

Jon Bewley talk about the work of Locus Plus, 22nd October 2003 at the Functionsuite Studio in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. The audience comprised mainly artists working for Artlink.

Jon Bewley (JB): This red leaflet tells the history of Locus Plus. It is a little snapshot giving a list of the artists' projects and books we have done, and it gives you an idea of the sensibility we bring to our work. We also publish books; this is a book about us **Locus Solus**. The books cover our work up to about two years ago and then there are four books with DVDs in them showing an art project. We commission new work, temporary work, site-specific and context-related work, and we work with artists right from the very beginning of a project to the final delivery. We also document the project and handle all the mediation around it.

A word about our different incarnations: the Basement Group is an artists' collective, Projects UK, started in 1983, was the first office-based organisation of its type in the UK, and Locus Plus is, as the name suggests, Locus (the place) and then Plus. People assume the Plus is the artist but in fact it is not, the plus represents the partnerships that orbit around the presentation of the art work. People assume, wrongly, that it must be about artists but actually it is about all these other people who bring their skills and energies to making the artwork. I hope the slides and the projects that I am going to show you illustrate this.

[picture] This is Newcastle; I always put this in at the beginning to remind me of home.

I am going to show you the work of three artists: Gregory Green, Laura Vickerson and Nathan Coley. Gregory Green is an American sculptor who makes missiles and bombs. They are fully working, functioning objects except for the fact that they don't have explosives in them; they would work perfectly in the real world. You could fire them. He exhibits them in galleries and people buy them. He wanted to do a project with us but we weren't interested in doing bombs or missiles. He then came to Newcastle. Just outside Newcastle there is an estate called the Meadow Well estate where a friend of mine, **Aiden Doyle**, was an artist in residence. He suggested that I should go out and have a look at Meadow Well because it was a place where there was rioting in 1991. Houses got burnt, policemen were killed and it was a disaster. People who lived on the Meadow Well estate, who were not involved in the rioting, decided to organise themselves. They got money from the Council and had a community centre built and worked at getting the place back on track. One of the things they did at the community centre was produce a magazine called *NE 29*, which was the postcode of the area.

After a visit to Meadow Well, Gregory came up with the idea of doing a project with the people from the estate. He wanted to make a low level communication satellite. We talked to the people there and they were very interested, so Gregory lived at the community centre for several weeks and in one of the rooms he made a fully functioning communication satellite. The interesting thing about that is he made it with materials that he sourced from within three miles of the centre. He was there every day, at the beginning, and the people from the estate helped. They were part of it. There was a drama group and a writers' group and they wrote scripts and performed them. We recorded the text and the performances, which were essentially the stories told by the people who passed through the community centre, about what had happened, why they felt it had happened, and how they had moved forward. We got a short term radio licence because we could not afford to put the satellite into orbit. Instead, we did the next best thing and put it on a pole and broadcast the stories of the people in Meadow Well to Tyneside.

A couple of things I'd like to mention about this project: first, part of Gregory's agenda is the demystification of technology, which is not as terrifyingly unknown as people think. Second, his practice was not jeopardised or compromised in any way. The satellite went on to be exhibited in New York as part of a public art programme, then his gallery exhibited it and a collector bought it, so it went from one part of the world into a private collection as an art object.

(Just as a corollary to that, we once bought a race horse as a work of art with Mark Wallinger and we ran it as a real object in the flat season, as a real racing horse. At the end we sold the horse to a German art collector and that horse is now in a field in Germany as an art work, so that is another story.)

Another aspect to the work is the parallel between the satellite and *NE 29*. The magazine is the voice of the people in Meadow Well and the satellite is another kind of voice in the territories of space. They are both means of broadcasting to others.

[picture] This is Farfields Mill, an empty textile mill in Cumbria in a place called Sedbergh, and this is Laura Vickerson, an artist from Canada. She uses organic materials, seeds, leaves, pods and so on, and makes female garments out of them. She suggested working with us on a project in a textile mill with the participation of the people who work in the mill. At that stage we didn't know where it was going to be or how it would work, so we went on a search not knowing if we could ever get the right combination of participants and partners. Then one day a friend of mine told us about Farfields Mill in Cumbria that had closed, making everybody redundant. I went to see it and found the mill had basically just been left and the women who used to work there had formed a society called the Sedbergh Stitchers. They met once a week to do embroidery and cross-stitching. They were unemployed but this is what they did collectively, to keep in touch and keep together.

The Heritage Trust who owned the mill agreed to Locus doing a project there, and we brought Laura over to meet the Sedbergh Stitchers and got permission to use the building. The top floor of this building looked like that [picture]. Laura described what she would like to do and they were interested in being involved. They embarked on making the piece of sculpture for this particular space, which took several months. It involved the Sedbergh Stitchers individually hand-pinning rose petals together to make this object. [picture] The final object was a seventy-five foot long cape which incorporated just over six hundred thousand individually pinned rose petals. I think I have got the detail of the hood here. [picture] And so the object, which was only there for two days, believe it or not, is this mythical, extraordinary, surreal object as if somebody is walking through this empty space and they have got to a wall at the far end and the person is gone but the garment, this astonishing garment, is still there. Although it took months to make it was only up for the Spring Fair in Sedbergh and it involved about twenty people working fairly committedly on it over many, many weeks.

Now the interesting thing about partnerships and participation is the misunderstanding that somehow collaboration is equal and of course it isn't. One of the ways in which we try to open doors and generally make things happen is to sit down and negotiate with all the participating groups. They could be unions, they could be teachers, fire officers, or the unemployed women from Farfields Mill. The important thing is to understand that we are negotiating on behalf of ourselves as an organisation, on behalf of the artists, and also on behalf of the other people involved, recognising what their needs are and making sure that they know we will protect them. In different cases, different partnerships want different

things. So there is an element of trust but there is also an active element in attempting to understand the needs of others and look after them.

To take the example of the Heritage Trust that owned the mill, we paid for everything and we were given access to the building. What the Trust wanted was to protect the mill as a heritage site and to politicise it in the sense of raising its profile among the councillors, the local MP and others in order to try and raise funds for its preservation. It had been a working mill for 127 years. The population of the village is tiny, and the sudden closure of the mill had a huge impact on everybody. We were there for quite a while installing the work, and everybody in the village knew exactly who we were and what we were doing there. It was an amazing place to be for two or three weeks. The work acquired a kind of mythical status that somehow transmitted itself to other villages; stories were told about it in the pub, and so on. There were hundreds of people there but it was only advertised through the Summer Fair. Of course the funding people came after us, saying 'What do you think you are doing spending all that money for two days?' and we were saying, 'Well that is the context. It was for the Summer Fair.' The funny thing about this garment is you roll it up and put it in a box and you could send it anywhere. What you don't get from an image of course is its fantastic physical presence, for example the smell of it. It is really intense. When you take it out of the box and roll it out you spray it with water and it all comes back to life again. It is an incredibly tough object.

These are two different examples of participatory projects: a technology one and a non-technology one. They are about place and about people. To talk about projects that work and about projects that don't work is very difficult for me. Obviously I don't believe any of our projects don't work because I am biased, but it comes back to this question of collaboration and partnerships and recognising the needs of others. The dynamic and rhythm of every project is different. Was Gregory's satellite any more successful than Laura's cape? Each had tens of people involved in it over a long period of time, artists who actually work in the commercial sector as well as people like me in the public sector. Their practice was very much ring-fenced and the works operated in both the real world and the art world. People were able to come and meet the artists, because they were on site all the time. We don't parachute in an object because we want it to look good in an atrium somewhere. During the making of the work the artists are accessible and therefore discussion, explanation, exposition and so on can take place. Those two elements sum up the way we work and if we went through the list in the little red leaflet and you asked me to do a snapshot of any of the projects on the list there would probably be key elements in all of them that are embodied in these two.

[picture] This is an aerial shot of some docks. Nathan Coley is a Scottish sculptor who makes work about architecture. We invited him to make a project in the North East and he chose to look at the way in which land is used in terms of urban redevelopment. We looked at three locations: this particular plot of land (almost where that yellow dot is), the grounds of a nursing home, and a school playing field. Nathan wanted to build a house on each of these sites but market it not in the art world but treat it as if it was a completely new build. The land would be bare, and it would have a site board saying 'Coming soon, an interesting development by Nathan Coley' with a contact number. The boards would be up for a few weeks, and we would take magazine ads in the trade press so where you would see ads for house builders, we would have announcements and a picture of Nathan with the architect, or with the builder. The project itself had its own lifestyle brochure, like a commercial brochure with glitzy pictures in it.

[picture] This is what the building was going to look like. You probably recognise that as a cottage-style house. That is the Photoshop version obviously, not the actual object, and this house was to be located on those three sites. This project illustrates the role of

'invisible partners'. We had to get the permission of the people who lived on or used these sites. In the case of the nursing home, we had to explain what was happening to the residents, because if a site board went up saying a new development was coming there, all the people in the nursing home would be very anxious. At the school I had to give a talk to nine- and ten-year-olds about the project and I have to say I was more nervous doing that talk than any other talk I've given in my life.

[picture] This is the house where the yellow dot was. You can see the dock, the nursing home in the background, and the school playing fields. We made a DVD about this work, and it has its own website, just like Barrett Homes has. { During the promotion this publication, which has an ISBN number, was part of the artwork then afterwards with inclusion of the DVD it became documentation and therefore a different kind of publication.

Now I should say I have led you down the garden path slightly because this house was actually on each of these locations for one day only. It was on the first site for the first day, on the second site for the second day and on the third site for the third day. It would mysteriously appear overnight. The reason for that was the way it was built. It took ten people two hours to dismantle and assemble it, so it was quite convincing. Obviously the resonance came from the political nature of land use. I don't know what the situation is in Edinburgh, but in the North East the key issue is the reusing of land for housing development. The housing market in Newcastle and the surrounding area has gone completely crazy over the last two or three years. Playing fields are obviously a political issue in terms of schools and funding, and urban regeneration from old industrial sites is another issue. The dock area used to be a shipyard. That has all gone, and now it is the marina where footballers have their yachts. When we did this project we discovered that, completely unknown to us, the nursing home had actually sold that land for property development.

All the people involved in allowing us to deliver this were aware of the issues that Nathan was addressing in terms of locating a 'dream cottage' – a kind of funny urban, roses-round-the-door kind of cottage. In fact that is a very political type of structure in terms of who would live there and why they would live there. We had 108 calls from people who wanted to buy it from the site board, just from that image which you saw at the very beginning. Some people were extremely annoyed when they realised that they couldn't. When we made the documentary about it, we had an interview with the property developer who basically said they didn't build houses for people. Well obviously they don't, they build houses to make money. When we came to signing the release form I think he realised that he was giving the game away, and he refused to sign so unfortunately we couldn't use it.

Is there anything you would like to know about any of these three projects?

Kara Christine: In the first two projects that you talked about to what degree did the collaborators inform the eventual product? Did they come up with the idea of the cape and satellite?

JB: No. With the Farfields project, Laura made quite a few visits and had several round table discussions. Her practice was about making garments, although she had not made anything on that scale. They discussed the metaphorical aspects of the object they would make. There is that whole fairytale element about capes and that is how the cape was decided on. It was a very organic discussion. Laura wasn't going to make a motorcar, we knew that, but the nature of the particular object she made evolved through their meetings.

Kate Gray (KG): Are you ever approached by 'the partners' or by the local authority? And do you look as favourably on the project if you are approached by them ?

JB: Yes, we have been approached by local authorities and by schools. We don't project-manage other people's events so when we work for private individuals, private companies and local authorities, we tell them that we will decide who the artist is to be. The process has several stages. We ask an artist to make a proposal, for which they get paid, and then there is no obligation on either side whether it proceeds. If the commissioning body does not want to proceed with the proposal then the process will start again, normally with the same artist having the opportunity to develop it further and then it goes on to a third stage or else another person gets involved. The reason for doing it this way is that there is a sort of curatorial gravity or attitude or sensibility in all the projects that we do that we need to protect. If they asked us to do a project for them with a specific artist they had already chosen, we wouldn't be able to establish the cornerstones of the process from the very beginning. The dynamic of it would be not something that we would be interested in doing.

KG: How would you explain what the cornerstones are? Because there could be many different artists that you work with.

JB: Yes that's right. That is an interesting question. I think we have to look at the situation and then decide how we are going to navigate through all the different problems that may arise. We did a project (a permanent work actually) for Nexus, the company that runs the Tyne and Weir underground system. The artist we approached was Cathy De Monchaux. I got some catalogues together to show the Transport Committee, which includes councillors among its members, and I showed the councillors the catalogues. One of them was looking through one of Cathy's books, the catalogue from the Whitechapel Show, which had pictures all these crazy little luscious sculptures, sexual, metaphorical objects, and he looked at me and said 'Oh my God, I wouldn't show my wife this book!' And I thought 'Mm, that is very interesting.' {I explained Cathy wouldn't put objects like that in the station. She could be trusted to be sensitive to the needs of the site. this is a rewrite} In fact she asked us if it would be all right if she proposed a photo work. We told her that of course she could do whatever she wanted. Our way of working is to mediate between these different interests in order to allow artists to make work that doesn't jeopardise the integrity of their practice, to create great opportunities for them, and also to make the process for all the non-art people as interesting as possible. So we start at the centre and we have all these different rings until it eventually it goes to the public domain and lots of people who weren't necessarily involved can come and understand the energy around them. If you look at it, it is like a bar graph. In each project the bars are all different heights but all the bars are there. Does that help you understand how it works?

KG: Have you got a way that you want the bars to be?

JB: No, that is what I said at the beginning. When people talk about collaboration they assume that there is some kind of equality, but there isn't. There is always a gradient but the content within the gradient has a different value to all the different people who are involved. So the bars are different but all you have to do is make sure all the other people don't think that their bar is now going to get smaller. You just have to look after all that and play the piano.

Rebecca Marr (RM): When you were talking about the curatorial aspect of what you do I was wondering if there is ever a situation where the process is reversed, where you chance upon the mill first of all and then you start thinking about artists that would suit that space?

JB: Well someone is going to ask how we decide what projects to take on. The answer is to do with politics, money and the level of commitment you want to make, because artists' projects take months. I think a lot of people don't understand quite how long it takes to deliver certain projects, possibly years, so we have to take a deep breath and say, well actually yes, I am going to spend the next two years of my life delivering a project by X, so you have to have a strong belief in it. You put artists into situations and relationships are forged through their activity that are for the good. I am not interested in the business of alienating people, I am not interested in slogans and I am not interested in cheap political graffiti. I am only interested in demonstrating that artists are a massively positive force in the world, in the way in which they can work with others by asking questions, but not by shouting – by asking questions and not necessarily even giving answers.

Patrick O'Growney (PO): Does that mean that projects eventually become politicised in a way?

JB: Yes it does. The political issues are not the reason for the project, they are part of the conversation that artists have with society.

PO: It seems inevitable that some sort of political issue would emerge. When that situation does arise, in the mill for example, could that be the start of another project? Because you had to challenge the structure?

JB: You mean another project there?

PO: Well not necessarily the way it was presented, which was basically an art project, but with regard to what came out of that, say the involvement of the councillors and the Heritage Trust, could you see the bones of another project coming out of that? You must challenge that structure again?

JB: I don't know. We have to really plan the project in terms of the budget. Something that developed out of the original project would have to be addressed in a completely different way at some point in the future. We don't have financial resources that we could exploit in order to allow changes in the shape of what an artist's project can be. That is an interesting question in that I was kind of blind to that possibility because of the way in which we manage the money.

Having said that, we have done about six projects with an artist called Stefan Gec but that is because it is the same project evolving over time. It will take twenty years. Whether we will finish it or not I don't know. Each segment of those projects is ring-fenced with different amounts of money. For example we bought some submarines and the metal from them was cast into bells and the bells were cast into an ocean-going buoy. It relates to the idea of swords being turned into ploughshares. But the metaphor is about the oceans, the sea, the changing of territories, and so on. We didn't know if the buoy would come out of the bells but Stefan wanted to continue with the work and we agreed.

People also questioned our putting money into Stefan Gec's work over ten years on the grounds that a public gallery can't keep giving the same artist exhibition after exhibition. For political reasons it is just not possible because the gallery is part of the infrastructure which should serve a much wider community. But there are artists whose practice has different strategies and different processes and the dominant infrastructure doesn't cater for that. How do artists working on projects that might take twelve years fit into the system? They don't, and Stefan is one of those artists. Our argument was that somebody has got to be prepared to support artists who do twelve-year projects, somehow, even if it is part of the research. I don't believe exhibition infrastructure should determine practice but that is what happens. And the situation is getting worse and worse.

KG: Has there ever been an occasion where people like the women who made the cape, who are actually hands-on collaborators in making the art work, have asked if they could move on and work with a different artist?

JB: You mean after we left? Yes, that does happen quite a lot. We were invited to curate a project for the landscape around Compton Verney, a Robert Adam mansion in Warwickshire. Peter Moores, one of the Littlewoods brothers, is converting the house into an art gallery. We did projects with Anya Gallaccio and Simon Paterson. Both went well and in the following years other artists were invited to work there.

AE: I am interested in hearing from Jon about the matching that he does between artists and communities that he works with, because this relates to what we do at Functionsuite. I think the common thing is collaboration, developing projects, and pulling in other partnerships and joining them together. I am interested, Jon, in how those relationships have changed over the years and how your experience of projects changed the way you would bring an artist into a project and the brief that you set them.

JB: I was asked about the cornerstones of the way in which Locus plus works. We are a small organisation. There are only two people who do everything. One of our principal priorities is the interest of artists and from that, all things follow. Our objective is to create opportunities for artists to extend their practice. If you look at this little red leaflet you can see our artists' projects to date. We might do a contemporary public art project on Monday, a CD on Tuesday, a book on Wednesday, a multiple on Thursday and so on. We are completely orientated around the object or event, and we have to then apply what intelligence we have in order to make it volatile in the world and when I say volatile I don't mean destructively, I mean in the sense that it would resonate in different ways for different people. How do we find our collaborators? They emerge from the process of developing a project with an artist. You don't necessarily find the people themselves but you find out what kind of places to go, the kind of pubs to drink in if you want to meet the right type of person. So that is how we operate. We don't have a condition of our funding saying we have to do this or we have to do that. Not many people have that luxury. I think our diversity was problematical in the beginning because it seemed to have no shape but over time people can look at the projects and visit the website and there is an ideological thread that weaves all these different projects together in different ways, the different books, multiples, events, talks, lectures, satellite broadcasts, which we did in Glasgow and Newcastle, and so on.

KG: How many projects do you work on at a time?

JB: I would say we always have about six on the go and they could be editing a film, or editing a book or getting planning permission for something. They are all on different fronts and we try and manoeuvre them into the world one after the other. We don't do everything ourselves. The money allows us to bring specialist skills if we need them – basically we coordinate people who are a lot cleverer than we are who do the hard work, so that is useful. Do you want to know about the money?

Audience member 1 : How do you make your money?

JB: We don't make our money. It mostly comes from grant aid or grants from private companies who commission works. We do make money from the books but nowhere near enough and any money from the books goes into more books. Our revenue grant from Arts Council, North East is £167,000 but with the project funding and the relationships with the local authorities and all other work, the turnover for the company is probably more

than double that. It fluctuates between £350,000 and £400,000 a year. The guy I work with, Jonty Tarbuck, and I basically spend 95% of our time writing applications.

It sounds like an absolutely colossal amount of money and it is actually a lot of money, but if you look at Nathan's project, that cost £60,000 to do. Even though it only existed for three days in its sculptural form, it needed that level of funding to do it properly, and allow him to get the project that he wanted. In our negotiations over funding, the artist's needs are equally as important as the other's needs. I know that is such a obvious thing to say but you wouldn't believe how that slips through the net when other people work with artists.

I am actually in dispute at the moment over a project by Elizabeth Wright for Nexus, her first permanent public art work. The situation is complicated because one company owns the rolling stock, another company owns the track, and somebody else owns the tunnel. The work is a permanent panel work for a tunnel and to access the tunnel you have to acquire temporary possession between one o'clock in the morning and four o'clock in the morning. Your solicitor has got to apply for it, it takes six weeks and costs £2,000 each time.

Audience member 1: For a slip of paper?

JB: Yes, you have to comply with Health and Safety and public liability regulations. Anyway we were told at the very beginning in the contract that the possessions would be paid for out of a separate budget because the company needed access to the tunnel anyway to carry out maintenance. Now they gone back on that agreement and asked us to pay for the permissions. However, we have already established how the lottery money will be spent and there is no funding available for this. The company have therefore proposed that we make the project smaller. Immediately the artist is the victim and of course that is not right. We are disputing this with the company. That is an example of how the artist has to carry the can for decisions made in other places.

Sarah Galliers: Do all projects have to take place in the North East? Does it have to have some connection to your local area?

JB: No. We have done projects in Ireland, for example. The location depends on the artists' projects and the agreements we make with funders.

PO: Do you think the problems you are encountering with the underground will eventually dictate the project?

JB: Yes, it will dictate the project. I have told them that we would very much like the situation resolved, because our relationship with the artist is deteriorating. This issue has been unresolved for almost a year and she is quite rightly not happy and wants to know what is going on. We have told them if they can't resolve it, we would like to ask Elizabeth to make a new proposal.

PO: With regard to the work that is produced?

JB: If we can't find a solution the work won't be produced because we will spend money on a different project. It is a shame because it is a permanent work for the inside of the railway tunnel, and she has come up with a very interesting solution that deals with all the health and safety issues. It is a very interesting work, we have been working on it for a very long time and would like to deliver it but there comes a point when you have to say, it is just not going to work out for the artist's benefit.

We have been carrying generic ads in magazines about our programme and we list artists' projects including this one. We are using her to promote us but we haven't actually delivered a project. Are we exploiting her? There are issues around that. Those big institutions they need to be made aware that that is an important part of the texture with working with artists. If you are take on difficult work with artists as their first project, everybody, including the funder, gets nervous. Are we going to pull it off, is it going to be a disaster, are we going to be on the front page of the *Sun*?

AE: What other projects or initiatives in the art world are you interested in? Do you have partnerships with other arts organisations or projects? Is there anything that inspires you?

JB: We have partnerships with the art world if they are to do with making the project better. We don't have a partnership with another arts organisation unless they are going to contribute something specific to the project, for example the facilities to produce work in . new media, or gallery space.

AE: Do you know of any art projects elsewhere in the world that are working in a socially engaged type way that you find interesting?

JB: I particularly like Art in the Public Interest (API) in North Carolina. They are having to work in a culture that is almost impossible for us to imagine and they are doing a lot of really interesting types of projects. They have a website you could visit.

Sue Pirnie (SP): Jon, when you were talking through the collaboration at one point you made it quite clear that your primary interests are the artist and the art work. In a sense that is not collaboration, as we know it up here. The projects that I know of yours have been centred on a very strong artist's idea and realising that idea. To my mind that kind of project is more site-specific than collaborative.

JB: The organisation is Locus Plus or **Locus Outside** and at the very beginning of the talk I outlined where that came from and stated that site specificity is obviously a crucial thing. At the beginning people assumed that Locus Plus was place plus artist, but it was never conceived of like that. It was place plus the participation of all the people who made the project happen. It happens to include the artist but it includes more than that: all the projects that we have done have a collaborative element to them. Earlier we discussed how people imagine collaboration implies an equality of benefit when in fact it doesn't. I think that is impossible to achieve. What it requires for success is the recognition and protection of the needs or interests of 'the other' and that is how collaboration works, in the way that we use the word.

SP: Perhaps there are two stages in that collaborative work. Do you look for artists who are interested in that 'other' as well? If the artist works in a purely solo way, do you feel that is not the artist for you or you are not the organisation for them. At a later stage, when you are working with the artist and the other, do you find yourself also having to represent the interest of the other?

JB: Yes

SP: What is the balance between the two interests? Which is the more difficult of the two?

JB: The first thing I would say is that none of the projects have ever been adversarial. One of the things that we do is to recognise the needs of 'the other' as early as we possibly can, to the extent of asking them to spell out why they are interested. I am

basically a salesman. I could walk into a fire station and and say to the fire officers, 'Excuse me, is it OK if I put six portraits of dead Chernobyl firemen on the roof?' The fire officers have to want to help us, because we need them to give us something money can't buy, which is permission and support. I have to be able to say why we think this project would be interesting, why we would like to use the building, why we would like them to be involved and to help make this project happen.

That was a very interesting project. It slowly became apparent that the Northumbria Fire Service was entering into a round of funding discussions with the Council and they wanted to take part in the project. The portraits, by an artist called Stefan Gec, were taken from the ID cards of the first firemen who went into the Chernobyl reactor. The fire station in Newcastle looks like a political institution in Eastern Europe and Stefan wanted to make these images on a huge scale.. It became apparent that the Chief Fire Officer wanted us there because he wanted publicity for the fire service and its ideas of sacrifice and social values in the run up to a series of negotiations about financial resources for the fire station. We supported that. Whenever anyone wanted to talk about the project we just asked him if he would like to be interviewed, for the *Guardian* or *Kaleidoscope*, for example. He talked very eloquently about public art, it got a lot of attention in the media and Stefan was happy with that. The answer is that you definitely have to act in the interests of the other, actively act as opposed to notionally recognise.

SP: And in that process presumably you are assisting in the experience and the skills on all the sides of the collaboration. You already mentioned that some groups were so interested that they wanted to carry on projects themselves after that?

JB: Yes.

SP: Do you prepare them in any way and are you closely involved in the mechanisms of delivering a follow-up project?

JB: Not in a formal way.

SP: Have you done any?

JB: Follow up, aftercare? We actually do call it aftercare. You have to do that to make sure that everyone feels there is a resolution. For Nathan's project I mentioned the talk I gave to the schoolchildren, probably one of the most nerve-wracking experiences I have ever had. I had to follow that up by going back, doing another talk, watching the DVD, and answering questions: 'Where is it now? Where is it going to be? What is Nathan doing now? Is he coming back?' And we do that with everything. If it is required. So the project itself lasted three days but it took a year to do. It is still ongoing because the project may appear again next year in different places.

If you live in the city for a long time doing artists' projects you get known, not necessarily directly, but by reputation. It is important to establish good relationships with all those people who are not directly involved in the art world, like the head teacher, the Board of Governors and all those people. That is part of the strategy. I wouldn't describe it as cynical; it is about advocacy and persuasion. When other artists turn up we hope these people will say, 'We have had a really interesting and positive experience working with artists. Why don't we do that again.' It is a professional and personal investment, in terms of the North East, for me, a little bit of a crusade or a campaign. So in a way I am more interested in the non-art people, funnily enough.

AE: How would you go about making things better in the future?

JB: I would certainly like to get more money so we can employ more people. We can't continue to do everything that we have been doing. It has come to a point where we need to choose.

AE: What part of the process would you like to work on and develop?

JB: I would like Locus Plus to develop its publishing activities.

CC: Who are the audience for the books?

JB: We have two distributors: Art Data in London and DAP (Distributor of Art Publications) for New York, North America and Asia.

CC: So you are writing for an art audience?

JB: We don't write them. They tend to be monographs or documents and these two companies distribute them.

CC: To an art audience rather than the communities?

JB: Yes, so they are sold in art bookstores and galleries. {Our print run is relatively low, for example up to two thousand. this is a rewrite} We are lucky because our two distributors don't cherry pick. Most distributors cherry pick in that they will take some books and reject others, and that is no good for us. They have to understand that the books that we publish stand alone, they are evidence of an art project that we have done and our distributors take them on that basis, because it would be absolutely pointless if we were to do six projects and only get distribution for two.

Our distributors have taken on the Locus Plus brand as opposed to the specifics of the content. I should have brought a set of books for you to see the range and the production values, which vary according to the nature of the project.

CC: You give something back to the art world in the form of these books. You have spoken about your responsibility to the participants. I wondered whether there is anything else that comes out of the project for the people you are working with, the communities?

JB: In the sense of?

CC: When you put artists in a context and they make a piece of work which is temporary, then leave, I wonder what is left in the context?

JB: Yes, that is right, but there is an awfully long lead-in time of making sure that everybody understands what the process is and why the process is the way it is.

CC: **So it is an experiential...?**

JB: Yes, very much. It has to be because all 'the others' make a commitment to the project that you cannot buy. If the Sedburgh Stitchers hadn't wanted to do work on Laura Vickerson's project, how would we have made it happen? So that process of persuasion and advocacy is all important.

CC: They give you something, they give you this precious thing you can't buy, and you give them back the experience of working with an artist.

JB: Yes, that could be one transaction. I think there is a three-dimensional set of transactions actually *but, depending on the project, yes, that is a way of describing what happens.*