

I've listened to Jon Walker talk a lot firstly as a teacher in the mid 90's and since that time as a friend. I do a lot of listening when in his presence. He likes to talk and I do like to hear what he has to say or what he's been listening to or painting or reading or cooking or watching or has seen. I know Jon owns a lot of records, I know he paints, I know where he paints, I know where he lives, I know what he's been reading lately but you don't!

To write something for Jon and this CAVES show I asked Jon a number of questions via email and he responded. I thought it best to show these questions and answers in point form. I try to remember things Jon tells me when we meet but his enthusiasm for the telling of the story sometimes hinders my memory. I remember a name or something but more times than not I have to ask again, 'Jon who was that artist you were talking about last time we met.....?' etc. etc.

One of our recent catch ups Jon tells me about Lennie Lower, I had to ask Jon a further three times about who Lennie Lower is/was. Jon's excitement of the telling of Lennie Lower again overshadowed my memory also I'm sure the bottle of wine we were having in the surrounds of Beco added to animation and memory loss. Jon tells me Lennie Lower lived in a cave on the Sydney shoreline he also told me and others in 1996 that some of the Mannerists lived in holes and trees! Jon lives above a shop with his records.

G'day Jon, some questions for you.

How many records do you think you have

I stopped counting when I got to five figures. There were still records I hadn't counted in the bedroom, the studio, the bathroom and the music room.

(I've got a feeling Jon may have raced around his home trying to count them all but just gave up, kind of an impossible question for him)

Do you have a favourite

My favourite at present is an LP by Toru Takemitsu, one of a series he released of short chamber music pieces called "Miniatures" in the early 70's. It contains one of my all-time favourite pieces of music called "Eucalypts" in 2 versions; one has more instruments than the other but they're very similar.

How did you buy records prior to you using the internet from overseas

Originally from local shops then more and more from hard copy mail order catalogues which you got from writing a letter to an outlet overseas. You had to include a couple of postal coupons so they could afford the stamps to send a reply.

How many records do you buy a year

I don't count them. I just keep an eye on the disappearing dollars in my bank account.

(Jon gave me some records in 95, namely Big Mama Thornton 'sassy mama'.)

How many album covers have you contributed your art work to and? to which musician

Only one I think but all of that was a long time ago. info on website.

(I can tell Jon's getting sick of my questions already. I get in trouble a little further on)

Is music incorporated into your paintings

This is difficult to answer with fidelity. In the 80's and 90's it was in ways both conceptual and methodological, but since then, less so.

How did you make these paintings i.e. sourcing the images etc., what are these paintings of?

The answer to this one and the next can be found on my website under spectral painting and Achim Wollschied collaboration.

(mmmm again with the website answer! I better step it up)

Are you restricted to the size of painting you can make?

Yes

(Think Lane think! Don't lose him, keep him engaged)

Who are the artists you most look at?

Australian tonal artists from Buvelot to Clarice Beckett.

Favourite surface to paint on?

Linen providing I do the preparation.

Time spent painting, do you have a daily routine?

2 or 3 days a week, each session no longer than a couple of hours.

Is this series of paintings finished?

No. There's already 2 more begun with a 3rd decided with image but undecided with dimension.

Are they specifically made for this space?

No.

(one word answer- great!)

How do you arrive at the size of a painting given some years back you made quite large paintings?

I now have to turn the painting round a bit and I prefer to paint blind (close-up) then "see" what I have done at a distance at the end of a session. So they have to be small enough to hold. The results are more surprising this way.

Have you ever made any sculptures?

None to be exhibited, just as prep for paintings. I have a huge photocopy of lavender cut into lace, but I couldn't store it properly and it's now sitting in a broken heap in one of those old plastic garbage bags that are non-biodegradable.

Is drawing important to you?

Stand-alone drawings were important as preparation for painting in the 80's and 90's just to become acquainted with my subject. Nowadays I only use drawings to place things right on the canvas.

What are you reading?

Your fucking questions mate. Don't you ever do this to me again Lane! The books I'm reading are:

The Australian Constitution: A Documentary History by John M, Williams

Age of Anger by Pankaj Mishra, a history of modern political resentment. And 3 new books of essays:

Known and Strange Things by Teju Cole

Proxies: A Memoir in Twenty- four Attempts by Brian Blanchfield

Too Much and Not the Mood by Durga Chew- Bose

(obviously don't ask Jon what his reading!)

(I have to try to attempt to capture Jon's animated telling of Lennie Lower)

Tell me about Lennie Lower?

He was a Sydney journalist who wrote barely disguised short fiction that was a firsthand account of the characters he met in Sydney pubs. This was a time when journalists, like art lecturers, were a pub drinking profession. Now they tend to spend their time in coffee shops or at home on their computer. His work was published regularly in the national newspapers; my mother can remember reading Lennie Lower. He wrote about drinkers. TAB frequenters, and what used to be the jolly working class in a vernacular that has disappeared, though certain intonations barely survive in a few remaining old timers.

Interview conducted by friend and former pupil of Jon's, Lane Cormick.