



(d/v)

Mind is a series of many activities  
and the doings of the mind are subtle.

[R] *...daylight and candle light played over their faces,  
and their voices intertwined as in a responsory. 763*

Patterns are ways of attending, of learning to be in the world.

*They* link closely to usages that are so familiar we are hardly aware we inhabit them.  
They colour our view.

I do not want rid of them.

[R] *the* pattern of refusal is to disregard

Only to be aware of them so I am not in their thrall.

Noticing the refrain - and the aspect of its changing -  
the asymmetric, asynchronous times of each -  
allows a foothold or vantage (that is not a hold at all)

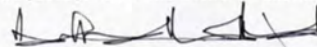


[R] I think of photocopies of hands and pages holding images

An opening of the body, a breath, perhaps a word.

The tracing of pressure in a line.

The passage from one sound to another.



[R] the aside's address directly to audience is  
meta-linguistic; awareness of the fiction you are  
creating is inherent in the work

In the relinquishment of views, movement  
particularity. Not repetition or reprise.

[R] Annotation of this whole process marks entry and exit points,  
folding the work into the work

## Interview with Martina Copley, 14 August 2015

*Sandie Bridie: Martina, what did you take 'unintended refrains' to mean?*

Martina Copley: In the initial text I read 'attempt to rid ourselves of' and I used that to interpret Unintended Refrains. So I guess I took it as some lumpen thing that for some reason I carried around unconsciously; a hindrance that someone might want to lighten their load by getting rid of it or at least disidentifying themselves from it.

*And what was the process in finding an object that might match your ideas?*

Those are not my ideas; I gave those ideas to you. My first response was interested because I noticed that my first response was 'No'. And I thought, how often my response to things is that, and I thought this is a really good opportunity to say 'yes' to this notion. So, yes to that and think on that, so that's what I did. I don't have an object, so this is a preliminary to answering that question about the object. I thought and I wrote – I've written like six pages or something – but I can't find an object, I don't have an object. I know Freud would be throwing his hands in the air, however it brought me to an understanding of ...

*Would the six pages be an object?*

Oh well, I have an object as a useless prop, I have many of those I could offer; I could offer text, I could offer an intertitle, if you like, so I could have a narrative, I could have a text piece and a kind of kernel or something and they could sit together. I feel like no object is a negation and I don't want to do that; I am talking about affirmation here, so I do have options, but my first focus is this open space, to open up a space for conjecture, I suppose. So my question wasn't, what are the things that I want to move; what are the things that I want to disidentify from, because it wasn't bringing me to anywhere interesting, it wasn't bringing me to any new understanding. So my questions then started to be, well how often do I say no to things? How do I say yes to what is presented? Then I started thinking about vantage and I thought about how in certain situations it is hard to say yes, and the way that I do that and I am writing on the aside and I do that, is this stepping back? Is this being able to step back and see something for what it is? And then you have actually got the space to say no, if you want to say no. So I think about it that way and I think about the situations in which unconsciously I don't give myself that opportunity, how my attitudes and my presupposition coloured my experience. Then that then shifts into this notion that is, I suppose, space/time understanding when I think about refrain. I think about two aspects of a refrain, noticing the refrain, which is like a pattern that is a recurrent pattern, a circling kind of pattern, it give a sense of time as continuity and noticing at the same time the aspects of that changing, the refrain changing, because it is never an eternal recurrence or a perfect return. That is the

story that is concocted by the eye and the self. So I am interested in refraining those two aspects. It's very unclear, but it is unclear still, it is still formative.

*Did you have a more concrete look at your artwork to see if there was anything that repeated itself? Taking a critical distance from your artwork to see if there was anything that was inserting itself in there that you hadn't observed, that you hadn't been conscious of when you were making it? That looking at the work now, it told you something new back to yourself?*

I guess I haven't – I have thought about my work as that which I do; it's the way that I think and the way that I live and the way that I do, so I didn't look at it that way, however I am looking at my patterns, if you like, that way. So I can identify things like patterns of holding my body when I sit in meditation, for example. The tendency is to want to be free of those patterns; the useful, skilful behaviour which is not about changing a situation necessarily, because I feel like that's figured in the question, this idea of getting rid of something, changing the situation, changing understanding itself, but being able to sit with that discomfort, if you like, the physical discomfort. That's a really nice one to visualise because it is locatable in the body, but I think about ways of behaving, attitudes that are held in the same way but almost as a colour filter that you might put over a lens, so everything is orange from here. Everything is going to be orange, it doesn't matter where I am looking, it is going to be orange – that's in my work a lot, the idea of filter or in framing or this sort of strategy of pointing to the frame, if you like. The held attitude is to engender a shift or to allow the possibility of a shift is more in the understanding of what I do. So that's how it relates to the work. That is one of the objects I love, a glass filter or something like that, it would be kind of nice thing to be involved somewhere as well.

*So, if you went through a process of thinking about what you might select and then deciding no, what were the things that you thought about that were not suitable?*

Oh, well, this is the thing; I didn't come up with any. The object, it doesn't seem right. I don't want to create a lumpen thing, to present an object as a representation of a thing I want to get rid of because I don't think that way and I don't work that way. I work through a process of attempting to give attention to things as they are, which is not acceptance and it is not just saying yes to everything. But it does allow me not to just instantly negate if you take just a singular, static viewpoint. So this idea of something shifting through; so for example, things that I thought about would be chalk marks on a wall, for example, so a gestural object I guess, or performance, I don't know what you would call it an object that exists only in relationship, so there is some elemental vantage involved in the way that you receive or engage with the object. So then, options come and I haven't thought

to that point. I thought it would be really interesting to come to the interview, and useful and helpful to talk before having actually pinpointed the object. That's the process of interest.

*Having an absence in an exhibition where my request as a curator is pretty specific and there is a kind of implied obligation to come up with an object, not being able to do that could be an interesting response. It creates a physical pause in the exhibition but also that creates a space for conjecture for the viewer as well.*

I find that a very binary space, for me that's a plain negation and it's very obvious; it's like a semantic game playing. I am not interested in that, I am interested in doing this to learn about how I figure. The refrain is important to me, this idea of time as continuity is central, but then how to manifest that as an object is another question. So that was my first response was this empty space, but no, I am interested to play in that space and not just stop there.

I don't know, I wrote some notes; things that I found problematic in the premise/proposal; to be rid of is problematic-interesting – I like thinking about it, to be rid of, we have talked about that, that idea of aversion and that there is some point at which you are – it's like an anticipatory time, like living not in the present but always in an anticipatory time so that at some point you will be right, you will be OK and the world will be OK and we will all be rid of the things that –

*Like a progress narrative.*

Yes. And it ties in very much with art practice, I think, with history and stories and film and how we construct selves, how we understand this idea of self. So that was the other idea that I find assumed in the premise; this idea of ourselves, our artist selves and I have been thinking about that and my understanding of self. So far I have thought about understandings of self, in any way that I might identify myself; doubts, fears, capacities – however I might – is already old, is already no, is already an orange colour over everything and so if there was something that I would like to be free of, and that is not the phrase I would use, or get rid of or be free, but if there was something that I would really like to see clearly, it would be that orange filter. Those notions of self that I have, because of the stories that I have told, because of my understanding of space/time as being some kind of life lived and continuous, a thread, when in fact my experience can be open to what exactly is now, what I find now, but a lot of things that hold me back from that –

*Are you looking for this orange filter rather than wanting to see things through another filter?*

Yeah, well and I suppose the Zen way of understanding is clarity of mind, if you like. But for me it is about processes of attention, where do you direct your attention. So I

could focus endlessly on what is the object going to be. So about this idea of filter or vantage, I think being able to be attentive to what is creating the vantage is sort of asking questions around how, and they are really useful questions for me for making.

*So the project has been useful for you to work out what you want.*

The project has been challenging in one way, but useful in that it did make me think about how I do approach things with a certain fixed view and I have very strong views, which is not to say that I deny my feelings and thoughts about things because they are considered, however the need that I seem to have when I started attending to conversations when people would propose to me they are; 'hmmm, I think this', or 'No, I like that' and this I, I, I. For me it is a very interesting and useful thing to be able to consider and through this project I seem to be considering this notion of views held and how they are held.

*So in that way, I suppose the idea for me was to set up a way of looking at what you do and observing those habits and asking yourself how useful they are, or not.*

I think the other key word in the project for me is 'intention' – this idea of intention and an understanding of just what is intention? In a way, my understanding of intention is that it does go to attention, where you choose to attend and how you choose to attend, because unintended is really unaware, however it also links into that area of actually being in the world and I don't know what words you like to use, but happenstance – just allowing things to come, of being with things instead of directing things, that's also involved in that word. That is key to processes of thinking and making, also understanding the sense of time in making, unexpected things happen and yet is it still me moving the work, moving with the work. So there is this lovely continuity but that is cut. I think about – the empty space that you were talking about before if I did have no object, I think more in terms of a lapse or a misstep or a transitional space or a cross dissolve in a film. I think about that space and it is very interesting to think about exhibition space in that way; it's a nominal space. I was curious about the fact that you chose object and text, that you asked for both and I am interested in the relationships that could occur there, I am very interested in that. The reader like the watcher, if you like.

*Whether they are equal or unequal, equal or cancelling one another out.*

So again, it is kind of a literary space and I tend to work in a literary space.

*I kind of like that it has set up a conundrum for people and it is not about an excellent artwork, it can be anything.*

That's true and I suppose I hadn't really thought about the project that way; that's another outside, if you like; another façade or another vantage, which is this idea

that artists make art, art makes meaning, that equation that is frightful! But yes, the whole project as a kind of figuring from the curator's perspective.

*Yes, you can't guess at what the result will be. It's nice to set up a conundrum, which is ungainly for people to deal with and then the result is the result.*

I wouldn't have called it ungainly, because there are so many relationships; there is the inner voice and the presentation of work – the conundrum could be in that space as well. So there are lots of spaces of translation in this project. So I don't think that's ungainly, I think that's really open and rich.

*I guess it's ungainly in that the people I have spoken to, they need to have conversation with me to work out what this thing is, or how to think about it. They want to know what my intentions are and so it is something that has required a first conversation or meeting before the interview. This is what curating is about, it's engaging with people, that, for me, it is the pleasure of curating; the exhibition is one outcome, the other is these engagements, these conversations about this nebulous thing that is clear to me but not clear to them.*

The thinking in the work is interesting, but I do think artists can be lazy, I know I shouldn't say that, but I notice a tendency in working with artists where they need to understand what you mean, but I don't feel that that is necessary for me, I don't need to understand what you intend. I am happy to read the text that you sent, it is a considered text, I am happy to take it and turn it around and find key words for myself and find my interest and find my point of intersection. In fact, as a curator, I love it if artists do that because it means that I get a prismatic approach, which is really what it is about. And I think it is a lot about power relations between curators and artists, and a habitual pattern as well. So you set the guidelines and then I am free. But actually you are free at the beginning.

*You are, but I think guidelines make it easier to be free.*

Yeah, they do. So that is how I take the proposition, it is something to be turned over and considered. I suppose the key to my approach would be noticing refrain and the pattern of its changing.