will represent the gallery well. So for instance, if you have a gallery artist who's an abstract painter making a particular sort of work, you really don't want to be taking on another one that makes work that is in direct competition with it. Because (1) you piss off the person you've been working with up until that point and (2) it will be competition for him in his market place. So you don't really want to be doing that. That's got nothing to do with art. It's got to do with how you keep people happy that you are working with.

**Q: Do you ever go to the open studios?**

**PH:** I have, but again I find them really difficult. You go into an open studio and there is an artist sitting there and you know who they are and they know who you are and (oh my goodness!) I've got to get out of here, no matter how good the work is, you want to run away.

And I've been in that situation too many times. I'd much rather go to something where I feel slightly more anonymous and just look at work, in a way that I'm not feeling that I'm being targeted in one way or another. We are a small gallery and we do our best with the resources that we have. I think to myself, 'I wonder what the bigger galleries have to deal with?' I mean honestly, we get severely hustled all the time. I can imagine it must be a lot more difficult as you develop a bit more of a profile.

**Q: How would you view an invitation to a small group show?**

**PH:** If you just get a card through the post and it's got a picture on the front and you turn it over and it's got a list of names that you've never heard of, it's not really telling you anything. Always put an interesting, arresting image on the front. A lot of people don't put an arresting image on a card. They put something that they think for some reason or other might represent their work but doesn't do a particularly good job graphically. Honestly I get that much mail a day and most of it is private view cards from people, tons of it, I'm drowning in it. And your card needs to stand out in one way or another. I always think, put the person who is best known at the top of your list if you can. I do try to get to things and it's not as I say that dealers are mean and don't answer your letters or attend your shows, it's because we're up to here and drowning in it and don't get time to actually deal with the artists we do represent. So you have to make it appealing in a way. And actually I wouldn't go as far as to actually do this but somebody did send me a car round to the gallery and said there's a car outside your gallery waiting for you to come to my show. [Laughter] That was really embarrassing actually.

**KD: Did you go then?**

**PH:** No I didn't. I was really embarrassed. I was really embarrassed. I didn't know what to say but I thought that was quite ingenious. I'd have to look out for their name afterwards I have to say, even if it was just to avoid them! (Laughter)

**Q: Generally speaking it's the dealer that approaches the artist. Do you think it is just as stressful getting the work shown and known, so that the dealers know that you're there?**

**PH:** Yes. That's the key thing. I think there are all sorts of pecking orders which seem to go on in the art world that I suppose I am aware of because I've been doing this for a while now, but that's probably true of galleries and also of artists. But getting your work out there, doing it yourself and showing lots of initiative is always good. The warehouse shows are a fairly well worn route now of getting your work out there. There was one guy who used to come and sit in our café (we've got a café upstairs). He'd come every day and sit in the café. Every time I

went out for a coffee he was there. 'Hi, it's me, remember you were going to come and see my show?' I recognised his face, I saw him everywhere. I see him around and I see his work. He was probably doing the same with the gallery that eventually ended up representing him. And eventually he got in circulation. It was difficult for him, but he did it and he got in circulation and his work was quite good. In the end, I suppose, all these things I'm telling you about now are about how you can get yourself in circulation. Then people will assess whether the work is any good or not. So it's not a substitute for making good work. Good work is ultimately what dealers are looking for.

**Q: No, but hang on, isn't ultimately what we want is to sell our work? You're sort of the middleman. I mean, surely that's what's important to us. It may be slightly different from what's important to you. I went to something run by the Whitechapel and they had a lot of the public there who were saying that they wanted to buy. And there were a couple of dealers and there was a guy who runs an auction house. And what struck me and it's striking me a bit with what you were saying, he was saying, 'It's really important to go through us' and 'You must get your work to us'. But in fact what we want to do is to sell our work. So it really is to get people to come round to see our work. That's what I think.**

**PH:** I'm sure there are a lot of other ways of doing it other than going through dealers. I think working with dealers is very limited but it is about a relationship, I would say. The artists that I work with, I'm quite passionate about their work and I'm very committed to their work. So once you're in the camp, goodness me, you can get me to do almost anything for you. And I think that that is true, that there has to be a real bond with contemporary art. There are some things that I try and sell, that are frankly ridiculous in the market place but I believe in them and I love them. The artists are very good and I think it's important for me to try and I make a huge effort to do it. But there are lots of other ways that an artist can sell their work. I wouldn't say for a moment that dealers are the only way in which they can do it.

**Q: You were talking earlier on about how you managed some of your artists, that selectors thing, through them applying for things. I sometimes have the impression that people with galleries already find it easier to get into shows. Do you think that's the case? Do you encourage your artists to apply for things?**

**PH:** Well I should hope so. I hope it is much easier to get into shows for artists that are represented because that's my entire job, to promote my artists so that they can get into shows, which in turn helps me to promote their career.

**Q: But is it an element of your promotion, your actively encouraging them to?**

**PH:** Yes, I am actively out there touting for them. Regularly, the gallery manager and I go to some museum, in some God forsaken place and mercilessly pound the curators with our artists. That's our job. We want them to get shows in good places and we make a huge effort to do it. I travel a lot. To try and meet other dealers that can help me to do that. Curators around the world, writers; and if I'm not travelling to meet people I'm phoning writers to come and write about our artists. That is my job, really. Selling things is probably about 30% of what I do. Of course it's important selling the artists' work but actually if you can build up a critical snowball that begins to roll, then selling things becomes really easy. People are coming to you to buy things and in fact you have to defend yourself. I suppose that is the dealer's dilemma, that 90% of the time you are pushing this enormous snowball uphill and when you get to the top you're running after it and chasing it. And you're having to say 'No, you can't have that. I've already sold it.'

**Q: Some dealers are wealthier than other dealers and they can invest more in the artists they represent. It's probably fair to say at the bottom end that even though you're represented by a gallery, you don't necessarily sell very well, so of course you are not able to give up your part time jobs. In most cases, that would be the case. It's only if you get represented by a main gallery that can actually actively invest in you. (PH: That's very true.) Does your commercial situation necessarily change if you are represented?**

**PH:** No and that's the other thing I've noticed, that quite often with the younger artists that I begin to represent they think, 'I'm represented now, it's 'legs up'. I don't have to do anything for myself, Paul will be out there doing it all for me'. And the smart artists, when they get representation, think to themselves, 'Goodness me, there's some 'oil on the wheels' now. At least I've got the opportunity to use Paul for a few things,' and I can get out there and help. For instance I can go to Art Fairs and the smart artists will decide to come with me. They hang around with me because I introduce them to everyone and they hustle for some shows for themselves. That's how it happens.

**Q: You represent about fourteen artists. So how many of those artists are living off their work?**

**PH:** I'd say about five of our artists are living entirely from what they make from their work. Others have a variety of teaching jobs, part-time jobs and bits and pieces that they are doing in other places. Given that, we are at the very early part of the cycle. I'd think we represent two artists who are in their forties and fifties but all the other artists that we represent are younger. And they are at a very early stage in their career, trying to build their career up, they

don't have many resources to pour into their own work and so everything is a struggle. They are constantly running out of money and are constantly calling the gallery for money, to find out if I've sold any work. All that is the pressure of working with young artists.

**Q: How many dealers would you say there are in London that are in position to completely finance an artist and do they do that?**

**PH:** Very few do, even if there are in a position to do so because most galleries believe that it's better to see if an artist can sink or swim on their own. They may finance particular projects that might be advantage to them. For instance, a photographer doing a show, they've made five big photographs and the gallery may agree to finance the production costs if they can show them. And we do that on a regular basis with our artists. We may finance the production costs for very specific things once we've discussed it with the artists. I think that would be terrible money management to just pour money into someone's career.

**Q: I just want to go back to the applications and proposal for a moment. I get the impression from some of what Mary was saying that some consultants and dealers would be putting people forward for residencies or awards etc. Is that fact well know and how likely is it that those artists will actually get the award - people who have been put forward by or suggested by someone? Does open submission mean that everyone has put in a proposal and that nobody has been suggested? What's going on there?**

**PH:** There is probably an element of that. There is also an element of the seeding system (the tennis is on at the moment so I'll use that metaphor) where there are some people that, you know, their work is emerging at the moment because there's a consensus where a lot of people think this work is interesting. But it can also be wrong to not open it up to a wild card. So the possibility that there ought to be some open submissions as well, where something really surprising could happen and you could find some really genuinely interesting work from people that haven't been spotted before. But there is a very big network of people looking out there at the moment from collectors, dealers, curators and writers. Lots of people are looking at art. I am amazed at the moment that collectors get to artists before I've even seen them. It's quite normal.

**KD: How do they do that Paul?**

**PH:** Because they understand the mechanism by which you spot people. So they know where to look basically. Whereas in the seventies, eighties and early nineties where dealers would go to rough parts of the East End and Southeast London and hunt through endless lofts and studios looking for interesting artists. Collectors wouldn't be seen dead there but now it's

actually a spectator sport on a Saturday and Sunday to get out to those studios. It always makes me laugh to look at the visitor's book of artist-led spaces and see who has been there before me.

**Q: What about websites?**

**PH:** We've got a website at the gallery, we got it under protest. I'm sure it is useful for people in Laguna Beach to look up what's going on in South East London and we have sold two or three things from the website in the entire six years that we've had it. It's a useful tool but I wouldn't pin all your hopes on becoming a successful artists because you've got stuff on a website. It's a tool and use it and it's a good way of communicating with some people.

**Q: Something you said about going to studios in East London and Southeast London, how important do you think it is to have your studio in certain areas? Is that something you've got to do, move to the right area?**

**PH:** I think it's completely natural. If you're phoning someone and saying, 'I've got a show and it's in Inverness, come and see it!' The art community in Britain is in London or Glasgow or maybe a little bit in Newcastle now or Manchester. The chances of them coming to see your show are about nil.

**Q: Do you think there is a kind of prejudice, where if you have a studio in Dalston then you are immediately more interesting?**

**PH:** Yes, I do. The art world is not fair; the world is not fair. I mean we are a gallery in Deptford High Street. We've been there eleven years; believe me I know all about prejudice. If you're on the end of some big American tour and you're the last point on their tour itinerary because you're a bit further away they knock you off if they run out of time. I've spent years thinking, 'those bastards'. I'm in the middle of nowhere. Why don't we move nearer the other galleries? And that's what we're doing. Much as I love Deptford and emotionally I'd like to stay there, I have to face reality. I'm not going to sell as many paintings on Deptford High Street.

**KD: Where are you moving to then?**

**PH:** Shoreditch.....there you go.....I hate Shoreditch! I'm moving there! (Laughter) It's got nothing to do with whether you like it or not. Can I represent the artists that I represent well, in a basement under a café? That's all we had when we started and we did the best we could but practicalities tell me I'd better move nearer where the other galleries are so that we can

pick up people that come and see other gallery shows in Shoreditch - they'll come and see me too. And fantastic if they do. Maybe it won't work, who knows.

**KD: Maybe they'll all move back to Cork Street.**

**PH:** Maybe. What are the chances of that, do you think?

**KD: I don't know, you hear rumours.**

**Q: I feel a huge pressure to move to the East-End and wear twisted jeans and listen to music to get forward. Do you know what I mean?**

**PH:** Yes, I know exactly what you mean. My instinct would be to fight it but when I actually think practically about it, I'm going to do it; I'm going to go there. (Not wear the jeans and listen to the music necessarily.....) I'm going to try and make an effort and where practical, advance the careers of the artists that I represent and my own career. I think that's a choice that you have to make. I noticed in the mid-nineties when in London the YBA started to kick off, there were artists here in London from everywhere in Europe. And as I heard from a dealer in NY, 'Oh, I hear London's over'. Suddenly they are not here so much. Why is that? Because artists are opportunistic, like anybody else and want to be where things are happening at that moment? People go to certain places at certain times and energy is expelled there and something happens.

**KD: I was talking to an American artist recently who has lived here for a number of years. He thought that it was very, very hard to be an artist and get shows in the London art scene, much harder than anywhere else and he was going to go back to LA, where he said it was much easier. Because there (in the US) it was about, what you see is what you get and here it's about who you know.**

**PH:** That's nonsense.

**Member of audience 1: I would agree with that. I think in France it's much easier.**

**PH:** No it's nonsense. If you went to France now and hustled for a show, you would have the same problems as LA artists would have coming to London.

**Member of audience 1: No you don't. Absolutely, you don't. You have 'La maison des artistes' in Paris. Because I've lived in France. And you have a lot of the banks who**

**show your work. You have a lot of the Mairies (town halls) who show your work. It's much, much easier than in England.**

**PH:** But there is little art market in France so maybe that's as a result of it.

**Member of audience:** Well there is actually. You have local people who buy work, much more so than you do here

**PH:** I don't believe that at all...

**Member of audience 1:** Well I lived on it. I don't care what you say. I lived on it. You don't believe it. I came back to England for a reason but it was actually easier for me in France. It is; you pay less social security and you pay less tax.

**PH:** So is it just artists are selling directly to punters?

**Member of audience 1:** Yes. It's partly that, but you have a much bigger network. You have authors (it all comes down from the 'Maison des artistes') you have actors and painters etc.

**KD:** But you see I think you said something earlier on, which I don't think all artists would necessarily agree with; which was that the main thing that artists want is to sell their work. But I know a lot of artists who aren't really bothered if they sell their work. Actually what they want is critical acclaim. So if what you want is critical acclaim, then obviously you have to be connected within part of the industry where you're going to receive it, where you're going to be presented in order to receive it. If what you want to do is sell your work then there are a million and one ways of doing that and it isn't actually that hard for artists to do it, if that's what they set out to do.

**PH:** What artists want is both. They want people to love them. They want some money and they want someone to say, 'hey, you're right on top as well'.

**Member of audience 1:** I can't believe that, I mean that's ridiculous.

**KD:** Yes, but if people really wanted to make money, they would not choose to be an artist, would they?

**PH:** There are loads of artists that aren't making money.

**Member of audience 1: I'm not talking about making money. I'm talking about living through your work. Because you are a painter and you are your work. I mean I'm not saying I want to be a millionaire, I don't. But it's very nice to be able to paint a painting and sell it. And get appreciation for it. And no, it's not of interest to me to have critical acclaim. Because I don't give a shit what critics think. I mean I'm sorry, but I think that's really a silly comment.**

**PH:** Well, that's great but a lot of artists do and they do care about it and they do see themselves in some sort of pecking order. And they want some sort of critical acclaim. They might not want that above having money. But I think generally artists want to have a reasonable life, have some sort of critical acclaim and have a lot of people around them that also like what they do.

**Q: I just wanted to ask how important you think it is for someone at the beginning of their career to be picky about where they show? Is it the case that you need to be quite careful about what offers you take up? If you get, for example, an offer from a gallery where you're maybe going to sell a lot, but your work isn't going to look particularly nice in there? How important do you think that is, or if you get an offer from a medium quality gallery, in an overseas place, does that add something else, I mean how important do you think it is for an artist to manage these things?**

**PH:** It does constantly surprise me that artists seem to, when they're offered a show by a gallery, throw all sanity to the wind. And just say, 'yes of course I'll do the show'. And there are some crooks out there believe me. Some galleries we've dealt with that our artists have got us involved with. My experience is, don't do shows in Italy- that's my experience. (It's) very, very hard work and a very different set of rules to play by there (I'm saying this slightly 'tongue in cheek'). But generally I would say you have weigh it up, you have to say to yourself, 'Have I had a show in two or three years? Maybe I should do this thing, maybe I shouldn't.' I think you'd weigh it up in exactly the same way as you'd weigh up every other choice you have to make in life. You know which galleries you're aiming for. I would say, probably everybody in this room who wants to be working with a gallery, has a pecking order in their mind of where they ultimately might like to be represented. Something that they think might be more realistic and something that they definitely don't want to be associated with. Most people have that pecking order in their mind already and I would say probably when you are beginning, the people that look the most impressive are people who are idealistic about what they are doing and do something that isn't necessarily just going for a big pot of cash.

**Q: I just wanted to say in terms of where you should be, whether you should be in South London or East London or wherever. If you're moving to East London then**

**maybe we should all move there and have galleries there and exhibitions there. Is that what you would suggest, that we should all move to where it's at? It's like what you were saying earlier about where you should have a studio. If nobody comes to South London then what's the point of having a studio there?**

**PH:** Exactly my point. I think if you create a scene where something is happening... I don't think personally that things will never happen in Deptford, I think there is a ten year cycle beginning now where things are beginning to happen there. But I'm 42; I've got 20 years to make it happen. Can I make it happen here? Probably not, but if I was at an earlier stage in my career then maybe I would think a bit more about how I might make it happen. Who knows what I would think if I were a bit younger.

**Q: So also, in terms of exhibiting, you would probably think to choose the venue carefully, as well as the theme?**

**PH:** Yes. In the mid-nineties there was an absolutely fabulous gallery in Farnham in Surrey. Nobody ever went to it. But everyone knew it was fantastic because they used to get the flyers through and everyone good was showing there. No one ever went. And in the end the curator gave up and moved to London. It was a shame but it happened. Maybe he could have stuck it out, who knows. It's just the way the world is going; there is a more homogeneous feel about how things are happening. I think London is looking more and more like New York, certainly the New York scene of the nineties and I think it's inevitable. Basically this decade is about building an infrastructure for what happened in the nineties. There was a huge boom and very interesting work in Britain and it's still going on. There was lots of great work being made but there was no infrastructure there, no writers, no galleries and no critics. Now that's what is being built. You'll notice that there will be a lot more galleries from abroad move here to Britain because there is a market here and it's developing and being created. Now it's being commodified in one way or another.

**KD: That's a really interesting analysis. So you don't buy it then when this New York guy says, 'London's over'?**

**PH:** Not at all. I just think he's competing for our market. And we've got to say, 'Come over here then, big boy and let's see.'

**Q: Despite that, I still think it is difficult to get connected here in London. As you were saying if you want critical acclaim then London's the place to be. I find it terribly difficult to penetrate the art scene in London, I think it's quite closed. It's the same names that you see over and over again.**

**KD: Yes but those people were not born joined at the hip. I mean those people met each other and gravitated towards each other.**

**PH:** Why do you think it's the same names that keep cropping up?

**Response: It's friends that promote friends that promote friends.**

**PH:** They have a market and they are trying to keep it. That's why you see the same names crop up over and over again. Critics and curators reinforce that market and there is an interest there in promoting successful people. Anish Kapoor is a very successful artist because of a whole load of mechanisms apart from his work, but his work is very good. How people develop their career is partly to do with luck, partly to do with judgement and a whole mixture of things that happen to people. And we are not in control of it and I know you're saying that you find it hard to connect up with the art world. I don't understand what you think the art world is. I think it's a whole lot of miscellaneous people doing a whole load of miscellaneous things and occasionally they come into some sort of connection with each other. I am perfectly in agreement with you that Britain is a very difficult and prejudiced place. It's difficult for working class people, it's difficult for anyone from an ethnic background and it's difficult for poor people. It's just a fact that you have to come to terms with. It's very difficult to be a working class bloke in a middle class world but I think to myself, 'Sod 'em, I'm going to get on with it'. I think you just have to have that sort of mentality and if your work's good you do find a way through eventually. I'll tell you, I've fallen flat on me arse a lot of times, so I'm not talking from a position where I've had some sort of silver spoon in my mouth. You know it is tough but you do get through.

**Q: If you find yourself with a dealer and you decide that they are not the best thing for you, to represent you, what's the process for moving on, so to speak?**

**PH:** It's not as easy in New York where they've experienced that a lot. For instance, there is a very, very clear hierarchy of galleries in New York. Everyone knows where everyone fits and everyone knows where the main prizes are. They know that if you want to be a very successful artist you want to be represented by Mathew Marks or Marion Goodman or such like, at one of those galleries. So when artists leave one gallery for the next gallery up everyone just accepts it and no one gets bitter and twisted about it. London's a bit less developed than that at the moment. I've managed to keep friends with 99% of the artists that have left our gallery for another gallery. Why get bitter and twisted about it, there is nothing you can do, that's the way it is. There are gallery owners who don't have that view but again these are people, you're dealing with personalities and strange things happen. There are a

few punch ups in the art world they are not too regular but there are dealers who are very upset when their artists do leave and there are artists who get very upset when they think their dealers are nicking all their money and spoiling their reputations. It seems to me to be becoming a little less of a problem and the hierarchy clearer now.

**Q: (Inaudible question)**

**PH:** I think play hard to get. I'm much more interested in people who play hard to get with me. Much more interested. If I ask someone to be in a show and they say, 'No, I'm considering my options,' I'm thinking 'I want to get that person, I want to show them now.' I'm much more determined then. So I would be very careful just jumping in with the first person that offers you a show. I know several people who have done that and come a cropper. Because you know they're not at the bottom of the heap for nothing. The particular dealers that I have in mind are there because they have either dealt very badly with people, but they might be very nice but hopeless with people and business. So bad business is one thing, crooks are another thing. You know there are people who are good and bad in the art world on every level including art dealers.

You know who the bad ones are because you hear all the rumours. I was with a collector today and we were talking about a particular dealer whose gallery had closed and he said to me, 'I knew his gallery would close before it opened'. All the signs were there before he opened. And I thought that was absolutely fantastic, you just have to use your eyes. You have to make those sorts of judgements with people anyway. And the fact that you want to show doesn't mean to say you have to throw all your intelligence to the wind and show with a lunatic who ruins your career, because frankly that will not help you.

**Q: It's about the idea of having a profile and what makes you as a young artist an attractive proposition for a dealer, feeding into that what are the components that work, you know is it how old you are...(inaudible)**

**PH:** Well those things do play a part in it, like if somebody tells me that they've been to an art school in central London and I know people who have come out of in the past, then I might think a bit more carefully. All those things are leading you to the work and is the work any good because ultimately that's what you base your choices on. People can have all the right grooming, for the want of a better word, but their work can be completely hopeless. And there are people who I've met who I wouldn't normally consider at all but they have the most fantastic work. It's harder for them to meet me, but once they do and I'm looking at the stuff, it's not really a difficult decision to make. All the things we've been talking about up until now have been about the mechanisms by which artists achieve things. We haven't talked about

how dealers look at work and look at artists. It's so much easier for me if the artist I'm dealing with not only has great work but is really helpful to the gallery and puts their work in a form that makes it easier for me to deal with - I mean such as crates, packaging, labels etc. All those things that make it easier for me to work with that artist, but that won't stop me from working with some very awkward and difficult to work with people if I think it's worth it. There are some very pragmatic artists that I deal with, (other people would unkindly call them plodders), people who's work is quieter. But frankly every gallery has some. They are making very interesting work and they think to themselves, 'How am I going to make a living for myself and use what I've got to the best of my ability?' And they are always the ones who are ultimately really helpful to the gallery. I have one artist who brings collectors to see me all the time. He's doing my job for me! He knows that if he does that, that I'm going to help his career an enormous amount. In a gallery structure there is a pecking order, they are not all equal. Actually they are competing with each other and they do say snide things behind each other's backs but we have a rule that you're not allowed to say anything like that outside the gallery. If they do they get kicked out.