

## Engage Scotland

September 11<sup>th</sup> Glasgow

1. Have you ever had that feeling that when someone claims to be doing something for you actually they are doing something **to you** ?
2. Had that feeling the whole time at school.

Have it often when I am on the phone to a call centre for a large company.

I feel it the whole time when big companies are marketing to me and selling at me, when I am treated like a wallet or a target.

I get it time and time again when politicians speak to me.

You can get it even when people are trying to help you. Sometimes in hospital even as people are helping you, you feel done to – passed from ward to ward.

I used to get it a lot in the worst organisations I worked for, where managers spent their time trying to get you to do things you did not want to do. I stopped being a manager because I didn't really like doing things to people, in the name of doing them for them.

3. It feels to me like we've grown up in a world of **to and for**, a world in which people separate from you, with specialist skills and knowledge, determined what you needed or wanted, and then delivered it to you.

And of course there is a lot of pleasure in this world of to and for – when exactly what you want arrives at your doorstep – you feel treated like a king – when you can call up exactly the song you want to hear in an instant.

But quite a lot of our frustrations with life, it seems to me, stem from this sense that we are **done to** so much of the time.

- Done to by the market which unsettles and disrupts.
- Done to by politicians that spin but don't listen.
- Done to by hierarchies and authority, by systems and processes, which aim to offer fairness and to improve well being but actually seem alienating and lacking in humanity.

4. So what I am interested in is what the alternatives are to that – and I suppose where I've got to is really rather simple – what people want, and often what is trying to emerge from within the world of to and for – is the idea of : **with**

5. What people desperately want and need is the spirit of with.

Think with provides a different lens onto life, a different framework.

Working with people carries a different logic: more conversational, interactive, it requires give and take, respect, contribution from both sides.

With is a principle of organisations – networks, partnerships, cannot go it alone.

With is a principle I think of politics – more conversational, persuasive.

With as a core to sustainability – do things with natural resources rather than extracting/depleting them.

So I think most people, at least some of the time, want a bit more with in their lives, rather than being done to.

They want to be treated like participants and contributors, not merely consumers, spectators, a passive audience or a band of followers.

6. I think that is a fundamental change – from a world of to and for to a world which is also with and by.

Today I want to look at the expansion of this world of with and by in three overlapping areas which concern you.

First, the rise of web culture and how that is changing how we think of ourselves and the world, changing how it is possible to be organised.

Second, the way the idea of with can change our approach to learning and so to where we learn, who with, how and why.

Third, what that might mean for our attitude towards the arts – art that works with people rather than at them, to them – and so how that might change the relationships between learning and the arts.

How could these three fit together in a new way. At the moment they fit together around the logic of to and for. In future they could fit together in a different way around the idea of with.

7. Let me start with the web.
8. Who does what: Twitter, Wikipedia, Open Source, eBay.

9. The underlying logic.

Industrial era media, provided the backbone for mass market society and mass market politics. High fixed costs, control – broadcast of messages to you and at you, from on high.

Now not against all of that by any means. Not all bad.

But it has a number of drawbacks this world – lack of diversity, lack of voice, limited creativity. Couch potato culture.

Now the kind of media that is in our kids bedrooms and pockets is very different.

Don't look at the technology, look at what people want to do with it. Why it matters to them.

10. What they see in it:

Opportunity to participate, to contribute, to do their thing, have their say, leave their mark. Garage Band.

I can generation.

I need era 1950s – 60s.

I want 60s – 80s.

I can...now.

11. If you can, then the next thing you want to do, is to show and share. So participation and sharing going hand in hand.

Living our private life in public.

You are what you share.

12. And if you share then there is the possibility you can connect and collaborate with other people and then together you can start creating things.

So out of the stew of social media, social networking, web 2.0 comes new collaborative undertakings on a large scale.

Not just that it changes culture, entertainment, information, important though that is.

What really matters is that it creates new options, new possibilities for us to be organised, to work together, to get things done in new ways. Often very practical, not utopian.

Break the stranglehold that to get things done you need an organisation or hierarchy or a market. Actually quite a lot of the time we work through sharing and collaboration.

New organisational possibilities.

Those matter particularly to develop ideas – ideas live by being shared.

Web is creating a with culture.

13. Second area where there is this tension/interplay between to and for and with is in learning.

Schools, for many people, especially large secondary schools, are where they get their first real experiences of a world of being done to in the name of being done for.

14. Even now too much experience of schooling is that it is something done to you – instruction delivering knowledge and information to you, in a system often barely understood by children, what it is for.

15. What's Next? Looked at schools trying to personalise learning. They were all trying to do different things – timetable, lay out and buildings, curriculum, assessment – in very different settings.

16. But at their heart all had two big ideas:

First, trying to reach and motivate children, to be investors, participants in their own learning absolutely vital.

Not just about delivering to and for children in a more personalised way, about getting them to be engaged, investors, participants in their own learning, to see it as their project, not something imposed upon them.

Second, as a result relationships critical to learning. Children learn when they have the right relationships, at school, at home, in the community.

Relationships which provide

participation,  
recognition,  
care  
motivation.

Everything else flows from that.

So for me the future of learning and reform of schools will be a constant battle between the forces of to and for and the forces of with.

Often who will benefit most from this will be those least well served by the to and for model – diassaffected in different ways.

Finding settings approaches that engage them vital.

- Break up large schools.
- Personal learning plans, challenges, portfolios and budgets.
- Create new spaces for learning between school and home.

16. Third area where see interplay between with and to and for is in art itself and perhaps particularly in visual arts, it's interplay with the culture around it.

17. Pop Art was an ironic, playful reflection on the to and for world, of advertising and television, supermarkets and consumerism.

If the wider culture around us, inflected by the web is shifting – to a world of rip, mix burn, the Ican ethic – how is that reflected in art?

Two different stories of the avant garde and what it means to be a modern artist.

18. The traditional avant garde – in a society of banality, commodification, in which imaginations so trammelled by marketing, advertising, the role of the artist is to be three S's :

**Separate** – stand aside, adopt an iconoclastic, different vantage point on the world. Art is a separate activity from life, produced and seen in separate spaces, galleries.

**Special** – the artist has special insights into the world, insights not available to everyone. Specialism still counts – creativity special people doing special things in special places.

**Shock** – art has to shock, challenge, disrupt, even be cruel, certainly controversial, to break people out of their familiar ways of seeing the world.

Produce a sense of shock and awe.

Avant Garde art should not be easy, accessible, comfortable, should not make itself available as an advertisement does.

19. That is why for many people the experience of seeing modern art is difficult, shocking, repelling even.

Edinburgh: NMMA – Modernism – cold.

Tracey Emin exhibition – warm – but unsettling.

Gallery like a bank with the deposits left by artists, which then convey meaning to us.

Often in modern art galleries people feel done to, that is the point.

That is the traditional avant garde.

And I suppose the role of learning and outreach around that kind of art is to help make it more accessible, to reach to audiences who cannot get it.

20. Second tradition of the avant garde, stresses the role of participation.

Walter Benjamin – work of art better the more it encourages participation.

Situationists – Guy Debord Society of Spectacle – from society of spectacle to participation.

Allan Kaprow and Happenings... The Real Experiment 1983

Nicolas Bourriaud – Relational Aesthetics

YouTube Flickr, Facebook bastard off springs of that.

But also see that in art – from more dialogic, interactive art now.

If main principle of the first avant garde was to separate and shock, then this avant garde is more about **combine and connect**.

Relationships, interaction, communication at the heart of what it does.

Combine and connect in Janet Frere.

Be a part of it, in a small way – Anthony Gormley, Martin Creed runners.

Can work in traditional institutions but does not have to.

Often drawing out the contributions of others.

Using art to convene, conversation or collaboration.

Not artwork but an experience, interaction, fleeting.

First avant garde like a headlong journey down a one way street.

Second is more open, exploratory, could go in different ways depending on you.

First audience/viewer is held at bay.

Second the audience is invited in.

Separation is the principle of the first, which then raises issues of access.

Combination is the principle of the second, which raises issues of participation.

This raises an entirely new possibility for learning and art.

Not learning as an adjunct and add on, an interpretive activity to make the art accessible. But the art as an interactive experience through which people learn by taking part. Make it much more central.

21. Where does that leave us?

Three big challenges, which I think all of us will be grappling with probably for the rest of our working lives, the interplay between to and for and with.

22. First, how do you really deepen participation. Participation comes in many forms. What does it mean to be a participant? On whose terms?

23. Second, how can you really get people to collaborate and share, can we take the collaborative opportunity being opened to us. Who with, how with.

24. Third, what's the relationship between to and for organisations – with power, authority, resources – and the emerging world of with.

Antagonistic, alternatives.

Interplay and connection.

With will change us through revolution and upheaval, but also through subversion and evolution.

To and for – welcome to with.

