

EDINBURGH

SCULPTURE

WORKSHOP

A conversation on *Conversations*
Siân Robinson Davies and Peter Amoore

To coincide with the exhibition
Conversations by Siân Robinson Davies

15 July – 31 August 2016

PA: The characters in *Conversations* ask questions looking to find out about one another, even if they don't always completely understand each other's point of view.

SRD: Their similarities enable them learn about their differences, but curiosity is also required for them to begin to understand one another. Learning new things often involves unlearning something we already accept as true. If we are open to being exposed to different perspectives, we can develop our thinking.

PA: In one of the conversations, soup describes time travelling in a freezer 'two whole weeks!' into the future, to a sceptical table. Where do the scenarios in *Conversations* come from? Do you start writing by imagining situations from the point of view of the things around you, or do you translate experiences from your life into events, re-told from the perspective of objects?

SRD: I use a variety of approaches. The idea for the time-travelling soup came from trying to explain to my boyfriend that best-before-dates don't apply if something has been in the freezer. Every time he takes out a pizza, he is like, "this is past its best-before", and I'm like "IT'S FROZEN IN TIME!".

Whereas with the conversation between the lipstick and the breeze block I started from a point of tactility. I was enjoying imagining their materiality and how they would touch each other; the lipstick driven by desire and the breeze block never having encountered sexuality before. In this conversation the breeze block feels totally lost, which is because it's in isolation. A breeze block that is within a wall is part of a community, so I think that it's probably going to be fulfilled. But a breeze block that is alone, perhaps discarded in an urban wasteland, never having done the job it was intended for, I imagine to be a bereft object. It knows there is something wrong with how its life is working out, but it can't figure out what or how to change it.

PA: Many of the dialogues highlight the gaps in communication and the difficulty of understanding another's perspective or role. For example, the remote control tries its best to explain to a knife how it turns off a T.V.

It describes transmitting images that evoke closure; ‘a candle burning out... the final bite of a chocolate bar... a plane coming into land...’, but the knife struggles to understand. This makes me think of trying to explain to my granddad how to save Word documents. He just isn’t quite able to grasp where the files are stored.

SRD: Exactly. The knife, as a non-digital object, doesn’t have the vocabulary or conceptual understanding to follow what the remote control is saying. All the knife has ever known is to make a cut by applying pressure to a surface, so it doesn’t understand how an action can occur without physical contact. For the same reason, the penis has difficulty in understanding how contactless payments work. I teach computer literacy to adults, which is all about finding analogue analogies for digital systems. It’s really rewarding when I am able to help someone understand something new, but sometimes it can feel like an abyss lies between us.

PA: Emanating from a celestial space, a know-it-all cycle helmet gives advice to a stately sounding sun. Without letting the sun get a word in edgeways, the helmet suggests that the sun works too hard. However it’s the sun, and the sun can handle it, at least for the next five billion years, so perhaps the cycle helmet is missing the point. The cycle helmet recommends the sun act a bit more like it does, to put things off as long as possible and not work “until it is really needed”, without understanding the different scale of their roles.

SRD: Yes, the cycle helmet is an irritating character, in that it has had a fairly small set of experiences but wants to give advice to anyone and everyone, even where advice isn’t wanted. But there is an uncertainty that creeps into its voice towards the end. It wants to defend its stated opinion that working all the time isn’t important, but it has self-doubt as to whether it is fulfilled. That doubt relates to the way we might not subscribe to particular notions of success, but we can’t escape them altogether. How society defines success affects our understanding of ourselves, whether we like it or not.

PA: When meeting for the first time, two strangers, love and the ocean, exchange awkward words but quickly find a strong affinity with each other as they realise that they both like to “knock people off their feet” and both “like being deep”. They are talking about different experiences, yet they can still connect with each other through their shared language; as the ocean’s physical depth is a metaphor for a feeling of love.

SRD: The conversation plays on the cliched language surrounding the imagery of love and the ocean. They are like two characters in a really soppy poem but they don’t care because they are having an amazing time.