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**CONSTRUCTING ARTISTIC INTEGRITY:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Arts
at
The University of Waikato
by
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The University of Waikato
2006

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the concept of artistic integrity. A historical foundation for artistic integrity is laid to provide a context within which eight artists' constructions of the concept can be placed. To date, little research has been conducted to discover how artists feel about artistic integrity, despite the fact that the concept is used frequently both in the popular media, and in arts and creative industries policy and research.

Secondary research into European Romanticism and the growth of the creative industries traces the complex development of artistic integrity through to contemporary New Zealand. Grounded by an internal-idealist ontology, a subjectivist epistemology, and an interpretive paradigmatic framework, qualitative, semi-structured interviews with eight artists were conducted to investigate how artistic integrity is perceived by those working within the New Zealand arts environment.

The multifaceted nature of the history of artistic integrity is mirrored in the complexity of the responses from the artists involved in this research. Key themes to emerge from the analysis of the interview data were the personally constructed and contextual character of artistic integrity, its importance to the artists involved, and its social contestation. However, the opinions offered on these themes were often very different, and occasionally even contradictory.

The artists' responses illuminate how differently artistic integrity could be interpreted throughout the creative community, and question the validity of current uses and definitions of the concept. Most importantly, this research provides an opportunity for artists to offer their understandings of artistic integrity, as surely it is artists who should be determining the validity and meaning of their integrity.

To the many people who have helped me get to the end of this journey, I send my most heartfelt thanks:

My fantastic supervisors, Prof. Dan Fleming, for his gentle teasing and infinite knowledge which kept me going in the right direction.
Dr Suzette Major, without whom I would be selling empty needs to demographics, for her inspiration and constant support.

The wider Department of Screen and Media family, for putting up with me for so long, and for giving me a job, an office and endless encouragement.

My friends, for sticking by me when I became so lost in my own head
I was no longer particularly friendly.

My family, Mom, Julie, Aboolfazl, Karen, Arana, Margaret, Jason, Dad and Linda, for their love and for carving the path on which I travel.

Most of all, my partner Richard, as without him supporting, loving, and encouragingly bullying and bribing me into writing, I may never have got to the end of this with my body and soul intact.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

‘[Artists] try and skip the work integrity when it comes to money, and I’m not sorted, I’m not sorted at all when it comes to that...’

(Mark, one of the artists interviewed for this research).

“Artistic integrity” is an intriguing idea. Personal integrity, mechanical integrity; these are concepts that have been studied and defined, yet the concept of artistic integrity, although widely used, has been largely ignored as a field of academic inquiry. This thesis begins the process of exploring the historical roots and current understandings of artistic integrity within the context of the New Zealand arts environment.

As a qualitative study, this research begins by looking at how the artist has been separated out from workers in other types of occupations to the point that the idea of artistic integrity has emerged. Hirschman’s (1983) discussion of creative orientations, consisting of self-orientated creativity, peer-orientated creativity, and commercial creativity, has been used as a framework through which to view integrity. In addition, by looking back on the development of the Romantic Movement of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, a link between artistic integrity, the ‘myth of the artist’ and the identification of artists as aspiring geniuses can be found. Using the work of theorists of Romanticism such as Pinoch (2002), Meecham and Sheldon (2000), and Brown and Patterson (2000), it will be argued that the Romantic Movement was the ‘jumping off point’ from which understandings of artistic integrity have developed as an ideal, and that this ideal works differently in each of the creative orientations.

However, at the same time as the Romantic Movement was turning artists into a special category of workers, much of the developed world was moving towards a capitalist economic structure, which has allowed the development of the current ‘art market’. In the 1940’s, Adorno and Horkheimer (members of the Frankfurt School), named and discussed the “Culture Industries” in which the art market

functioned. These theorists critiqued focusing too much attention on the economic value of art, rather than on the artistic, creative, or social values. This critique of the motives of the ‘Culture Industries’ did not stop their development, and it can be argued that this has led to a clash between Romantic notions of the artist and economic values. Critiques of the ‘Culture Industries’ still resonate today in the New Zealand context under the current Labour government, where there has been a massive injection of funding into the newly named ‘creative industries’ in order to allow arts to become more economically viable. With large amounts of taxpayer’s money being invested in the creative sector with an expectation of return on that investment, questions about artistic motivations and value, and with them artistic integrity, are becoming more frequent.

Looking at current uses of the term ‘artistic integrity’ provides some basis for understanding how artists may themselves see it. In documents from Creative New Zealand (the country’s primary arts funding body) use seems to encourage a broad understanding of the term (see Kerr, 2001; Keate, 2000, Creative New Zealand, 2005; McDermott Miller Limited, 1998; SGS Economics and Planning Pty. Ltd., 2006), and the sole Creative New Zealand definition looks at issues around control. In contrast, usage in the media has a much more narrow focus, almost purely relating to whether or not an artist has economic motivations behind their practice (see Page, 2006; Leggett, 2006; Philpott, 2006; APP, 2006). The disparity between these two conceptions of artistic integrity, as imposed from outside onto working artists, is the legacy of the clash between the Romantic notions of ‘the artist’ on one side, and the focus on the economic value of the ‘artistic product’ on the other.

What stands out most strongly when contextualising artistic integrity, both historically and in the current New Zealand arts environment, is the lack of an artist’s voice explaining how s/he views the concept. Therefore, questions as to how artists themselves view artistic integrity – a concept which surely artists should be consulted on – must be asked. The objective of this study was to begin to address this imbalance. In order to do so, primary qualitative research was undertaken in the form of semi-structured interviews with eight artists from a range of creative practices. Grounded by an internal-idealist ontology, a

subjectivist epistemology and an interpretive paradigmatic framework (Sparkes, 1992; Denzin, 1994), the interviews allowed each artist the opportunity to pursue their own responses in relation to the questions asked, while allowing some level of comparison between the interviewees. These theoretical groundings will be explained as we proceed. (See in particular Chapter Three). Drawing on techniques from ethnography (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) and personal construct theory (Botterill & Crompton, 1996; Meyer, 1993), the researcher provided the opportunity for each of the artists to explore what they thought artistic integrity was, how (if at all) it affected the way that they worked, whether they felt it was an important idea in the current creative industries environment, and how they perceived challenges to their own or other artists' integrity.

Having drawn discursively on two immensely different influences on artistic practice – the Romantic Movement and the development of what is now known as the creative industries – it is not surprising that the responses from the artists about artistic integrity were complex and multifaceted. What emerged during the analysis of these interviews were a number of central themes around which the artists had different views, such as the personal construction of integrity, its importance and the fact that artistic integrity is often context-dependent. What did not emerge was a solid, mutually understood definition of what constituted artistic integrity, as each artist explained different constructions of the term, and identified the context-dependant nature of integrity within their arts environments. However, despite the differences and contradictions between – and in some cases within – the artists' constructions of artistic integrity, links can be made among the eight individuals and between the historical and contemporary basis for integrity. These links allow the beginning of a greater depth of understanding of the idea of artistic integrity as it currently applies to artists working within the New Zealand arts and creative industries environment. Most importantly however, the constructions and discussions of artistic integrity included here are provided by the people who are affected by it – artists.

CHAPTER TWO

Theory and Context

The concept of artistic integrity as it is currently utilised is a relatively new one in a history of art which includes paintings, music, sculpture and writing many hundreds or thousands of years old. Despite this, integrity has become deeply embedded in the way that both artists and non-artists think about the creative process and creative careers. The Romantic Movement, from which developed the ‘artist as genius’ and ‘myth of the artist’ ideas, was perhaps the biggest philosophical influence on the idea of artistic integrity, and will be discussed in some depth below. Parallel to the Romantic Movement was the beginnings of a capitalist economic structure in parts of Europe, the America’s and the United Kingdom. This change in the way the economy functioned also changed the way that artists earned a living, allowing it to begin to resemble the art market that is in operation today.

However, in the past twenty to thirty years, artists have begun to be challenged on their artistic integrity more frequently, by those both within and outside the artistic community, and this will be discussed in relationship to the increase in attention paid to the arts since the development and investment in the ‘creative industries’. This economic growth area is considered important by New Zealand’s current government (see *Growing an Innovative New Zealand*, 2002), and also in many other OECD countries around the world. As the shift is made from an ‘arts for arts sake’ view to an ‘arts as economy’ view, concepts such as artistic integrity need to be investigated to provide understandings that artists and the creative industries can utilize.

In an effort to resolve some of the issues of ‘industrialising’ the creative sphere, which includes the arts, the arts marketing discipline has emerged both in practice and in academic research, and it is from within this discipline that this study has developed. Because the arts marketing discipline helps to link an artist with the most appropriate audience, Hirschman’s (1983) discussion of “creative orientations” can be used to contextualise the development of artistic integrity.

Hirschman (1983) discusses three main creative orientations, self, peer, and commercial, which coexist together and within one another, as seen below in figure one.

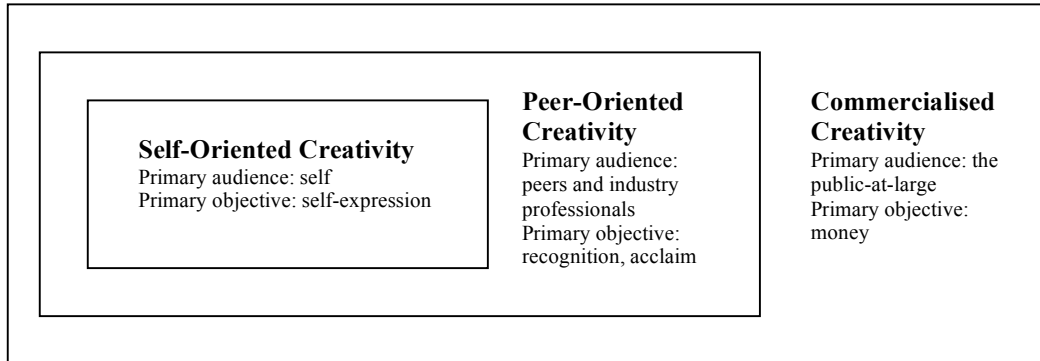


Figure 1. Hirschman's (1983) model of creative orientations

Self-orientated creativity is when the primary audience for the creative work is the self, and the main objective is self-expression (Hirschman, 1983). Although there may be economic benefits from the work, this is not the motivation for the work being created. Peer-oriented creativity has industry experts and the creative practitioner's peers as the primary audience, and the main objective is to gain recognition and acclaim from those whose opinion the practitioner values (Hirschman, 1983). As with self-orientation, there may be economic spin-offs, but again, this is not the main reason for the creation of the work. Thirdly, commercial creativity has the public-at-large as the main audience, and here the primary objective is money. In this case, the creative practitioner may make significant compromises in their work to allow it to appeal to a greater audience, as this is necessary to achieve the primary objective (Hirschman, 1983). Often creative practitioners may work in more than one of these orientations, creating works for themselves, for competitions or industry events, and for a mass market. These three orientations towards creativity provide a useful framework for considering the various ways 'artistic integrity' has been conceptualised throughout this thesis.

The concept of self-orientated creativity provides a starting place from which to discuss the development of the Romantic Movement, as it was principally from

this movement that the idea of the artist as separate from the rest of society developed. Self-orientated creators “place their own evaluative criteria above not only those of the public at large but also those of their peers”, and risk “financial and social costs” by putting their own creative preferences before those of anyone else (Hirschman, 1983, p. 48). This does not mean that the creative practitioner cannot be financially, critically or socially successful, but they do not create work with any audience other than themselves principally in mind, except as potentially approving recipients in the end:

...self-orientated creators create to communicate a personal vision or satisfy an inner need for self-expression. Rather than seeking creative guidance from peers or the public, they follow their own inclinations and then present their creation to others – desiring to receive approval from peers and/or the public. (Hirschman, 1983, p. 48)

This type of creative orientation seems to be the expected reality for most artists. Tusa (2003), after interviewing a number of prominent British artists, comments that “the process of making, painting, writing is, by and large appallingly lonely” and “the fundamental loneliness of the artists’ work is compounded by the fact that they can never know in advance if what they think is right and true will find answering recognition from the public and the critics” (p. 9). However, the idea of self-orientated creativity has not always been recognised, and it will be argued below that its current manifestation has specific historical roots within the Romantic Movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Historical basis

Romanticism as a movement significantly changed the way that theorists, professional artists, and the wider society thought about art. Brians (1998) states that “no other intellectual/artistic movement has had comparable variety, reach, and staying power since the end of the Middle Ages” (para 1). During its heyday in Europe, Romanticism was not only a visual, musical or writing style, but also a philosophical transition from thinking about art as an integral part of society, and as a way to communicate with the illiterate. Artists, who had been viewed as simply a different type of tradesperson, became people to be revered, with artists being supremely talented individuals who were to be singled out. It has been said that Romanticism involved “a turning in upon the self and a heightened examination

of human personality and its moods and mental potentialities; a preoccupation with the genius, the hero, and the exceptional figure in general, and a focus on his passions and inner struggles” (Pinoch, 2002, para 3). Further, Meecham and Sheldon stated that “alienation and rejection were essential elements in the formation of artistic sensibility in Romanticism... The Romantic artist became identified, at least in myth, with the Byronic phrase ‘mad, bad and dangerous to know’” (2000, p. 20). This conceptualisation of ‘the artist’ continues today, and as Brown and Patterson comment, “the Romantic Movement is still very much with us, late and soon, albeit under a ‘postmodern’ *nom de plume*” (2000, p. 7). Meecham and Sheldon agree, calling the artist-as-hero notion the main “legacy of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romantic movement” (2000, p.20). This myth of the artist as hero persists to this day, and is most obvious within Hirschman’s self-orientated creators.

The artists who are now widely accepted in popular discourse to be the true ‘geniuses’ of the creative world are believed to have created primarily to express themselves, as self-orientated creators. However, these artists were often not immediately accepted by the mass audience, and because of this, the ‘myth of the artist’ has continued to develop. It is widely believed to be normal for creative practitioners (especially from the less commercially based creative practices) to struggle to make a living off their work, at least at the beginning of their career. Michels (2001) states that “the myth tells us that struggle, complexity, and suffering are necessary components of creativity, and without these key elements an artist will stagnate. The myth tells us that the desire for comfortable lives and financial success will ultimately poison and distort art” (p. 2). While discussing the myth of the artist, Bättschmann (1997) comments poetically “the artist who has spent his life with no reward other than the expectation of a little fame, with no other support than his inner voice, happily indefatigable, may cherish the faint hope that after his [sic] death he may be crowned with laurel!” (p. 96).

The most often discussed example, and something of a poster child of this myth, is Vincent Van Gogh, whose struggle to create (along with his mental illness) led him to self-mutilation and time in an asylum, and eventually to attempted suicide (Brooks, 2006). At the time of his death, he had only sold one non-commissioned

work, but is now one of the most copied artists in the world (Brooks, 2006). This type of post-death fame feeds the myth that great artists may not get recognition during their life-times, so it is acceptable to starve through life, following one's own creative vision and disregarding critical and peer commentary, as one's true worth may only ever be discovered after one is dead. This thesis argues that the 'myth of the artist' has contributed to the construction of an idea of artistic integrity in which the creative practitioner should stick to their beliefs and vision despite hardship, and taking economic considerations into account is a corruption of the practitioner and their work. Seabrook (2001) agrees with this position, stating

From Wordsworth to Rage Against the Machine, art created for idealistic reasons, in apparent disregard for the marketplace, was judged superior to art made to sell. For the artist, it was not enough to have a gift for giving the people what they wanted; to insure fame, the artist had to pretend not to care what the people wanted. (p. 68)

One of the immediate difficulties with this idea of the 'myth of the artist' and the proliferation of the corresponding idea of the 'starving artist', is that it has created an expectation that it is highly impossible that an artist will become successful (in a financial sense at least) within their lifetimes. This is despite the fact that many of the most recognisable heroes of this group – Van Gogh notwithstanding – were able to live off the sale of their work. This myth contrasts starkly with the current discourses of professionalism and economic potential within the creative industries. It also means that those who subscribe to the ideas within the artists myth (especially that of not pursuing economic return), yet still wish to gain reputation and appreciation of their work from those they consider able to appreciate it, must find a non-market orientation that still allows them to fulfil their objectives. This is where Hirschman's idea of a peer-orientated creativity comes in.

Peer-orientated creators share many characteristics with the self-orientated creators, including an emphasis on the integrity of the practitioner over financial success. Hirschman comments that "the majority of creators exhibit a self or peer orientation, in contrast to the public at large values found in commercialized

industries” (1983, p. 47), although it would be interesting to discover if this is still as true twenty years after Hirschman’s publication.

Hirschman goes on to state that “in creative enterprises such as ballet, the fine arts, opera, classical music, legitimate theater [sic], philosophy, poetry and literature, industry norms advocate artistic integrity, self-definition and ideological independence” (1983, p. 47). The way to determine whether one has met these industry norms, if the artist considers them important, is with a peer-orientation. Peer-orientated creativity often embraces the myth of the artist and the concept of artist-as-genius as self-orientated creativity does, but takes a step towards considering a wider audience base than the self by seeking acknowledgement from peers, critics, and competition judges. Because those who are ‘successful’ in the forum of their own creative practice gain publicity, they can also come to the attention of the wider public. This attention can encourage those who are not as involved with the industry to interrogate the creative practitioner and their work, especially when it is seen to be earning a practitioner a decent living.

Again, this creative orientation can be linked to the influence of the Romantic period in how the public-at-large views creative practitioners. Lee (2005) states that “the Romantics elevated the status of artists to that of ‘geniuses’, ‘prophets’, ‘the unacknowledged legislators of the world’ or ‘agents of the revolution of life’. Artists’ creativity, imagination, originality and sincerity were highly praised and regarded as the very source of greatness in art works” (p. 291). This concept of ‘artistic genius’ seems to be very closely tied to the concept of artistic integrity and self- and peer-orientated creativity. Creative practitioners can be held apart from the rest of their communities as geniuses, whose ‘sincerity’ and integrity were seen as almost the most important part of their work. One way to gain that status as ‘genius’ is to become a peer-orientated creator, who creates work specifically for the purpose of obtaining peer or industry approval; that is not to say that gaining peer approval for work automatically garnered an ‘artist with integrity’ label. However, the need to protect their genius - once gained - and their sincerity could be another starting point for artists placing importance on the idea of artistic integrity, as this could also be the point where an artist’s internal

belief in their own work began to be questioned by the wider public. In order to maintain their 'genius' status in the eyes of their peers, creative practitioners must do ever more amazing things, but they may also use their 'artistic integrity' as a barrier to avoid having to deal with negative feedback.

Damien Hirst is an interesting contemporary example of the need to continually shock and amaze his audiences (*Damien Hirst*, n.d.). Having started his career with heavily publicised and shocking works such as *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991), in which a whole dead shark is encased in a glass cabinet filled with formaldehyde, he must continue to break the boundaries of critics', peers', and the public's sensibilities in order to attract attention to his current work. It has been said that "overcoming an initial distrust of its ease of assembly, people became fascinated by how ordinary things of the world could be placed so as to be seen as beautiful. The work democratised its meaning, operating as simply as a pop song" (*Damien Hirst*, n.d.). However, when we stop being shocked or fascinated, we begin to question why the creative practitioner created this work. This is where the economic forces could have a negative impact on the public's view of a creative practitioner's reason for creating their 'art'.

Hirst has been critiqued widely and loudly for the content, themes, and construction methods of his work, and claims "I like the idea of a factory to produce work, which separates the work from the ideas, but I wouldn't like a factory to produce the ideas" (Carillo de Albornoz, 2006, para. 14). However, employing other people to create work on behalf of an artist, although hardly a new idea, is still greeted with great scepticism by many arts audiences. Within a review of *Damien Hirst: The Agony and the Ecstasy, Selected Works from 1989 to 2004* (an exhibition at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples), reviewer La Placa (2004) commented:

But two centuries after the Romantic era, the crowd still thirsts for the cliché of the suffering artist, when the "pain" embedded in the word "painter" was the measure of artistic integrity. Many continue to pine for the art hero, a half-mad impoverished genius working in isolation. Their benchmark is nothing less than van Gogh's bloody ear! (para. 19).

Because Hirst does not seem to be so personally absorbed in the creation of his work, and is certainly not impoverished, his integrity as an artist can be called into question by those who still buy into the myth of the artist. Hirst is only one of many artists who are critiqued for lacking integrity, although the criteria on which integrity rests is never made clear. Becoming economically successful as an artist appears to open the door to questions from others as to whether one's integrity is still intact.

When considering the idea of an artist taking economic forces into consideration during or even after the creative process, one can again use Hirschman's idea of a commercial creator as a way to frame the discussion (1983). The primary audience for the creative work of the commercial creator is the public-at-large, and the primary objective is money (Hirschman, 1983). As discussed above, this financial focus could be seen by some to damage the creative practitioner's artistic integrity by requiring them to "fulfil the values, desires and expectations of the marketplace" (Hirschman, 1983, p. 47). This is also one of the critiques of the newly – and still somewhat controversially – 'creative industries'. However, critique of the creative industries is by no means new.

As early as 1944, what is now called the creative industries was being critiqued as being too business focussed, with too little emphasis on the art itself. Adorno and Horkheimer argued:

Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries; and when their directors' incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed. (2000 [1944], p. 4).

Having coined the term 'culture industries' to describe what they saw as an unnecessary emphasis on the economic outcomes of cultural 'products', Adorno and Horkheimer, along with other members of the Frankfurt school, sought to critique this sully of the art world as appealing to the 'lowest common denominator', or offering only entertainment, rather than art. They stated "the deception is not that the culture industry supplies amusement but that it ruins the fun by allowing business considerations to involve it in the ideological clichés of

a vulture in the process of self-liquidation” (2000 [1944], p. 14). The commercial creator, as one who deals specifically with satisfying consumer desires, is at the centre of this deception. Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that “the stronger the positions of the culture industry become, the more summarily it can deal with consumers’ needs, producing them, controlling them, disciplining them” (2000 [1944], p. 15).

The commercial is perhaps the most maligned of Hirschman’s creative orientations, but is also the most appropriate for the creative industries. Indeed, it may be the defining feature in some ways. The Romantic ideas of the ‘myth of the artist’, ‘artistic genius’, and struggle do not sit well with the new emphasis on the economic returns from the creative industries. The economic focus has also led to an increase in emphasis on marketing. Lee comments that

...marketing provides not only a management strategy for individual organisations, but also an ideological framework. It asserts the democratic character of a market transaction over other means of social interaction: the market is seen as giving power to people by ensuring their right to voluntarily choose what they want. (2005, p. 292)

Discussion of the creative industries within the contemporary context, and in relation to Hirschman’s (1983) commercial orientation, follows below.

Contemporary Context

The commercial creator’s desire to make money and appeal to the public at large requires them to get the attention of the most appropriate audience for their creative product. For mass media products, such as popular music or film, this audience includes large numbers of people, often spread widely across the developed and developing world. One way to get widespread audience attention is through arts marketing. Arts marketing, as both an academic enquiry and a professional practice, has been growing in popularity over the past two decades. Arts marketing aims to adapt traditional marketing strategies to specific arts environments, in an effort to increase profitability for the creative practitioner(s) and satisfaction for the audience(s). Ideally, it involves “sound, effective technology for creating exchanges and influencing behaviour that, when properly applied, *must be beneficial to both parties* involved in the exchange” (Kotler &

Scheff, 1997, p. 30, italics in original). However, both artists and those outside the art world can feel that a reliance on marketing encourages artists to give up their integrity in an effort to garner more support for their work. This is often called ‘selling out’, and is almost always seen as a negative for the artist and the ‘quality’ of their work. This is beginning to change as the creative industries gain recognition and acclaim. Seabrook (2001) comments that:

The mainstream market, once the enemy of the artist, even began to acquire a kind of integrity, insofar as it represented a genuinely populist expression of the audience’s preferences. In a world of relative values, the popular hit had a kind of currency that ideals about quality lacked. You could argue about what was “good” (whose good?), but you couldn’t argue with Soundscan and Amazon.com. (p. 71).

This recognition of the success of ‘popular art’ in forms such as music and film is in fact recognition of the place of the commercial creator, and the fact that it is now beginning to be possible to be considered both popular and having integrity. This can be seen as a positive step away from the somewhat constricting ideals of the myth of the artist.

Figure two illustrates the relationship between the different creative orientations and the market driven economy that, due to the development of the creative industries, most artists must now work either within or alongside of.

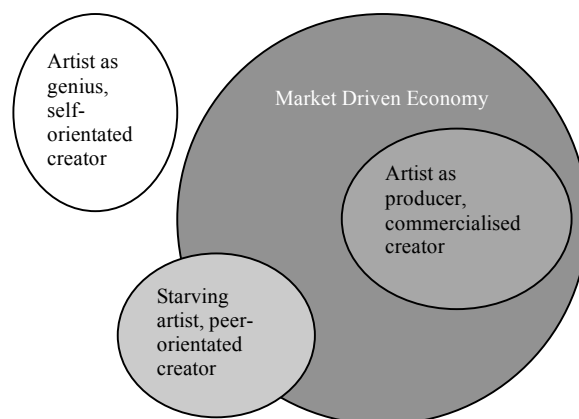


Figure 2 – Artist’s relationship with market driven economy

However, the creative industries include a very diverse range of creative practices, and the question needs to be asked as to whether areas of the creative industries

such as visual arts and crafts should be held to the same measures of financial success as the more commercially focussed sectors. Success in the more commercial areas of the creative industries, such as film, television and music, tends to be focussed on economic returns and industry recognition, whereas in the less commercial areas, including visual arts and crafts, success could be measured in other ways. This reflects the differences identified on Cunningham's (2005) creative industries continuum, which "moves from the culturally specific non-commercial to the globalized [sic] and commercial, where *generically creative*, rather than *culturally specific*, content drives advances" (p. 284, italics in original). The remainder of this chapter will deal with the contemporary context in which the creative orientations function as points of contact for historical constructions and today's particular circumstances.

Now that everything from advertising to painting, fashion to software design, is under the same banner heading of creative industries, the areas of the creative industries that traditionally struggle economically are being encouraged to look at ways in which they can be made more financially successful, while still maintaining their 'culturally specific' nature. This can be seen particularly strongly in Government arts policy, and also in the way that funding bodies such as *Creative New Zealand* have spoken about the arts:

The Government's recognition of and enhanced investment in the arts have resulted in high levels of confidence and buoyancy, an explosion of arts activity, and more financially viable professional arts organisations to support this activity. New Zealand arts and creative industries are attracting increasing international attention and contributing to New Zealand's image as an innovative and creative Pacific nation. (Creative New Zealand – Post-election Briefing Paper 2002, p. 20)

The arts and creative industries are being increasingly seen both nationally and internationally as essential to a healthy economy and political stability. As Florida comments "a host of countries – Ireland, Finland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, among them – are investing in higher education, cultivating creative people, and churning out stellar products, from Nokia phones to the *Lord of the Rings* movies" (2004, p.122). The media (who somewhat ironically fall into the creative industries) are beginning to focus on those working within the creative

industries for reasons other than their work. The promised economic benefits of a strong creative sector have led to increased questions about the inherent value of individuals' creative work, as well as the prices associated with accessing that work. Along with a move away from elitist views of 'true' or 'high' art, have come questions about price-quality relationships both in relationship to contemporary art forms and traditional 'high' art. The 'underground' music scene, for example, does not garner one as much money as commercial music, yet is seen by those involved to be purer, or to have more integrity than what is shown on MTV or played on commercial radio. Seabrook (2001) comments on this in relation to rock music, stating:

The politics of the rock world still gave lip service to the old Romantic opposition of art and the marketplace, and therefore rock had never been quite such a seamless fit [as hip-hop] with the values of MTV. In rock a distinction was still made between music created for some idealistic reason and music created for money. (p. 76)

Similarly, film-makers who concentrate on niche markets and festival awards are often framed as being more 'artsy' and therefore having more artistic integrity than those who work with big budgets and large production companies to create work for the mass market. This can be seen in how the festivals themselves are marketed, with the *Melbourne International Film Festival*, Australia's biggest, stating on its website that "at the forefront is an unwavering commitment to artistic integrity, to brave and dynamic programming, and a firm belief in stakeholders and audiences to recognise and support this vision" (Melbourne International Film Festival, 2006). Blockbuster films are seen as entertainment, whereas prestigious festival films are expected to be more than this, by challenging the audience through raising important issues or using new forms of film-making. This is part of what Florida (2005) discusses in relation to the search for authentic experiences by members of the 'Creative Class', which includes people working in and around the creative industries. He comments that rather than going to "the heavily packaged commercial venues that [members of the creative class] call 'generic' ... they prefer more authentic, indigenous or organic venues that offer a wide range of options and where they can have a hand in creating the options" (p. 143).

The search for 'authentic experiences' by the media, which can be seen to be related to artistic integrity, is heavily focussed on the relationship between the artist and the market, and self- and peer-orientated creators are applauded. In an album review, music critic Page (2006) comments that "A lack of intention to produce a commercial, radio-friendly album has resulted in a refreshing sense of artistic integrity". Hip hop artist Matiu Sadd is quoted as saying "A lot of bands are predominantly doing it on their own and making it happen for themselves and their creative integrity is still there" (Leggett, 2006, p. 2), while the interviewer commends his group for sticking to their guns despite lack of financial success. Philpott (2006) takes this further in an interview with another group of hip hop artists, stating that "The collective of Auckland mcs [sic] working under the Breakin Wreckwordz label don't seem too concerned about the possibility of mainstream success however - they want to keep their creative integrity intact" (p. 1.). All these uses of integrity indicate that an artist can have either financial success or maintain artistic (or creative) integrity, but they cannot have both.

Perhaps one instance when the either/or discussion is questioned is in a newspaper article headlined *Time, reality, money see punk gods sell out*, in which the writer discusses issues around the Sex Pistols' signing over "the rights to their back catalogue to Universal Music Publishing Group, which is now hawking it to companies to use in advertising" (APP, 2006). Despite discussing the possibilities offered by this deal with undisguised disgust, the writer does offer an alternative reading of this apparent "sell out", stating "what was punk about if not defying expectations of how to behave, whether it be from the crusty establishment in 1977 or today's die-hard acolytes" (APP, 2006). Further, because much of the music made by the Sex Pistols commented on the fact that they care about nothing but themselves, perhaps fans shouldn't be too surprised that the surviving members of the group would try and again make money off their music. This reading of the idea of artistic integrity, through its supposed opposite idea of 'selling out', shows that there is some belief that artists have different personal constructions of what artistic integrity is, and what one may see as 'selling out', may in fact be completely within the bounds of artistic integrity, and therefore acceptable, for another artist.

New Zealand Context

The increase in attention of the media towards artists on a national level in New Zealand can be seen in part due to the support of the New Zealand creative industries by the current Labour government. Over its last two and a half terms in office, Labour has had an immense impact on the development of a strong and viable creative sector. This support comes not only in the way of increased funding, but also from the position of the Prime Minister as the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage. This makes Labours' support of the creative industries visible to those who would ordinarily not have any interest in the arts in New Zealand, and signals to those within the industry that the Government believes the arts - and more widely the creative industries - to be an important growth area for the economy.

However, this increase in interest in the creative sector by the government does raise some interesting questions about the nature of artistic practice. With the government definition of the creative industries including the word 'exploitation' (*Snapshot: Auckland's creative industries*, 2005, p.5), one must ask to what extent those working within the industry feel that they could be exploited, and how. If the government is openly admitting it is looking primarily for economic returns from the creative industries, practitioners could feel that this concentration on money is expected to be gained at the expense of their creative vision. The government is investing large amounts of money into the creative sector, and will therefore be expecting some form of return from that investment (Creative New Zealand, 2003).

Research conducted in 2002 into the economic contribution of the creative industries in New Zealand put the GDP contribution of this sector at around 3.1% (New Zealand Trade and Enterprise). This was comparable to communication services, and central government and defence. However, the figures show that the sectors within the creative industries that are making the most money are those that are the most commercial, such as television, film, and advertising. What is especially noteworthy here is the comparison between the estimated \$168 million in revenue and 3075 people employed in the visual arts and crafts sector, and the \$911 million in revenue and 4400 people employed in the television and radio

sector (NZ Institute of Economic Research, 2002). Although the numbers look good when the creative industries are taken as a whole, there are still sectors within the industry that are not particularly financially successful. The different emphases and economic successes within different areas of the creative industries could contribute to quite different understandings of artistic integrity, as there could be a tendency for those who are struggling to support themselves economically from their creative practice to rely on the ‘myth of the artist’ and all of its implications to justify their continued focus on their art.

Along with an increase in funding of the arts by the Labour government, there has also been an increase in attempts to understand the creative process and other issues specific to artists. Through Creative New Zealand, a number of influential research projects have been conducted into the lives and practices of the creative community in New Zealand, along with research into how the wider New Zealand public feel about the arts. Research projects include *Balancing Arts and Business objectives* (Kerr, 2001), *Know Your Audience* (Keate, 2000), *New Zealanders and the Arts: Attitudes, participation and attendance in 2005* (Creative New Zealand, 2005), *Protecting Creativity* (Creative New Zealand, n.d). In such a report, commissioned by Creative New Zealand and The Chartwell Trust, McDermott Miller Limited comment that:

While the public perception of the artists is still informed by that romantic myth of the artist as bohemian visionary, solitary genius and provocateur at odds with society, since the 1960s, at least, the artist has tended to be seen as producers of social meaning, deeply engaged in the society in which they work. (1998, p.1)

This perception of artists engaging in the wider social context also allows for a deeper engagement by those outside the arts with working artists, which in turn allows for questions around issues such as artistic integrity to be asked. The term artistic integrity is used in research documents, such as *Evaluating New Zealand’s Participation in the Venice Art Biennale* (SGS Economics and Planning Pty. Ltd., 2006), which, in discussions about the amount of funding allocated by Creative New Zealand to the project, states “The implication is that if Creative New Zealand were to contribute more than the management and bureaucratic influence over the project may be greater, thereby diluting its *artistic integrity*” (p. 26,

italics added). In discussions about obtaining more sponsorship for the project in future, the document also states that “Of course, any widening of sponsorship needs to be consistent with delivering a project with *artistic integrity*” (ibid, p. 30, italics added), and the ‘good faith’ policy of the contracts includes the statement “All parties will act in good faith to achieve the successful outcome of this project, and to maintain the *artistic integrity* of the Artist” (ibid, p. 49, italics added). Despite these and other uses of the term within this document, ‘artistic integrity’ is never defined, but appears to mainly be linked to monetary concerns.

For a Creative New Zealand definition of artistic integrity, one must turn to *Getting on Board: a governance resource guide for arts organisations* (Nahkies & Creative New Zealand, 2003), which defines artistic integrity as “the process of, and influence on, artistic decision-making, acceptable levels of influence and potential loss of control”, and comments that for arts organisations moving from independent to trust based societies, “the fear of losing control and artistic integrity is understandable” (p. 18). This definition, although coherent and allowing for some flexibility in application from an artist’s perspective, is limited in scope. It also has very little to do with any of the definitions provided by the artists interviewed for this research. What it does acknowledge, however, is that artistic integrity is personally constructed, as within this definition there are factors influencing artistic integrity which would differ from one situation to the next. This document also indicates that artistic integrity is considered as a valid and important concern, not only for individual artists, but also for larger art organisations.

From this discussion of the use of ‘artistic integrity’ in government publications and media items from New Zealand and around the world, it is possible to see that artistic integrity is complex, not clearly understood, yet important, and it is this that makes it worthy of study. The fact that members of the media feel it necessary to either emphasise or question artists’ integrity shows that artistic integrity is considered something that can be understood from an outsider’s perspective, and that others have the right to suggest an artist may have ‘sold out’. These simplifications can make a good story of course, and instantly revive the whole Romantic myth to do so. Despite this, discussions around artistic integrity

– including the Creative New Zealand definition – assume that each artist may have a different understanding of integrity as constructed by their personal beliefs and experiences. These two discourses seem at odds with each other, but can be both linked back to the historical basis of artistic integrity within the Romantic Movement, and with current developments in the creative industries. Both discourses emphasise the importance of artistic integrity within creative practice, whether as a personal construct, or as an external, and possibly contestable, constant.

From the above discussion, it is evident that many discourses exist around artistic integrity, and it is a terms that is used frequently. However, artists themselves are rarely given an opportunity to explain their views and understandings of this concept, and therefore the following chapter explores the methodology and method behind how this research offered an opportunity for eight artists to do so.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology and Method

As explained above, this study seeks not only to discover the historical roots and contemporary appropriations of the concept of artistic integrity explored in the previous chapter, but also to discover how artists themselves view the idea. In order to do this, it was necessary to talk to artists. Due to the complexity of the concept of artistic integrity, it was felt best to limit the number of participants to eight, and in-depth interviews were used to allow thick description in the findings. The methodology allowed the researcher to draw on a range of perspectives and disciplines within the method, all of which sit comfortably within an interpretive paradigm.

Qualitative, primary research makes up the majority of this study. This consisted of semi-structured interviews with eight different artists from a range of disciplines, including contemporary dance, painting, screenwriting, music, and film. Although this is a small sample, the intention was to understand in depth how a number of individuals from a variety of practices felt about the issue, and as such does not provide a way to extrapolate artistic integrity out to the wider artistic community through a representative sample, if this is in fact possible. However, many of the themes and issues identified within the study could provide a starting point from which to develop a larger project on the place of artistic integrity within New Zealand arts practice. The methodology that grounds this research, as discussed below, supports an emphasis on rich description and qualitative analysis, and as an exploratory study the small number of participants is considered appropriate.

Research paradigm and methodology

The methodology of this research is based on a particular research paradigm that encompasses ontological and epistemological assumptions, as outlined below. Ontological assumptions relate to questions about the nature of the subject matter of the research, and can be broken into two main categories (Sparkes, 1992). The first of these is an “external-realist” view which assumes that the subject matter or

reality imposes itself on to the individual from outside of themselves. Sparkes (1992) classes the second category as an “internal-idealist” view, in which the subject matter or reality is a product of the individual. In the context of this research, this would mean that the researcher would view artistic integrity as either an external reality that affects creative practitioners, or as internal view that is affected by the consciousness of each individual.

The lack of previous research into how creative practitioners perceive artistic integrity could allow this study to proceed in either direction. However, the researcher’s own ontological assumptions direct this research from an “internal-idealist” perspective, and the research methodology and practices derive from this. An internal-idealist view allows for each creative practitioner to hold their own ideas about the nature of artistic integrity and how it affects their creative practice. The small scale of this project means that each practitioner’s ideas can be discussed in some depth. Because there are so few published attempts at creating a firm understanding – or definition – of what artistic integrity actually is, it is felt that an external-realist perspective could have unnecessarily limited the exploratory nature of this research. The internal-idealist ontology allows for the broadest sweep of ideas relating to the research topic.

This internal-idealist ontology is accompanied by a subjectivist epistemology, with the researcher believing that each creative practitioner’s view of artistic integrity is “based on experience and insight of a unique and essentially personal nature” (Burrell & Morgan, as cited in Sparkes, 1992, p.13). This epistemological standpoint requires that the researcher consider not only what each creative practitioner ‘knows’ about artistic integrity, but also to place that ‘knowledge’ in the context of the practitioner’s experience. The ontology and epistemology described above necessarily have methodological implications. In the case of this study, an ideographic methodological approach will be taken, “which is based on the view that to understand the social world, we need to gain first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation. Such an approach emphasizes the importance of getting close to one’s subject and exploring its detailed background and life history” (Sparkes, 1992, p. 14). Although the parameters of the study do not allow for the researcher to spend long periods of time with the research

participants, an effort has been made to discover what has led each creative practitioner to their individual understandings of artistic integrity.

Grounding the ontological and epistemological assumptions is an interpretive paradigm. This paradigm is based on the belief that “knowledge is seen as the outcome or consequence of human activity, that is, knowledge is a human construction, which means that it can never be certified as ultimately true but rather it is problematic and ever changing” (Sparkes, 1992, p. 26). In the context of this study, the idea of artistic integrity is seen as individual to each creative practitioner, and that how each of the practitioners views artistic integrity can change and develop over time. Therefore, the discussion of each interviewee’s concept of artistic integrity will be only that, with no attempt to generalise out to the wider artistic community.

In contrast to the interpretive paradigm that has been discussed above, two other main paradigms could have been adopted for this research study. The first is a positivist approach, which adopts a realistic-external ontology, along with an objectivist epistemology and a nomothetic methodology. This paradigm would allow the researcher to believe that things such as:

intelligence, social class, self-esteem, motivation, and so on are conceived of as independent and separately existing entities – they exist whether we conceive of them or not. Since they are taken to be mind-independent and exist outside of the individual then they can be described and known for what they really are by researchers who aspire to a detached objective ‘God’s eye’ point of view to see the world from nowhere in particular. (Sparkes, 1992, p. 22).

The implications of a positivist paradigm for this research project would include the researcher’s belief that a hypothesis could be formulated around the idea of artistic integrity, and then tested to be found either ‘true’ or ‘false’. Providing the researcher believes (and can prove to others with a positivist paradigm) that the research stands up to scientific scrutiny, then the research is worthwhile, or as Goetz and LeCompte (as cited in Sparkes, 1992) state, “validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings” (p. 23). This paradigm was not adopted as the position that is developed here is centred on the impossibility of finding a non-context bound, universal understanding of artistic integrity. As with the decision

to base this study in an internal-idealist ontology as opposed to an external-realist ontology, the researcher will argue that the adoption of a positivist paradigm would unnecessarily limit the exploratory nature of the research. Instead, as stated above, an interpretive paradigm has been used to allow for each individual's beliefs relating to artistic integrity to be considered independently from the other artists.

The final research paradigm to be discussed is critical theory, or as Guba (as cited in Sparkes, 1992) calls it, 'ideologically orientated inquiry'. This is perhaps the most complex of the three paradigms, as it has no single identifiable methodological approach, and can include everything from neo-Marxism to feminism. However, one similarity among all the critical theory approaches is that they reject the positivist paradigm of being able to be completely objective as a researcher, as well as the idea that there is one universal truth. Of the two main strains of ontological and epistemological assumptions related to critical theory, one is very similar to the interpretive paradigm, with an internal-idealist ontology, and a subjectivist epistemology. The main difference is that critical theorists typically suggest that an interpretive paradigm limits the research being conducted to concepts and ideas, rather than a wider understanding that takes into account historical forces, and economic and material conditions (Carr & Kemmis, as cited in Sparkes, 1992). In this case, the researcher believes that to adopt a critical theory paradigm would unnecessarily extend the research outside of the parameters of this study. An interpretive paradigm allows discovery of areas of interest and perhaps subsequently a critical theory perspective could be applied in a larger project.

The use of an interpretive paradigm allows for greater interpretation by the researcher. However, as Harris (as cited in Sparkes, 1992) states, in order for interpretive research to withstand the evaluation of the wider research community:

The research must be grounded in the shared understandings about the culture developed between the researcher and the members of the group being examined; it must include the researcher's insights about details of the culture that are not well articulated by members of the group; and it must include theoretical generalizations that go beyond the particular details of the culture to link the study to relevant portions of other research. (p. 35)

Although the interviewees that have taken part in this study are treated separately, rather than as members of a group, the criteria above have still been met. The interpretations of the researcher have been developed out of a shared understanding between the researcher and the participant, these interpretations go further into areas that were not clearly discussed by the participants, and the research is clearly linked to other relevant areas of research.

Method

The ontological, epistemological and paradigmatic groundings of this research led to the use of one-on-one interviews with the artists. The interviews themselves were conducted using a qualitative, semi-structured or “general interview guide” approach. Patton (1990) comments that “qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (p. 278). Of the three different types of interview discussed by Patton – informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview – the second was adopted for a variety of reasons. The interview guide approach:

presumes that there is common information that should be obtained from each person interviewed, but no set of standardized questions are written in advance. The interviewer is thus required to adapt both the wording and the sequence of questions to specific respondents in the context of the actual interview. (Patton, 1990, p. 280)

This approach is appropriate for this research, as it allows for a level of comparability between the perspectives of different creative practitioners on different aspects of artistic integrity, but has not limited the research by requiring the participants to answer exactly the same question, with no opportunity for further discussion. Had an informal conversational interview approach been adopted, the topics within the data gathered might “be different for each person interviewed”, and there would have been little opportunity to discuss different understandings of artistic integrity in relation to each other (Patton, 1990, p. 281). At the other end of the spectrum, had a standardised open-ended interview approach been adopted, there would have been no opportunity for the researcher to ask further questions on areas of interest that were outside the questions

designed before the interview began. For example, other topics might “emerge during the interview, topics of importance to the respondent that are not listed explicitly on the guide and, therefore, would not normally be explored with each person interviewed” (Patton, 1990, p. 284). The researcher was able to explore areas important to the creative practitioner that were not necessarily relevant to all interviewees, but was also left with comparable data sets from which to begin interpretation.

The use of a semi-structured style was of particular importance because each of the creative practitioners interviewed for this research not only worked in different fields of the creative industries, but also had very different approaches to the creative process. The use of the body in the performance of both dance and music led to very different, yet equally interesting, interpretations of many of the questions, and often needed deeper investigation due to the physicality of the medium when presenting the creative product to an audience. This is very different from a painter or film-maker, who is physically distanced from their work when it is presented to the public. An open-ended, standardised interview style may not have allowed for opportunities to discuss these issues. Having an interview guide allowed the researcher to obtain data on each individual’s feelings about the same range of ideas and concerns.

However, in designing the interview guide, it was felt that it might be difficult for the interviewees to freely discuss their understandings and views around artistic integrity without prompting. As it was desirable to elicit candid views on these issues, two small exercises were designed to be used near the beginning of the interview as a device to relax the interviewees into the discussion of the complex and personal topic of artistic integrity. These exercises were based around personal construct theory, and consisted of three different situations in which artists made, or were asked to make, a variety of decisions in their creative and business practice (see Appendix Two).

Personal construct theory is based originally in psychotherapy, and utilises some very structured research techniques. In particular, the repertory grid is a technique that was adapted for use as a device in this research. Botterill and Crompton

(1996) state that “in contrast to in-depth interviews where thick descriptive data are recorded and subsequently interpreted by the researcher, the conversation that surrounds the use of the repertory grid becomes a collaborative, immediate, interpretation of inner psychological processes” (p. 59). In adapting the repertory grid exercises to this research, the interviewer was able to elicit immediate, considered, and often seemingly contradictory interpretations from the interviewees. In each exercise, the interviewee’s were prompted to compare the three situations, explain their understandings of what was happening in the situations, and provide reasoning as to why they did or did not agree with the decision made by the artist in each situation. In addition, the artists were able to comment as to whether they could potentially make the same decision in their own practice. These exercises allowed the interviewees to begin to consider their own feelings about artistic integrity. Meyer (1993) comments that

In persons’ descriptions of others, the constructs chosen expose what qualities ‘good’ people ought to possess, according to their individual value systems. Thus, content analyzing the descriptions people give of liked as well as disliked others not only reveals constructs, but the values that underlie their use (p. 228).

By obtaining thicker description from the interviewees than is generally sought when using the repertory grid, it was possible to both gain the interviewees interpretations of the situations, and also allowed to for the possibility of using the responses to these activities during analysis. However, such was the richness of the data gathered during the interview that analyses of the repertory grid material was not required.

Before any primary research was conducted, the researcher applied for and was granted ethical approval for the research by The University of Waikato Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. Issues such as obtaining informed consent from participants, potential risk to the participants and the researcher, and potential conflicts of interest were worked through at this time which allowed the project to commence having considered ethical issues. Once ethics approval had been granted, potential participants were selected. The criteria for the selection of participants involved a process of identifying established and emerging practitioners from a variety of artistic practices, or what

Denzin (1994) refers to as “purposive (theoretical) sampling” (p. 508). For example, practitioners who were widely discussed in the popular media, (for example, television news programmes or widely distributed magazines) were identified as potential participants who were ‘established’. The participants chosen were those who not only have a body of work, but also are ‘professional’ artists, those who depend on their work within their area of creative practice for their livelihood. The ‘emerging’ practitioners (James and Matthew) were identified through personal contacts, but both of these practitioners were known within their respective fields of visual art and music.

The interviews themselves were conducted over a period of five weeks in June and July 2006, at a time and place suggested by the interviewee, most often at the artist’s home or studio. However, for the convenience of the artist involved, one interview was conducted in the researcher’s university office, and one was conducted at the researcher’s home. Ranging in length from 45 minutes to 90 minutes, all interviews were recorded with the permission of the artists onto cassette tapes, which were then transcribed by the researcher. Although all the artists were offered a copy of the transcript to allow them to correct or alter any content, only three wished to see it, and only one responded with alterations. Once complete, these interview transcripts formed the basis from which an interpretation was developed, as discussed in the following section. (See Appendix Three for full transcripts.)

Interpretation and Analysis

The method of interpretation of the interview transcripts by the researcher needs explanation. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that “the meaning people give to their experience and their process of interpretation are essential and constitutive, not accidental or secondary to the experience is. To understand behaviour, we must understand definitions and the process by which they are manufactured” (p. 36). Therefore, in order to understand how each creative practitioner acts in relation to artistic integrity, one must investigate how they think about the concept, and how they came to that interpretation. Denzin (1994) states that “a good constructionist interpretation (text) is based on purposive (theoretical) sampling, a grounded theory, inductive data analysis, and idiographic (contextual)

interpretations” (p. 508). Within good qualitative research, one must include one’s own interpretation of the research data to make clear points that were not well articulated by the research participants (Harris, cited in Sparkes, 1992). However, as Spiggle (1994) commented, “interpretation of others’ experiences is inherently subjective. No two investigators have the same store of experience or archive of source texts for mapping onto target texts” (p. 499). Therefore, although it is necessary to include the researcher’s interpretation to make sense of the data within this study, the interpretation itself is only that of the researcher, and others may interpret the same data in different ways.

In order to analyse and interpret the interview transcripts, an ethnographic coding approach was adopted, which involved “line-by-line categorization of specific notes” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 143). Although not strictly an ethnographic research project, the use of ethnographic analysis methods proved useful in the interpretation of the interview transcripts. The use of the semi-structured interview is common enough in ethnography for this type of coding to be appropriate. Emerson et al. (1995) comment

Qualitative analytic coding usually proceeds in two different phases. In *open coding* the ethnographer reads fieldnotes line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or issues they suggest, no matter how varied and disparate. In *focused coding* the fieldworker subjects fieldnotes to fine-grained, line-by-line analysis on the basis of topics that have been identified as of particular interest. Here, the ethnographer uses a smaller set of promising ideas and categories to provide the major topic and themes for the final ethnography. (p. 143).

These two phases of coding allowed for the identification of a wide range of themes discussed by each of the interviewees. The focused coding concentrated specifically on the themes identified as important by a number of the interviewees, providing a sense of comparison.

In writing up the themes and findings, an “excerpt strategy” was used, which Emerson et al. (1995) states “visually marks fieldnote extracts off from accompanying commentary and interpretation, usually by indenting” (p. 179). This strategy was chosen to maintain a sense of the artists voices within the texts, and remain true to the internal-idealist ontology which encourages the view that

each artist may feel differently about the issues discussed within the interview contexts. Therefore, the excerpt strategy worked by “letting readers see for themselves the ‘grounds’ for analytic and interpretive claims” (Emerson et al, 1995, p. 181), allowing for the emergent themes, along with contradictions to those themes, to be explained as much as possible in the artists’ own words. It must be pointed out that to allow ease of reading, the excerpts chosen for inclusion within the findings were edited to remove repetition and redundancies. However, all possible care was taken to ensure that the original intent and emphasis of each excerpt was maintained.

It is important to note that some of the themes identified around artistic integrity were only discussed by a minority of the participants, but these were still considered to be important in the context of this research project. Because the aim of this research was to investigate this issue rather than provide generalisations, or extrapolate out from the interviewees to the wider artistic community, it was necessary to consider not only common themes but disparate ones also. Because the interviewees do not (and were not intended to) provide a representative sample, further research may identify themes prominent in the majority which were only discussed by one or two of the interviewees in this study.

Having explained how the research was conducted, the following chapter gives an introduction to the artists interviewed. In keeping with the subjectivist epistemology within which this research operates, the short biographies aim to provide a context in which each artist has constructed their understandings of artistic integrity, presented by way of the excerpt strategy following coding.

CHAPTER FOUR

Artists' biographies

“Commencing with the phenomenon or behaviour” (Pettigrew, 2002, p. 112) entails starting with the artists themselves. As an introduction to the presentation of findings from this research, artists' biographies are presented below to provide a contextual understanding for their excerpts. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the artists, their names have been changed.

Chris

Chris is one of the leaders in what has come to be known as the ‘Wellington’ sound in popular music – a mixture of reggae, dub, dance and blues that is gathering a following in New Zealand and around the world. With three current projects, and several successful albums under his belt, Chris has been able to support himself solely from his musical career for the past two years, which is a real feat for a young person in New Zealand.

Chris was brought up with direct access to the radio industry through his father, who was a children's radio stalwart in New Zealand, and was encouraged into music by his mother, who is a hobby musician. However, the only formal training in music Chris received was provided by primary school guitar and piano lessons. Chris comments that he “just didn't want to go down that road, and got kind of distracted into arts and drama and painting and all that sort of stuff, and then later on decided music was for me”.

Perhaps the most successful of Chris's projects is his band. With three albums released currently (the most recent was number one on New Zealand charts), a large following in New Zealand and Australia, and several international tours – including through Europe – Chris calls this his “priority band”. Founded in the late 1990's, the group developed a strong following, and is now known as one of the best live shows on the New Zealand circuit. Developing in Chris's home city of Wellington, the group epitomises the ‘Wellington sound’, a particular genre of

New Zealand music made famous not only by this group but by a number of other bands who began their careers in Wellington in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

However, supplementing this is a solo project, and a better known collaborative musical project of which Chris is the creative leader. He was also a member of a group of New Zealand musicians who travelled to South America in 2006 to collaborate with and learn from a group of local musicians: "we went, had a great time, met some amazing people and made some cool music".

Having toured internationally, Chris sees New Zealand's music scene as peaking currently, but is not concerned about the possibility of it collapsing. He does state that "there's a small amount of albums that you sell in New Zealand, so it's a niche market", and therefore for a group to be really successful they must travel to international markets. Despite the limits of the New Zealand market, Chris states "for me it's great being able to make a living from music, and that's a real honour, to make a living from your art. And to be able to do it full time, that's what I see as the best, most positive thing".

Matthew

Originally from Palmerston North and now based in Hamilton, Matthew has been involved in music since his mid-teens. With high school and tertiary music training, and a large amount of experience in both performing and management of bands, Matthew has recently moved away from seeking a career as a professional musician to studying at university and playing music as a hobby.

Matthew's interest in music was pre-empted by an interest in and talent for writing. Matthew says that "I wrote stories and I wrote poetry and I used to like typing it on mum's typewriter...and used to write stories for my friends". Always an avid listener and buyer of music, Matthew was given a garage-sale guitar by his mother when he was 15 or 16, and immediately began putting his poetry to music. He comments that when he had finished writing his first song, "I didn't know what the feeling was, it was just, it made me feel really emotional, it really felt that I was expressing my idea exactly the way I wanted to express it, and what

I wanted to express, which was cool”. Matthew studied music in high school, and got up to grade 8, but began to get frustrated with a curriculum that focussed on “Mozart and all the old school stuff, and I was into Neil Young and Led Zepplin”.

Moving from Palmerston North to Levin in his late teens, Matthew began to busk on the streets, which led to gigs playing in café’s around town, playing originals mixed with the occasional cover song. In Levin, Matthew met a man in the process of setting up his own studio, who offered to help him put together a tape of his music. Funded, released, promoted and distributed with only Matthew’s own time and money, this album included a song which reached the dizzying heights of number one on the Levin community radio station. This helped Matthew decide that a professional music career was for him, and he moved to Wellington to attend Whitireia Community Polytechnic to complete a music programme.

Through contacts with other people in this course, Matthew set up a band, playing around Wellington, and by the late 1990’s, was playing regular gigs as part of a steady duo with his girlfriend, along with starting up an annual independent music festival. Deciding a move to a warmer climate was necessary, Matthew moved to Hamilton just prior to the turn of the century. Creating a new band out of a group of ex-pat Wellingtonians, Matthew went on to successfully compete in the Battle of the Bands and the Band Experiment competitions, and became well-known and successful enough to be able to travel to Australia, despite the coming and going of seven drummers. This successful act dissolved in 2005, when the seventh drummer moved on.

During this time, Matthew was also working in his first full-time employment, spending two years as a magazine editor. Up until 2003, he had chosen to focus solely on his music, working only where necessary in transient employment such as gardening and house painting, to supplement the income that he could generate through the performance and management of music and music events. Currently, Matthew has returned to full-time study at The University of Waikato, and says “right now, I’m pretty much solo, and looking very tentatively at playing music. But when I think about the hassle, I just can’t be bothered”.

Ben

Although Ben paints and plays drums in three bands, his primary creative practice is that of directing. Working in television commercials to earn a living, Ben has also directed 78 music video's, written, directed and released his first feature film to relative success, along with three short films, and is in the process of writing two further screen-plays to continue his film-making career.

Born and raised in Palmerston North, Ben comes from a family with only one other person pursuing a creative outlet: an uncle who is a painter. His decision to study film-making was not encouraged by his father, who Ben comments asked “when are you going to get a real job? Why don't you get an apprenticeship or something? Why don't you learn a trade?” Despite this lack of encouragement, and failing to complete his course at the then Waikato Polytechnic, Ben continued to pursue his passion of a job in the film industry, and began making commercials and music videos to gain experience and recognition.

Ben comments that “For years I was like this struggling bum, living out of my money box ... and for a while there I had to live off that, in between trying to get paid gigs, learning to be a baby director”. He believes that his early time making music videos and commercials allowed him to develop the skills necessary to be a feature film director. In 2003 his first feature film was released both in New Zealand and internationally, and received some very good reviews. Ben sees this as his “best single creative achievement” to date, and goes on to say “now I've got the poster on my wall at home and it's like ‘made that one, sweet, got to make another one’. It's that feeling, I've got to make another one”. Now in the development process of turning his second screen-play into a feature, Ben is hoping his next film will be “twenty times better” due to the experience he gained working on the first one.

Along with his work as a director, Ben has also been painting for the past ten years, recently holding a solo exhibition in Auckland. He sees this as a “career/hobby” and although it is a vital creative outlet for him, he doesn't see it as something he would pursue on its own. This is similar to his drumming, about which he says “after working in advertising all day, driving to Hamilton and

beating the shit out of drums is like ‘hello stress relief’. And I can go back to Auckland and go ‘oh yeah, I’m totally calm, I’m not going to get grumpy with anyone’”.

Each of these different creative pursuits fulfils a different function for Ben. Although he states that “I act the same way that I act when I direct a clip that has no money to a commercial that has a hundred grand for thirty seconds”, he does acknowledge that he doesn’t invest as much of himself into his commercial work than he did into his feature film. He sees his painting as something he does without any real consideration for himself, and as stated above, uses his drumming as a form of stress relief.

Mark

Mark is a contemporary dancer currently based in Auckland. He entered the profession much later in life than most dancers, and comes from a family with what he sees as creative ability, although he is the first to try to use his talent professionally. With four years of professional training through two different institutions under his belt, Mark puts on regular shows, and is able to scratch a living out of dancing and teaching dance.

Finding his way to dance as a career was a long process for Mark, who after leaving school working in such diverse positions as a guillotine operator at a placemat making firm, to being a lens maker for an optical firm, to working as a warehouse supervisor. Mark comments that “they were terrible, awful jobs... oh, they really weren’t awful jobs, I can’t say that, but I was living a mediocre life, and I got sick of it”. His brother and sisters have “what I would call ability, but none of them other than me use it”.

Mark chose to study first at Unitec in the contemporary dance course, and then at the New Zealand School of Dance (NZSD). Both these courses involve full-time, intensive dance training in a variety of styles, and also include training in choreography. Mark commented “it was like, four years of full time training back to back from two different institutions”.

He sees his transition into professional dance as very important for him, and when asked about regrets, states “I wish I’d gotten into this a bit sooner, or I wish I’d worked it out a bit sooner... I suppose it would have been good if I’d somehow managed to nail this, what it is that I’m into, and focus on that earlier, as opposed to spending lots of years basically being unhappy with what I was doing, and what it was that everyone else was doing as well”.

Now established within the New Zealand contemporary dance environment, Mark explores and innovates in the area of improvisational dance, or what he calls ‘real time choreography’. Continuing to live in Wellington after his time at NZSD, he found the environment for creative practitioner’s extremely supportive, “warehouses full of creative types getting on with the job of creating”. However, on returning to Wellington after travelling to Europe, he found that the lifestyle he had enjoyed prior to his departure was disappearing, as the city council approved the conversion of warehouses into apartment blocks, and as the spaces which used to be used for dance performances became more and more prohibitively expensive. This transition drove him back to his home town of Auckland, where he discovered “everywhere I was going there were dancer’s rehearsing, there were shows on every weekend, with people putting on stuff. There were tons of dancers out there busily doing stuff”.

Now settled in Auckland, Mark still travels where possible to work with his contacts in Europe, most recently visiting a group of improvisational dancers in Holland. He prefers to call his practice “associative kinetics”, as he feels that it is a more appropriate “accurate generalisation” than the label ‘contemporary dance’, covering a wider range of movement and philosophy.

James

James is a currently based in Hamilton, is the youngest person interviewed for this research, and is a visual artist. With an aunt and an uncle working as professional visual artists, his decision to try to follow a creative path was not questioned by his family. Despite considerable success and recognition during his first year as a

part of the Hamilton art community, he has decided that a career in the visual arts is not for him currently.

As a painter – his most well-known medium – James has not had any formal training. His decision to try art was not one he claims he thought too seriously about, claiming “I just didn’t really think about it really. Most people kind of make such a big deal about it, and I just thought, nothing to loose really”. He chose to create an exhibition as a way to signal to an art school that he was serious about becoming an artist, as he didn’t take art as a subject at secondary school. His first exhibition sold out, and a painting from that exhibition won a prestigious New Zealand art award.

Although his second exhibition didn’t sell as well as his first, it received considerable positive attention from art critics within Hamilton. Despite this relative success as an emerging artist, James decided not to pursue going to art school, as he felt he could not cope with the financial investment, saying “I’d be in debt for the rest of my life”.

James describes himself as “just kind of mucking around” with his art practice now, but is interested in moving away from painting into other forms of visual art. He comments that “I’ve just started painting so far. I’m kind of more interested in other stuff at the moment, like installation and stuff, but I don’t have a lot of time to pursue those”.

James believes that despite the increase in attention to the arts in New Zealand, many people still find contemporary art difficult to deal with as it so subjective as to whether something is ‘good’ or not. He states that the subjective nature of art is “why most people find contemporary art hard, because there are certain standards that they can judge it by and a lot of art doesn’t kind of go by those standards. So if you don’t know what to judge it by then you can’t know whether it’s good or bad... it freaks them out”.

Rebecca

As a contemporary dancer and choreographer, Rebecca works out of Auckland on a variety of projects. With formal dance and choreography training, she has also previously studied science at university and worked as a children's dance teacher in a school she set up herself.

Inspired by musical parents and dance movies including *Footloose*, *Fame*, and *Grease*, Rebecca began formal dance training with jazz ballet when she was 12. By 18, she had opened her own dance school, teaching children the New Zealand Association of Dance syllabus in jazz. On completing high school, Rebecca moved to study science at the University of Canterbury, and when her degree was complete, she moved to Auckland to study contemporary dance at Unitec.

The transition from jazz to contemporary dance was significant for Rebecca, who comments that “the training was interesting because it was a real switch from the jazz practice, and it was the first time I'd ever done ballet and contemporary and looked at contemporary art practices and concepts, so I was learning quite a lot. It was quite a massive change at that point for my whole life”. Despite being comparatively old for a dancer just completing formal training – Rebecca was in her mid-twenties when she completed her Unitec training – she was able to get work choreographing for one of the more established companies on the strength of the graduate performance piece she choreographed. While continuing to work with other graduates from her year at Unitec, Rebecca has either danced with or choreographed for almost all the top contemporary dance companies in the country. Rebecca also continues to create her own new work, and has toured the country with a show that has now been performed over sixty times, which is incredibly high considering the comparative lack of support for contemporary dance in New Zealand.

Along with Rebecca's contemporary dance performance and choreographic work, she also works on a number of corporate or commercial projects. Some of these have included choreographing dance pieces for product launches and one-off events, and others involve large scale choreography for major annual televised events, and also working with individual dancers for television dance

competitions. This work allows Rebecca to support herself while allowing time to also develop her own practice in terms of choreography and dance.

Rebecca was in the process of working on a new show when the interview took place, and for the first time is able to work with a professional director. She comments on this, saying “the two worlds are very different, very difficult to combine, so it’s really challenging. So I’m really enjoying that at the moment, even though it’s really hard”.

Tom

Currently living on outside Auckland, Tom is a playwright and screenwriter working in television. All of Tom’s family were encouraged to pursue creative hobbies, but Tom sees himself as the only person to put that into practice professionally. Having won several awards for his work, and with successful television shows screened on free-to-air television, Tom is currently working on a new primetime comedy.

With father who is a mathematician, and a mother who is a midwife, Tom took mainly science subjects throughout his schooling. He comments that “apart from my English – writing short stories and stuff – all through high school I never did a single art class and I used to really enjoy it, even up into intermediate school. I think I got this weird idea at school that I should be doing something that I could get a job from, so I did really stupid things, like I did typing in third and fourth form, if you can imagine that. What a waste of time. Although I am quite a good typist now...”

Despite the lack of concentration on arts at high school, Tom chose to study for a Bachelor of Arts at Victoria University of Wellington, majoring in theatre and film. He says that “I kind of started out wanting to be an actor, and sort of wanting to be a writer, so you know, I just fell into playwriting really”. This led to writing short works for the *Fringe Festival*, and a theatre programme called *Young and Hungry*. He returned to university to complete a Masters in Creative

Writing, and as part of his portfolio wrote a script for a television show which was picked up and produced, screening in 2004.

Tom has worked in television ever since this success, involved in a number of different shows. He also received a prestigious writers' residency in 2005, which allowed him to concentrate on his work more closely. Despite his success at a young age within the industry, Tom feels that screenwriting as a profession in New Zealand is not only difficult to get into, but also hampered by low population, lack of funding, untalented people trying to write for television, and over-enthusiastic producers. He comments that production companies "don't want a re-hash of something somebody else has done except on a lower budget and just generally not as good... It's got to be a kind of unique thing that you haven't seen before and I don't think as an artist that you arrive at a unique thing by going 'I'm going to do something that no-one's done before'".

His previous successful shows have given Tom, despite the fact that he is younger than most of his colleagues, the power to demand conditions relating to his work. He gives an example, saying that "I've just signed a contract right now where – I've hardly directed anything – but I've said 'well, unless I get to direct this you won't get my script', even though I haven't written it yet or know what it's going to be about". Having control over the production of his work has become increasingly important to Tom, and as he feels that "if people just keep fucking up your stuff all the time, you'd just go totally insane".

Angela

Angela is a visual artist, currently focussing on painting as her medium. With formally training in the fine arts in Australia before immigrating to New Zealand, Angela has worked as a potter, commercial weaver, and has taught art in high schools for many years. She classes her current work as contemporary with a strong traditional influence, and with several different focuses, including bush imagery, nudes, and landscapes.

Encouraged by her parents who were avid supporters of the arts, Angela attended many galleries and exhibitions as a child, as did her sisters. She took fine art classes at high school, and then continued her formal training at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology thanks to a Commonwealth scholarship. Initially Angela was to major in pottery and sculpture, but she changed in her final year to complete a major in print and textiles.

Two of Angela's three sisters also completed degrees in fine arts, and she comments that "one – the oldest sister – specialised in print and textiles, and the next eldest also specialised in pottery, but at a different institute. And my youngest sister who is a social worker is quite involved in the patchwork industry". This focus on art and creativity in the family Angela believes stems largely from her parents influence, and states that "we were quite encouraged to be creative, to do things, to make things, to look at things, to see things".

After moving to New Zealand on the completion of her formal training, Angela set up practice as a commercial weaver, working on her own to spin and weave fabrics which she then made into original and unique garments. Working in a small rural town, she ran successful, regular fashion shows for tourists, as part of a local tourist venture. She comments that over a period of ten years, she "sold I think an average of 3 to 4 garments a week, and they sold for about \$400 a piece; my basic bread and butter was \$400 a piece. Overcoats and things were more. They weren't cheap clothes; they had heaps of time in them. I had fashion parades at Parliament house, at the Beehive and I had one parade at Puka Park Lodge. I travelled to Rotorua for fashion parades, and Taupo, and was often invited by local people, so my work got around quite a lot."

During her time as a weaver, Angela also continued to work on her pottery. In one case, around two years after moving to New Zealand, she shipped an exhibitions' worth of work back to Australia. The exhibition was extremely successful, and every piece sold, including the 'imperfect' pieces. Although she worked within a collective gallery for a time, Angela felt that she worked better alone, and took complete control of all aspects of her work, including setting up her own weaving studio.

After moving from the rural town to a larger city, Angela began working as a high school art teacher, a move that allowed her to get regular income and support her family after her marriage broke up, but which meant that she wasn't able to spend very much time on her own practice. In 2003, when both her daughters were independent, she took extended leave from her teaching position to concentrate on painting. Two years later she felt that she was in a position to paint full time for the foreseeable future, and formally resigned from teaching at the high school. She now is focussed on developing her reputation within the art community, and regularly enters competitions, along with exhibiting at arts festivals. She is also in the process of finding galleries in which to exhibit her different types of work, including small pieces that she regards as her 'bread and butter', and the larger pieces in her current trademark style. To give herself the financial freedom to focus on her painting, Angela has recently begun teaching art classes at a local jail, which she finds very personally rewarding.

Having established an understanding of the creative practices in which the eight artists work, we now move on to consider the wider environment in which they work.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings

The eight artists interviewed for this research have themselves created the majority of this chapter, in keeping with the methodological position articulated in Chapter Three. Their descriptions of the New Zealand arts environment provide a context for understanding the emergent themes from the discussions. These themes include the personally constructed and contextual nature of artistic integrity, its importance to both the artists and others, and its social contestation. By including large sections of the transcripts – the artists’ words – we allow for a clearer understanding of the place of integrity in each of the eight artists’ practice. The interpretive approach remains that of linking back to the historical roots of artistic integrity while also considering Hirschman’s (1983) discussion of creative orientations in relation to the current development of the creative industries.

New Zealand Arts Environment

The current environment in New Zealand for the arts and wider creative industries plays an important role for the artists interviewed for this research. This environment has been introduced in Chapter Two, but will now be related to these artists. Feelings about how the individual sectors operate, along with the creative industries as a whole, ranged immensely. While some of the artists felt that the sectors in which they worked were struggling from a lack of skill or funding, others felt that both creatively and economically there was little more that could be done in a small country to support those working in their sector. This range of opinion corresponds to Cunningham’s (2005) continuum on which the creative industries operates – those in the less commercial areas, such as dance, writing, or visual art, felt that more funding and support was needed, whereas those working in the more the commercially focused areas of film and music were more comfortable with the current situation. It is from the context of the New Zealand creative industries that these artists have constructed their views on artistic integrity, and so therefore this context requires some consideration.

One artist to critique the current quality she sees in her discipline was Angela, who stated:

I think people have forgotten what skill and craftsmanship are all about, and I think that skill and craftsmanship are a major part of any art form, it doesn't matter what it is. And it's all well and good seeing a straight line or a red line on a black canvas and saying 'oh well I could do that', but the reality is that most people can't, and you can do it, but we can do it well, and well with understanding is the difference. And I think there is too much art work out there that doesn't show skill and understanding.

In some ways it is not surprising that Angela critiques the skill of other artists, as this is something that she is particularly focused on in her own practice. She also felt that it had become too easy for people to obtain fine arts degrees, although as a former high school art teacher, she certainly was not opposed to fine art education in general:

I think having easy access to education is incredibly positive, but giving people false hope is very negative. Giving someone a degree in fine art when they have little skill I think is very, very negative thing to do to a person because you are giving them three years of hope when at they come out at the end they come out and they've got nothing. And they're unemployed. And I think that's sad. Give them three years, but do it at a level with a qualification at the end that is appropriate. And I don't think that a degree is appropriate.

Despite this somewhat pessimistic view of current art education frameworks, Angela does believe that there needs to be public support for the arts. She acknowledges that she does not pay too much attention to what goes on at a national level in terms of arts policy, but despite this, has noticed the increase in attention by the current government explored in Chapter Two:

I think that it's vital that the arts are supported. I think councils could support it more. I think Government's making - from what little I know - I think Governments is certainly voicing opinions on art, but I think councils need to do more too, local body wise.

Another artist who was critical of local body politics in relationship to the arts was Mark. Having spent some time away from the country while training in Europe, he came back to Wellington with fresh eyes:

I came back from Europe with a different sense of things, as one would, because I felt what I encountered over there had kind of smashed open my little colonial box, my little cynical box about what was happening here. I came back to Wellington, and felt, and in some

ways I was dead right, and felt that there was huge economic forces impacting on peoples' everyday lives, that has absolutely effected the way that art was being made, and I was seeing that there the microcosm of Wellington, because it's such a small town, I was seeing a council highly sympathetic to property developers, I was seeing space, physical space, shoot up in monetary value making it inaccessible for dance, one of the primary resources for dance, I was seeing the council then influence policies to basically regulate and have a hand in doing things for the arts that were inappropriate, and ineffectual, and I got highly frustrated, and thought, what happened to Wellington, you know?

His frustrations around what he saw as negative changes to the arts environment in Wellington, a city which brands itself as the 'Creative Capital', prompted Mark to move back to his home town of Auckland, where he discovered the dance scene that he had left behind in the capital:

I came up to Auckland and thought 'Oh my god, everything's happening'. Everywhere I was going there were dancers rehearsing. There were shows every weekend, with people putting on stuff. There were tons of dancers out there busily doing things, there was Luxemburg Gardens that has come up out of nowhere as a kind of venue, and I've been making a living teaching at Unitec. And um, and I've just gone 'wow', and I feel that Auckland actually has another culture here, since I was last here, last living here.

Rebecca agrees with Mark on the quality of the work created in Auckland and throughout New Zealand, although she struggles with the lack of funding available within the dance community, commenting:

The work that gets created here, because of the poverty and because of the lack of resources on some levels, the pieces of work that come out are really interesting and it really comes from people wanting to do it, because it's not really very economical to do it here. So people make it because they really want to, and I think it stands up against the work from overseas really well. I think it's quite unique, because it is so isolated as well. The standard of the work artistically is really good. I think the level of the dance behind it is probably not up to scratch in terms of international standards, but that's because dancers here can't really work fulltime, so they're not trained up, they're not practicing enough. Same with choreographers as well, it's just lack of experience. Not lack of potential or talent, but yeah, just lack of actual practice, work practice. They don't get, there're no full-time companies except for those two companies, and they only take about eight dancers all up, you know? So everybody else is just working project to project and in between waitressing or doing whatever else they need to do, so they come back into the project unfit and projects here have a life of six weeks. Projects in America are like a year, so at

the end of the day, people create really good things out of six weeks I think, or eight weeks or whatever they get, but versus a year?

Perhaps due to the ‘poverty’ of the contemporary dance sector, Rebecca seems to reflect on the issues related to the ‘myth of the artist’, indicating that she sees the struggle and lack of financial stability to contribute to a high artistic standard of work. However, she does recognise that with an increase in resources, the “level of dance” (the actual skill of the dancers) would also increase, showing that this myth is perhaps losing its grip on contemporary dancers.

The comparatively small size of the population in New Zealand was also discussed by Tom, who felt that this made it especially difficult for screen-writers (himself included) to make a decent, consistent living. When asked what he thought the industry was like for screen-writers in New Zealand, Tom stated he thought it was:

pretty shitty, pretty shitty. I just think it’s pretty typical low population, mass media kind of thing. You know, you’re beaming out to three million, four million people as opposed to like a hundred and twenty or whatever the hell it is in the States, and so you just get about that percentage of earnings. I mean, it’s propped up a little bit by the government and so forth, and the Film Commission sort of giving people money and trying to develop scripts and so forth, but it’s really pretty difficult to kind of make ... you know there’s literally in television about half a dozen to maybe a dozen of outside people who can actually live full time off of being a screenwriter. I mean, even probably television and film put together, because most - although I’m not - they’re pretty much the same people, and so there’re not a lot of people that can really actually do it. I mean, I’m really on and off, yeah, so it’s pretty tough. It’s pretty tough. But you kind of just have to keep doing stuff and, and that’s it really.

Ben, the other artist working in audio-visual fields of the creative industries, had quite a different, and much more positive, take on the industry, particularly that of film-making:

I think it’s great. Totally great. I mean there’s too many of them, we need to do a big cull, and wipe a few of them out, for sure, but it’s great, it’s really encouraging, and there is a funding body which you know, is unbelievable, and there’s the Film Commission, and there’s Creative New Zealand, and there’s a huge swell of fantastic crew who are all Peter Jackson trained, and there’s Peter Jackson, who’s you know leading from the front. He’s like the little Napoleon going ‘whaa’, like carving this big path and creating all these studios and all this post-production, and creating all these film crew people who

know all this great stuff, because they've worked on gigantic movies, and little dudes like me get to come along and go [high pitched squeaky voice] 'hey I've got two million dollars to make a little thriller, um can I have', [normal voice] like half the crew on my film were from Lord of the Rings, and it was like sweet, and they loved it coz it was like this six week shoot rather than a six hundred week shoot, and they could say something, they could say 'hey what if we did this like this' and I'd say 'yeah' and so like they wouldn't have to call twenty people and put it in writing 48 times. So I think it's really good.

However, similar to Angela, Ben felt that there were some issues with people arriving in the industry fresh out of their education, expecting too much too fast:

The only issue I'd say is that there's a whole lot of film schools and polytechs and stuff churning out people who are coming out saying [deep voice] 'I'm a director' and you're like 'oh no'. You know I go and talk to classes sometimes and you can see that there are ten people in there who already see themselves as directors, which is cool to have that confidence. But you know, you come out in the real world and you go whoh, there's a whole lot of people battling for the few commercials that are made and few big films that get done, so you know, you need to start at the bottom. That's the only thing.

Comparatively, Chris also sees his sector of the creative industries – music – as thriving, and sees the increase in funding and support as helping to raise the quality as well as quantity of new New Zealand music:

Well, there's some good support that has developed over the last five years, more support than usual, than previous. And that's a lot of different government support networks there as well, and funding, that's part of that. And also the music is getting better I think, and high quality people are doing it, so I think we are in a pretty good stead, but it's not a massive industry. There's a small amount of albums that you sell in New Zealand so it's a niche market.

Chris has reaped the benefits of a strong music industry in New Zealand, and it is not surprising that he sees the music sector as healthy and supportive while artists in other creative sectors, such as contemporary dance, still see some aspect of struggle associated with being an artist. The music sector, along with the film and television sectors, has received a lot of attention as a potential economic growth area by the Government, and in 2005 New Zealand Trade and Enterprise published *Creating Heat*, a strategy document aimed at increasing the export of New Zealand music internationally, and both directly and indirectly Chris has benefited from this attention. Having travelled and performed in many different

places around the world, Chris was also able to compare the New Zealand music industry with those he has seen elsewhere. The youth of the industry in New Zealand, along with its comparatively small size, was something he felt was holding current musicians back a little:

There is a slight lack of experience in lots of different parts of the music industry in New Zealand because of the nature of how big the country is and how big the business is. And going overseas you see that. You can see the level of musicianship and the business side is at a higher level, because of the length of time the country has been doing it, yeah. You know, America has a really rich history with the music industry in terms of experience, yeah, compared to the New Zealand industry.

The size of the market also impacted on Matthew's view of the industry, which – although he is also a musician – is not quite as positive as Chris:

I think that you are in between a rock and a hard place in New Zealand because you've got low population in terms of a market, and so you have to be, it has to be worthwhile doing something. If you're going to have an industry it has to be making money, and with bugger all people, you're going to have to really be careful with what you fund, obviously, whether you're business or government or both, in order to get a return on your investment, and so because of that, you have for the last ten years or so when New Zealand music has started to get promoted again, you've had bands that are definitely going to make something, you know, are getting the funding, and you have the trickle down effect in theory that everyone else will get some of that, and it has, it is happening, but like all these things it is happening very slowly.

Ben would agree with Matthews understanding of the length of time that any changes need in order to take effect. However, now that there have been some positive developments in terms of political interest in the creative sectors of the economy, as explained in Chapter Two, Ben is concerned that a change in government could have a negative impact on what has been achieved:

There definitely has been um, yeah there definitely has been a change for the good, like for the creative good. I think it always takes a long time. A politician says something and two years later, it's like [funny voice] 'oh look, they're giving us five dollars more to do creative stuff'. It's that slow, but there does definitely seem to be a change for good. People seem to be confident and will actually go after it because they're like, 'wow, Labour government and Helen's into film-making, cool, let's go get some money and make a film.' So yeah, I think there is definitely a positive response to it now. I mean I was pretty scared of what's-his-name getting into power, old Brash, getting into power, because it's like, well [stage whisper] he's going

to make it even harder to get some money out of the Film Commission if I want any.

Although acknowledging that the current government had made changes to the environment for artists, both Mark and Rebecca were a little more cynical about how influential those changes were than Ben's comments indicated above. This could be a reflection of the fact that contemporary dance is much further towards the less commercial end of the creative industries continuum than film, and therefore is much more dependant on government funding than the film industry, in which much of the money comes from large corporate funding companies.

Mark stated:

I think that what they're doing is what the Labour Government has always done. The Labour government has an agenda around the arts that can either be seen as interference or seen as... They have set structures and put money into structures. The \$70 something million or \$80 something million injection into the arts went, almost all of it went into infrastructure. Over that same time period, there was actually well over \$100 million, I can't think of the actual figure, which came into the arts to individuals from private sources. So in some ways the Labour government has an active interest in the arts and that is actually being considered part of the cultural identity, the national identity and they're very interested in that. National basically has a 'hands off' policy, where they don't really give a shit. Te Papa happened under them, and there are occasional things that have cropped up, and there are certain structures that are always going to be in place, like the QEII Arts Council, Creative New Zealand, those sorts of things existed, but they're never really pushed. So Labour comes along and goes bang, and throws all this money at stuff, and some of it ends up at CNZ and some of it in national heritage things, some at the library thing, and then you see things like industry building. But industry building out of areas that there already was industry, like music and film. And it's easy to build an industry there, or easier, because they have distributable units. Live performance is much harder to do – it's still doable - but we haven't cottoned on to the kind of economic structures that will actually boost that.

When examining how she felt about the contemporary dance industry, Rebecca took into consideration that she was comparatively successful as a dancer and choreographer, and commented:

It's an interesting thing when you're in it to get an objective vision, because I'm doing what I want to do at the moment so for me that's great, so I have decent funding currently. I have contracts coming up and I also have, I guess, a future with it. So for me it's ideal at the moment, but in terms of the environment for dance at the moment, it's a poverty stricken industry, and it has been for while, and it's

unbalanced in terms of opportunity I guess for people... It tends to, like the money and support tends to get given out in lump sums to certain individuals, instead of being spread out, and that's the sort of shift that CNZ has made, and there are different sort of shifts that CNZ make at different times during the time that I've been a part of it, where they'll go 'we're interested in development' so they'll put a whole lot of money into developing projects, or 'we're interested in touring, we're interested in developing audiences' or 'we're interested in only giving support to work that is well marketed, well publicised and well produced' so it means that companies that want support have to be quite organised. And reasonably well established even to have those people on board to do that. So there has definitely been a shift to look at dance creating as a business, and I think that's not good. But, that's just my feeling, I feel that the other artists within the industry that don't naturally tend to operate in a business sense, that means that they're alienated from being able to do the stuff. So like myself, I've started up two companies, three companies, and I got interested in that, as well as making work, so it doesn't phase me, the grant writing processes doesn't phase me, but I know for some people that those things do. So systems prevent some artists from being able to do the work, but the systems are seen to be set up to support them.

James also commented on the increase in focus on the business side of the arts and creative industries, but was less sure about how he felt about the issue:

I suppose there is the whole thing of being recognised as important in an economic sense. I don't know if that is a positive or a negative, but that's quite a big thing, the whole creative industries type thing.

However, James also acknowledged that concerns about the origin of funding in the arts, including the visual arts which form the basis of his creative output, are by no means new:

I think it's always been a dilemma for artists since the start of time you know. Artists have been funded by the bourgeoisie or whatever and they make art against them, you know, whereas they couldn't make the art if they didn't have that support. So it's always going to be a dilemma. I think it's similar to that, you know, artists would like to think that they're anti all that sort of stuff, when really they can't do without it. [laughs] So I suppose if I was going to make a career out of art, I'd have to go along those lines, you know? I'd have to use those sort of channels, but if I just wanted to do art for art, you know, didn't care about money then, yeah, probably wouldn't want to do that sort of thing.

Perhaps the most interesting comment on the creative industries and the arts in New Zealand came from Matthew, who believes that culture is something of a

luxury to the Pakeha New Zealand public, and thought that this is the biggest impediment to the further development of the arts:

we don't see dance, singing, playing music as part of our culture... They don't see that as an actual thing, they see it as white, and rugby and alcohol and that's what you do... 'Culture' is going to have coffee with your friends and talking about the rugby. [Laughs] You don't think of it as going out to see a band, and having a great time, and then going to a film or something. Or even going to an exhibition or something.

The different sectors in which the eight artists are working provide a context from which to analyse their feelings of artistic integrity. Because of the methodology informing this research (explained in depth in Chapter Three), it is necessary to understand and acknowledge the contexts in which the constructions are made, and the views expressed above, whether positive or negative, influence how the artists view their work, and their artistic integrity, within their sectors of the creative industries.

Personal Constructions

Each of the eight artists interviewed for this research were questioned on what artistic integrity meant to them. For some, it was evident that they had considered this question previously, perhaps reflecting an intuition that it was important, and so were able to answer easily. But for others the question was much more difficult. Often the first definition offered was contradicted or corrected further on in the discussion, or was qualified in terms of different projects or creative practices. However, despite the many differences in the ways that artistic integrity was defined, two themes within the constructions emerged during analysis. The first relates artistic integrity to a work ethic – with some participants equating the two directly – and the second related artistic integrity to a belief in the work produced, rather than its production. Additional to these two themes were other ideas linking artistic integrity and personal integrity, and artistic integrity as personal development rather than a financial focus. What did not emerge, even within the two main themes, was a refined or mutually understood or agreed definition of artistic integrity between the artists. Rather

each artist appeared to personally construct their own understandings of artistic integrity in relationship with the creative context in which they are working.

Visual artists Angela and James both initially described artistic integrity in a way that seemed close to a work ethic. This is particularly interesting as although they are currently both working primarily in the same medium, they have had very different levels of experience in their practice. James, in his late teens, is at the beginning of his career, whereas Angela, now in her fifties, is formally trained and much more established.

When asked what artistic integrity meant to her, Angela commented:

I think artistic integrity means... well my own artistic integrity is me producing work to the best of my ability. So my artistic integrity reflects strong work that has a traditional basis to it and I think a balance of tone and shape and form and colour and I use all those basic principles in my work. And I execute my work and craftsmanship right down to the frames I put my work on. My frames are of top quality, I stretch my own canvasses, I gesso my canvasses four times before I start painting, and to me that's all part of the craftsmanship that to me is important. I feel that that is my integrity.

This focus, not only on the quality of the work itself, but also on the canvas and frame which holds the work, indicates that Angela sees her artistic integrity as something over which she has complete control, as a part of her artistic ability and "craftsmanship". She also goes on to say that "I know people who paint big paintings on Warehouse canvasses. Well I wouldn't do that, because I want my work to last forever. I don't want it to fall to pieces, because I really value my work". Her perception of the quality of her work is clearly linked to the time and effort she puts into controlling all the details, such as her canvasses and their frames, and it is this that she sees as a reflection of her artistic integrity.

Contrastingly, James' response to being questioned about what artistic integrity means to him was much less focussed, but still indicated a tendency to view integrity as a work ethic. Just two years after winning a national painting award, he stated quite categorically:

Well, I don't really have that much conviction for art to be honest, to be completely honest. I'm not really that devoted to it. I could sort of take it or leave it really. But I mean, if you put the effort in to do

something then you might as well do it well, and you might as well take it through to its logical conclusion or whatever. You might as well go the whole way; if you've got to put the effort in to start something then you want to do it properly. And in a lot of ways doing it properly is remaining consistent with your art, with your ideas I suppose, so yeah I suppose it's just kind of going through with what you want to do.

Although still focussing on following through with ideas, and doing “it well”, as seen in Angela's conception of integrity, James does not seem to be as concerned with these ideas as Angela was. This could also reflect the fact that Angela has almost fully retired from other forms of paid employment in order to focus on her practice, whereas James is still making up his mind as to what he wants to do with his life. These differences could also reflect significantly different conceptualisations of ‘the artist’ with Angela reflecting the Romantic view of a ‘supremely talented individual’, while James focuses more on simply ‘getting the job done’.

Another of the artists to focus on a work ethic definition of artistic integrity was contemporary dancer Rebecca. Unable to separate herself as the artist from her work, in her dance practice as well as her choreographic practice, Rebecca sees integrity in a similar way to James, but is much more firm about her beliefs. After some consideration of the idea, she said:

So I guess integrity is sticking, sticking with stuff, really investigating and following it through, and coming up with something that belongs to you, that really belongs to you, to you as an artist. As opposed to being artistically unintegral, [laughs] yeah, which I guess could mean doing what ever you need to do to satisfy other people.

What was most interesting in Rebecca's responses to these questions was her discussion of dancers being “integral” to the work. This is different to the other artists interviewed, as rather than being a purely philosophical or ethical issue, artistic integrity for Rebecca was also a physical aspect of the work that she creates. When questioned about how important she felt it was for dancers to show that they have integrity, she stated “I mean every choreographer that uses a dancer has to know that that dancer can be integral to how they are as a dancer. That's why they'll get employed, and that they'll be integral to the work that's created”. Although ‘integrity’ and ‘integral’ have the same root form, they are not

commonly used as interchangeably as Rebecca does here, and this could suggest a fundamental difference from the other artists in the way that she constructs her understanding of integrity. It seems that for Rebecca, artistic integrity relates to both a way of thinking and a way of being. In her view, as a dancer and choreographer, she needs to have a strong work ethic in her own practice, to explore ideas and movement fully in the creation of work, and to also be integral to the work, which could be read as being irreplaceable.

Screen writer Tom was one participant who initially equated artistic integrity directly with a work ethic. In contrast to Rebecca's understanding of being integral to the work itself, Tom clearly separates out artistic integrity as valuable for the artist, but feels that it should not be a consideration when looking at the work. He talked around his views on artistic integrity extensively as both a positive and a negative:

If you think about artistic integrity then I could so see that turning into self indulgence, you know what I mean? There's like a fine line between going 'I'm maintaining my artistic integrity' and just simply being self indulgent. I mean I do think about it, like I think about it in the sense that if I have an idea, and I think this could be a great idea, and if it doesn't come out properly I'm fucked off about it. I think that artistic integrity exists in the sense that you have to work really hard to achieve something that's any good. And you can't bullshit it. You know, you can't kind of be half-arsed about it and you can't go 'oh, yeah, but the practical reality is that we only have this much money and we can only do this, that and the other thing'. I mean, artistic integrity really only kicks in when you're going 'oh fuck it' you know? 'Lets work a 16 hour day' instead of going 'oh fuck it, it's been 8 hours and I'm tired' or whatever. And then everyone really works really hard. And that's really the only extent of artistic integrity. If you get to the point where you start thinking that artistic integrity is something to do with what the product is, then I think that's where you start fucking up and getting into self-indulgence. Artistic integrity to me is like a work ethic, and a work ethic that you really care about the idea, and you like the idea, and you don't want to get watered down with bullshit, right. And I think the mistake that you can make is thinking that artistic integrity is something where you're thinking about the product and the product has to be... oh but it's just such a fine line.

Again, the focus in Tom's discussion is artistic integrity as a work ethic, but the above discussion is perhaps the clearest version of this. He is not just talking about the quality of the canvas as seen in Angela's understanding, or about

following through with ideas as seen in James' and Rebecca's understandings, but is about the need to work as hard as necessary to achieve the best result, despite other practicalities such as a lack of funds. One possible reason for this is that the product that is a result of Tom's creative output is not complete when his job is over. As a television screenwriter, Tom has directors, producers, actors, and crew to take on and interpret his work. Therefore, the collaborative nature of his work makes it necessary for him to get the work to the highest standard that he can personally manage. After this, however, he has little control over how that work will then be manipulated into the finished product. This difference could be what caused him to separate his initial understanding of artistic integrity from the product, instead focussing on how he works to achieve his personal aims.

Interestingly, Tom then revised the above understanding of artistic integrity after considering a time when he felt that other people had infringed on both his and their own sense of integrity by claiming the credit for his 'good' ideas, while blaming him for their own 'less successful' ideas. He commented:

I guess maybe that's artistic integrity, you go 'this is my work, and I stand behind it 100%' you know? Like I will stand or fall on the basis of this work, and if something is bad about it then I'll take blame for it; if something's good about it, I'll take the credit for it. You know, and I'll work really hard and I'll do the best I can. And that's it, you know? Yeah, I think that's the most integrity I think that you can have. There are plenty of people around who won't do that.

In this quote, Tom contradicts his earlier claim that you can't look at the end product in order to determine artistic integrity, and instead should be looking at and supporting what it is that you have achieved. This second understanding of artistic integrity offered by Tom is similar to that of the other artist working in the field of film and television, Ben. As a director of film, music videos and commercials, Ben, like Tom, works extensively in collaborative creative practice, where the amount of control he has depends on what sort of project he is working on. He states that:

To me, artistic integrity is trusting your own instinct, and being able to back it up. That's all it means, and knowing that deep down, you are right, and what you're doing has a meaning to you that you love and you're going to fight for it, and that's all it is. I mean, I've learnt that now. I've learnt that inside here – 'taps on chest for emphasis' - inside here, if I'm going to make a film or a painting or whatever, it

has to have an element of truth in it, and the only truth that I can give it is the truth that I know, so I'll just make sure that it feels true to me, and then it will retain some sort of integrity.

This understanding of artistic integrity as 'standing behind your work' resonates well with Tom's second understanding above. Once again the focus is on the artist's belief in what they are creating, rather than the work ethic that created it.

The idea of truth also relates to Chris' initial understanding of artistic integrity within his creative practice of music. Along with Tom and Ben in the film and television industry, Chris works in the more commercial end of the creative industries continuum, although the music that is created by his solo project, the band of which he is a member, or the collaborative venture which he helps to organise is not essentially considered commercial. Chris spoke briefly about the fact that with the band, "the only thing that we do would be to shorten a song for radio edit so that it can be played on radio, but even then we're reluctant to do that", and otherwise they do not consciously change their music in order to have greater audience appeal or to achieve greater financial returns. In order to explain how he felt about artistic integrity, Chris stated:

To me artistic integrity is about sticking to your guns. You make something that is an original piece of art, and you display it or you present it to people and that should be it. You don't need to change it to fit or to follow a fad or to change it for your audience or change it for a company or you know? And generally those companies and those audiences don't want you to change it either, but they want to see something original and edgy and provoking, thought provoking, or a vibe that they're into, you know? So artistic integrity for me is not changing stuff for money, or for an audience, or for a company. And not changing what you put out under your name and pretending that you're really happy with it when really you're just doing it for the money. So yeah, knowing where that line is for yourself.

Although this does relate back to the previous notion of 'standing behind the work' that is created, Chris takes this one step further by stating his belief that integrity also relates to not changing the work to suit outside influences, such as recording companies and audiences. By distancing the creative practice from its audience, Chris appears influenced by the Romantic notion of "turning in upon the self" (Pinoch, 2002, para. 3). The idea of rejecting outside influence is reflected on by the other musician interviewed, Matthew. Although Matthew's

understanding of artistic integrity does not fit within the two categories outlined above, he can be linked with the comments around money above, offered by Chris. Matthew was also one of the artists' interviewed who had thought carefully about how he felt about artistic integrity, pointing out:

I was thinking about it on the way [to the interview] actually, and I think the difference is, and it's a very thin line, but what can I *create* out of this, and what can I *make* out of this. You know, what I can create is what I can develop and how I can go forward, and what I can make is more about what I can get out of it. I think it's the difference between artistic integrity and just doing something to make money or whatever, you know? And I think that obviously with artistic integrity you can still get money and recognition, and still retain artistic integrity, so it's a real fine line to find out how that can actually be done.

Here, Matthew has related artistic integrity to a relationship between personal and economic development. He is saying that if an artist is primarily creating in order to develop themselves as a person, or to increase their skills and future opportunities, then they are acting with integrity. However, if they are creating with the primary goal of making money and being financially successful, with personal development and creative expression further down the list of importance, then the artist would be lacking artistic integrity. This is quite significantly different from all the previous understandings of integrity, as it offers a way for an artist to interrogate their own motivations to decide whether they are acting within Matthew's definition of artistic integrity.

The second of the artists whose understandings of artistic integrity did not fit within the two main themes was Mark, also the second of the contemporary dancers. Having written extensively on philosophical and physical issues related to dance practice, Mark was very clear on how he felt about the idea of 'artistic' integrity. He stated:

I think that I can't make that distinction of artistic integrity. The only way to make the distinction is by saying that I claim being an artist, and I can speak from that viewpoint, but integrity is integrity to me, regardless of whether it is mechanical integrity or anything else. Basically what there is for me is there's a set of values in place that the behaviour of the organism is in congruency with, and that those behaviours are in some kind of harmony or taking into consideration the immediate environment.

By refusing the notion of ‘artistic integrity’ as separate from personal integrity, Mark seems to make the issue much simpler. By removing the artistic from the idea of integrity, one does not need to consider artistic issues as separate from the rest of one’s life, and instead can act in accordance simply with the values that hold true in all the other parts of life. This idea was briefly reflected upon by other interviewees also, with Matthew commenting that “whatever I express in whatever way, whether it’s artistically or just communicating with the bum on the street, I want to have integrity”.

What stands out most with all these understandings or attempts at defining artistic integrity from eight different artists working in different types of creative practice is that they *are* all different from each other. Each artist has constructed their own views around what constitutes artistic integrity from their own beliefs and experiences, to the point that one doesn’t even see that there can be such a thing as ‘artistic’ integrity in his practice. However, the two main themes of artistic integrity as a work ethic, and also seeing integrity as standing behind one’s creative output, were dominant between the eight artists. Angela offers a concise response to the range of construction after looking up ‘integrity’ and ‘integrate’ in the dictionary, stating “it has to be a wholly personal thing. I mean you can’t write a list and say, to have integrity in painting you must have this, this, this, and this”, and her claim could work just as easily for each of the other artists interviewed.

When considering how the artists involved in this research constructed their understandings of artistic integrity, it is possible to see links to the context in which the idea of artistic integrity has emerged. Hirschman’s (1983) self, peer, and commercial creative orientations offer a framework in which to view the personal constructions of artistic integrity.

Despite how different the constructions of integrity were among the eight artists included in this research, the majority of the artists’ initial constructs fit into the self-orientated creator category (Hirschman, 1983). Rebecca discussed artistic integrity as creating work that “really belongs to you, to you as an artist”, while Tom felt that artistic integrity stopped the ‘idea’ being “watered down with bullshit”, and noted he felt integrity also related to a belief that “I will stand or fall

on the basis of this work". Ben talked about believing that "if I'm going to make a film or painting or whatever, it has to have an element of truth in it, and the only truth I can give it is the truth that I know". Taking this idea further, Chris stated "artistic integrity for me is not changing stuff for money, or for an audience, or for a company", which concurred with Matthew's belief that the difference between having artistic integrity and not having artistic integrity is "what I can *create* out of this and what I can *make* out of this. To return to Hirschman's (1983) definition of self-orientated creators, all five of these artists, in their constructions of artistic integrity, claim that they "create to communicate a personal vision or satisfy an inner need for self-expression" and "follow their own inclinations and then present their creation to others" (p. 48).

What is interesting is the one artist, Mark, who would be most likely to identify himself as a self-orientated creator (if he was willing to categorise himself in any way), but who was also the artist who believed that discussions around integrity must *not* remove economic issues. After explaining why he could not separate artistic integrity from personal integrity, Mark commented:

... with that, integrity totally has to take in relationship with money. People try and skip the word integrity when it gets to money and I'm not sorted, I'm not sorted at all when it comes to that, but I do feel that I want to be participating financially, within the economy, and that has something to do with it

Although Mark has acknowledged that he creates primarily for himself and for creative expression, identifying him as solely a self-orientated creator is much too simplistic. As stated above, Mark also sees the audience as important, and pointed out that "without them, I'm dancing in my bedroom and having a good time, and that's okay, because it's nice to just... the act of dancing is the act of dancing. To perform it is something else." The recognition of the importance of "participating financially" also demonstrates that Mark may have been affected by the recent development of the creative industries, although it may also be a response to the fact that he had been in paid employment in other sectors for some time before becoming a dancer. The complexities involved in categorising Mark into the self, peer, or commercial creator group also reflect the difficulties with categorising any of the artists interviewed for this research. Although their initial

constructions of artistic integrity seem to point the majority in the direction of self-orientation, each artist also demonstrated that they could, and do, work within the peer- and commercial orientations also. For the most part, the artists re-constructed their conception of artistic integrity and its importance to fit each situation.

However, one artist whose initial discussion of her personal construction of artistic integrity fitted more into the peer-orientated than self-orientated creator category was Angela. Her focus on external elements such as the craftsmanship used to prepare her canvasses and frames, along with her concentration within the discussion on entering competitions in order to build her name, sees Angela seeking recognition from potential industry experts (although she expressed a real lack of confidence in the judges of the competition she entered). Angela also believes the quality of her work to be such that she equals or betters all those who enter or are selected for such competitions. Angela, as with many peer-orientated creators, could be seen as a bridging member of this group in terms of her understandings of artistic integrity. Angela sees integrity as linked to a work ethic: “my own artistic integrity is me producing work to the best of my ability”. However, she also believes in focussing on the audience of the work that she creates, and commented “I’m more than happy to work to someone else’s requirements. It’s something that is a part of being an artist. It doesn’t mean that all my work is like that, but if you need some money, you go out and earn it”. As with Mark, the categorisation of Angela as solely a peer-orientated creator is much too simplistic.

It would seem that James would most likely agree with Angela’s final statement above. The only artist whose construction of artistic integrity throughout the discussion could fit into the commercial creator category, James acknowledged:

Yeah, it’s funny, because I think you should consider your audience when you do art, it shouldn’t be totally a mind wank kind of thing you know? [laughs] Not just kind of boosting your own ego, you know? You should think about your viewers because really you’re nothing without an audience, you know, so I suppose it’s a fine balance. I mean you don’t want to just do it all for the audience, so yeah, it’s a fine balance.

Once again, James has shown that he does not buy into the Romantic idea that “alienation and rejection” are essential elements of creative practice (Meecham and Sheldon, 2002, p. 2), as he acknowledges the influence of the audience. Although other artists such as Chris and Mark did comment that the audience was important, they didn’t feel that they should be a factor during the creative process. Because James considers the audience *during* the creation of his work, he could therefore be categorised as a commercial creator, who according to Hirschman, “fulfil the values, desires and expectations of the marketplace” (1983, p. 47). Once again, however, the categorisation of James as a commercially orientated creator is troublesome, as he exhibits features of the other orientations as well, depending on the context in which he is working.

Importance

The importance of artistic integrity for each of the artists was an emergent theme within the data, both in relationship to the artists’ own practices and in the context of the wider industries in which they work. Although Rebecca stated that she felt that artistic integrity was essential for contemporary dancers (see above), artists in more commercial areas of the creative industries also considered their views on whether artistic integrity was important. Matthew offered a unique comment on this issue, expressing that although he felt artistic integrity was important for him, he believes that it is not a necessity for artists:

I don’t think artistic integrity is important at all. It’s only as important as you think it is. For *me* it’s important because that’s how I feel about it, but it’s just a piece of art, you know? Like, at the end of the day, like other people just think it’s this, other people think it’s that, and that’s the beauty of it, of music or any art, yeah.

This is in sharp contrast to many of the responses from the other artists interviewed. For example, Ben felt that as a film-maker, you must have integrity or the film itself would not be accepted by the audience, stating:

Um, I think you have to, you have to show, you have to show the audience - who are completely savvy - and treat them with respect, and as a film-maker you have to show them that you do have some integrity, because then they will come along for the ride. You know, when you watch a movie you sit down and in the first five minutes you can usually tell if you’re in the hands of a good director, in a weird way. You know, you go ‘oh cool, this is going to be good’ and you know that it’s confident and there’s a heart and soul to it, and you

go 'oh this is going to be good, I'm going to follow this story'. But then when it's not good, when it's not there, there's been too many cooks making this broth, or you know, the director was not there, was mentally away on holiday when they made this, you know... I think that's the sign of a good director, someone who can just put a little bit of themselves in it, and take you on a good ride, so, you have to have some integrity to do that.

Chris also takes on this idea of an audience being able to see if an artist has integrity, while echoing Mark's and Ben's words earlier that it is important to show integrity throughout your life, by commenting that:

I think it's really important, yeah. It's important to show that you've got artistic integrity. Or that you've got integrity in anything that you do, because I'm not in music to be cool, I'm not in music to be on TV, I'm not in music to be on the radio, I'm in music to make music. And people can see through, you know, if you don't have integrity people can see it, so you're not doing yourself any favours.

In relation to the two different views expressed by artists as to whether artistic integrity is important in different fields of the creative industries, it is interesting to note that the two musicians, Chris and Matthew, agree the least. Although Matthew has acknowledged that for him artistic integrity is important, he feels that it is not necessary in order to create artistic work, whereas Chris believes that it is. This relates back to their personal constructions of artistic integrity discussed above. They both make a comment on the relationship between having integrity and seeking financial reward for creative products, but Matthew seems to be focussing more on a morally based construction of integrity, whereas Chris views it as a way of working within the particular constraints of the industry. In explaining whether he felt other musicians had integrity or not, Matthew had this to say:

Well look at Jimmy Hendrix. I mean if you think morally, you know, he was a waster, and shagged lots of people or whatever and all of those bands, Jim Morrison and all those sorts of people you know, they had no integrity whatsoever, but they created amazing pieces of art.

That artistic integrity was almost always recognised as important, even if it is seen differently by each artist depending on their personal construction of the concept, adds a layer of complexity onto what was already a complex issue. These artists believe that it is difficult to know whether another artist is acting within their own

construction of integrity, but also, except for Matthew, believe that having artistic integrity itself is necessary.

Context

These apparent contradictions in understanding what constitutes artistic integrity, and whether or not it is important, are also reflected within the discussions with each of the eight artists, many of whom revealed that their constructions of artistic integrity differed depending on the types of creative products they were involved in. Rebecca is a good example of this contextualisation of artistic integrity, as she works as a dancer and choreographer in many different ways. Not only does she create and perform her own work, she also has a running contract with a prestigious fashion event, has performed at corporate product launches, and choreographs for a number of dance companies around the country. She acknowledged that she maintained a different sort of artistic integrity for each of the different types of work:

If I'm working on [the fashion event] choreography then that has to satisfy the audience, that's its primary objective, it is entertainment. So I have no problem understanding that that's the conditions under which I work and I'm not there to push any buttons... I don't really have that agenda when I work on that show at all. But then with my own work it's kind of about finding - again I'm not interesting in breaking ground as that's not what I'm about, or drives me. I want to make work that means something to me or the people that see it, so it has an impact but it doesn't necessarily have to be political. Well it could be; it just depends on what the focus is.

Rebecca goes on to acknowledge that her own construction of artistic integrity is “contextual”, a view shared by Ben. Having directed many different types of film and video work, from television commercials, to music videos, to his own films, as well as his own work as a painter, and playing the drums with a number of different bands, Ben's level of control over the content of the final product varies wildly. From negotiating with producers and financiers over content in his feature film, to dealing with clients who hire him to create advertisements for their products, Ben feels that he maintains an artistic integrity during each process, although it is different each time. When asked specifically whether he felt that he had artistic integrity while making commercials, he commented:

Yeah, it is there to a degree, like I want to do a really good job as a director. So I'll get given a script, which I haven't written, and I will make suggestions on it, and go 'hey, it would be funny if this was outside', or 'not one guy, but two guys', that sort of stuff, and they might turn around and say 'nah, do it our way' and I'll go 'ok, cool'. And so I'll do it their way to the best of my ability, and that's where my artistic integrity can come out.

Mark had a similar view, and despite his own belief in staying true to his style of dance practice, he also acknowledges that there are times when the context of the work comes into play. He stated:

I have a certain ideology about how I want to work. Along comes an opportunity to perform it, but I must remove something, or I must keep my clothes on at all times, - not that I ever do [take them off] – but I kind of go 'well, you know, I always get naked in my performances', and they say 'yes well if you do, you won't be in this show, and without you in this show we won't make enough money and then we won't be able to give this money to this cause', and I go 'oh right, so there's a bigger picture'.

The idea of a bigger picture is also relevant to Matthew, who considered the changes that he feels have occurred in how he has viewed artistic integrity since his teens. Having acknowledged that he believes it is easier to stick by a particularly moral form of artistic integrity when you are younger and have fewer responsibilities, Matthew considered the way he felt about integrity when he was just starting out in the music industry:

I just thought that's what you do you know, this is my art, this is pure man this is what I feel, and I'm not going to let other people listen to it you know, and I can't sell it, it's not a commodity, it's my pure essence and it's not for sale you know [laughs]. And then when I left home I couldn't make money without doing it, and I couldn't really make money with music either but that's what I'm going to do. And then I started thinking about it - I went on the dole obviously, because I didn't want to work, because I can't even work because that's ruining my integrity as an artist because if you work then you're not spending time on your art, and that was a real big deal. So then I couldn't work, and it took ages, and then I was piss poor, and thought, well I'm going to have to do something other than just play music and not making any money, so then you do some sort of work, but you know, it will be work with integrity you know, so I'd do gardening and nice things like that.

As his responsibilities increased, Matthews's construction of artistic integrity altered. Many of the artists indicated that it would be much easier to stick to an

‘ideal’ form of artistic integrity if all they had to do was focus on their creative practice, but other considerations stopped this from occurring. When Angela was asked what she felt would happen if artists didn’t have to depend solely on the sale of their work for income, she stated categorically “They wouldn’t give up their integrity”.

While many of the initial comments from the eight artists on what artistic integrity means seem to place them within the self-orientation, consistent with Hirschman’s claim that “the majority of creators exhibit a self or peer orientation” (1983, p. 47) further discussion led to questioning of the primary audience and primary objective of their artistic work. Here, the influence of the current focus on the economic potential of the creative industries can be seen. As a film-maker, Ben acknowledges that he feels the need for his creative product to be financially successful as a key aspect of its creation. This is highlighted in his discussion about keeping the financiers of his films happy:

if someone is going to give you a lot of money to make a piece of art, your art, they have to be able to sell that piece of art and make some money back off it, or otherwise it’s not worth it for them. Why would it be? Why would I give you 100 grand if you weren’t going to give me back something that I could make 150 grand off? That’s just bad business, you know? I’ve kind of learnt that now...

Although Ben’s initial construction of artistic integrity placed him within the self-orientated creator category, the above quote would see him join James in the commercial creator category. In fact, Ben seems to move between categories depending on what type of creative work he is making, and with this change is a reconsideration of his artistic integrity. As with the majority of the other artists, work created for personal expression – in Ben’s case his painting – tends to ignore outside influence and does not have economic motives. This is coupled with each artist constructing a complementary understanding of artistic integrity, which one can argue stems from the Romantic Movement’s separation of the artist from wider society, and encourages a self-focus. At the other end of the spectrum, work created with commercial motivation – Angela’s “bread and butter” paintings; Rebecca’s fashion show choreography; Ben’s commercials – is coupled with a construction of artistic integrity that fits more easily into the creative industries, with more of a focus on work ethic and creating quality products.

These artists do indeed work within more than one creative orientation, and this thesis that argues the different contexts, in terms of audience and objective, become the driver behind the artists' construction of different understandings of artistic integrity that are fundamentally context dependant.

Social Contestation

A further issue that emerged clearly during the discussions with the eight artists involved in this research, and one with wider implications than those affecting the artists individually, was that of the socially contested nature of artistic integrity. All the artists could identify times when they felt the artistic integrity of an artist had been questioned by 'outsiders'. Although this questioning was often acknowledged as being legitimate, there was also an overwhelming feeling that many times this could be far more destructive than constructive. The issue of 'selling out', which was understood as using one's creative ability first and foremost to obtain financial rewards, was almost always seen in opposition to having artistic integrity. The issue was never completely clear cut however, and many of the artists admitted that the context in which this happened was important. One artist who admitted his own integrity had been called into question was Ben, who stated:

Oh, well, I mean it's happened to me. People have gone, 'oh you're a sell-out man, you make TV ads'. And I've gone, 'yeah, ok, I could sit at home on the dole and try and write films, but that way I'd just feel like I was bludging off you'. How do I feel about it? I say bring it on. Um, and you can think that some people have sold out, and you can go, 'well, maybe they have, maybe they've decided to take the money and run' and then they're going to go off and do something else better. I mean, it really depends on what it is.

What is interesting here is that although Ben has been in the position of having his integrity questioned, he still recognises 'selling out' as something that could happen.

Mark also questions the concept of being able to determine, from an outsider's perspective, whether an artist has 'sold out', noting:

Just because I have a friend who choreographs [corporate functions], doesn't mean that she's sold out. Just because you know I have a friend who chose to go on a TV show as opposed to do a dance piece by one New Zealand's leading choreographers, I can't say that he sold out, because I don't know what the decision was about.

Here, he has identified two examples of dance work which he himself would not have accepted, but acknowledges that just because he would see this a breach of integrity does not necessarily mean that dancers or choreographers who do take on these jobs agree with him. This emphasis supports the idea that artistic integrity is both personally constructed and contextual, and questions the validity of anyone suggesting that a choice made by an artist necessarily leads to 'selling out'.

The idea of 'selling out' also arose in discussions with Chris, when he used the phrase himself to question another successful New Zealand group's decision to help promote the product of a multi-national corporation. When questioned about what the term means, he claimed:

Well it's annoying because I find those words, the words sell out (even though I just used them), I find them, that's not accurate, it depends on what you're talking about. Like to me, it's 'sell out' to totally change what you do for money, when what you did before that was really good, and a lot of people have respect for you, and then to just do something way off and for a company, is really shallow, that's 'sell out'. But to be successful at what you do is not 'sell out', and sometimes Kiwi's get that totally wrong. Like to get your music video that does have integrity and a song that does have integrity on TV, and for it to be number one, and for people to buy your album, that's not 'sell out', that's success. For you to get into bed with different major labels or different major brands to help you get there takes away from the music, and I think that could be called 'sell out'. But, I don't like that term so I shouldn't use it.

Chris' somewhat defensive response can be seen to stem from the music industry in which he works. He identified very specific ways in which artists could be seen to have lost their integrity or 'sold out'. However, the other musician, Matthew, had quite a different response, while again commenting on how his views have changed over time. He describes how he had previously bought into

some of the strongest notions of artistic integrity, in which the artist could not even be seen to be making money:

Something I think, it's that thing where, it's kind of supposed to be anti-establishment, you know, anti-work, anti-everything. So, you can't be playing punk and making money, and you're part of the establishment. It's just a contradiction in terms, so you're selling out. And if you're a rock band, and you're playing U2 type music - or bands like Pearl Jam or Nirvana or who have that punk sort of ethic of singing stuff because you mean it, all that Neil Young sort of ethic, we mean this stuff, that four dead in Ohio sort of stuff, the world is going to hell in a handbag if we don't do something about it - you're making millions of dollars with those statements, that's selling out. You know? You don't write that sort of stuff for money, you write it for the betterment of man-kind. Any money you make off it, you know, you should give to the World Wildlife Fund or to children in Africa. You know? Yeah. When I was younger I was all for that, you know I was like, yeah man, that's exactly it, and if any band that I liked, if they weren't like that I didn't like them anymore, you know?

Here Matthew has acknowledged that when he was younger, he believed that music that expressed anti-establishment ideals should not make any money for the artist. He continued to explain these ideas, giving *Green Day* and *Rage Against the Machine* as examples of groups who would have fit into this category of 'selling out' as he used to view it, as the two groups' music expresses strong political views, and made money off that music. He then goes on to comment:

What people call selling out now I don't think is selling out at all, because you have sports people going onto a field to run around kicking balls and grabbing each other, being paid thousands, millions of dollars. That's not selling out. And they're making entertainment, they're entertaining people, and for some people, it's drama, it's soap opera, it's their lives, for some people it creates their whole being, to be watching it and be involved in it. Music, culture, art, is the same, if not more important in a great thing like that. People who are creating it should be paid lots and lots of money to be doing it you know? Especially if what they're saying is really important. Who decides what is important is the hardest thing. Who decides what will be recorded and what will not.

As explained earlier, Hirschman's categories (1983), especially that of self-orientated creators, can be traced back to the Romantic Movement, and this tradition also has had a strong impact on the way that these artists initially viewed their integrity and the idea of selling out. Along with the 'myth of the artist', this thesis argues that the Romantic Movement not only gave rise to the artist as

‘genius individual’ ideal, but also to the beginnings of artistic integrity and the concept of selling out. In fact, Chris’ comments and Matthew’s description of his beliefs as a teenager above about the idea of selling out fit with Michels’ (2001) comment on the belief that “the desire for comfortable lives and financial success will ultimately poison and distort art” (p. 2). This relates to much of the discussion from the artists around the concept of ‘selling out’, where a focus on the economic value of art at the expense of artistic integrity is almost uniformly seen as negative. When the dominant discourse within the art community since the late 18th century has focused on artists following their inner need for creative expression rather than chasing economic return – despite widespread adoption of a capitalist economic structure – it is of little surprise that most of the artists spoken to within this research found it necessary to separate out financial issues from their understandings of artistic integrity.

Matthew’s idea of comparing artists to other members of society in terms of their ability to make an income from their work is carried through by Mark, who believes that if artists are questioned on their integrity, then so should everyone else. He expresses below that artists can feel as though they are somehow held to a higher standard of integrity than people working in any other job, which could be linked to the development of the ‘genius individual’ identified above:

A colleague of mine recently talked about their voice as a kind of expectancy. That there was a kind of expectancy on the artist within the broader culture, that there was this expectancy, this responsibility, this obligation of the artist was to be the one who was actively engaging with the world and you know, with the free thinking and the developing and that kind of thing, and he was saying ‘No, it’s actually of more value that the person out there that’s an accountant is also doing that in their thinking of their day to day life’. Um and I really really liked this, and it’s like, in a way, you know, for me choosing to be an artist is no different in a sense than choosing to be a lawyer, or a street sweeper or somebody who works in a bank. It becomes a choice.

The feeling that artists are held to a higher standard of integrity than other workers is especially interesting in the context of this research. Mark goes on to say that when people from outside the arts question artistic integrity he feels that “in some ways I resent them, because I resent the comparative lack of legitimacy of the arts in general in New Zealand culture, and in some ways I think it’s a fair call,

because we all have the right to question”. This idea of a “fair call” was challenged by James, who commented:

well it seems to be pompous and stuck up to say ‘oh, I wouldn’t sell out’ you know, ‘that person is selling out’, you know, when they’ve got their own shit, and they have to make their own way and make their own living and do their own thing, so it just seems a bit egotistical to try and pretend, try and say ‘oh well, they shouldn’t sell out’ when really you know, what’s it got to do with you? It’s their life I suppose.

Here James reflects back on the idea that artistic integrity is constructed differently by each artist, and therefore, it could be difficult to determine whether an artist’s actions are imposing on their own sense of integrity. James went on to say “I think life is messy and nothing is clean-cut. You have to ask yourself, ‘maybe my view is coloured by something’, ‘maybe I’ve got some prejudice or bias’ or maybe they could be remaining true to their integrity but not to yours”. This was a common theme to emerge during the discussions, often arising after lengthy consideration of what artistic integrity is and whether it can be displayed or identified by people who are not involved in the arts themselves. Although all of the artists except James felt that they could identify people who had lost their integrity, or sold out, none of them transferred those feelings onto themselves.

One artist who responded directly to the idea of continually trying to meet the social expectations of artistic integrity was Rebecca, who even felt that these expectations could damage the artist, although in some sense artists still need to meet them:

I think to me anyway, keeping that sense that you’re always trying to think that artistic integrity is from an outsider’s perspective, or which people are going to see your work, you can kind of chop yourself off at the knees, yeah. But I think it’s important for most artists that *you* have that sense that they are integral to what they’re doing.

Interestingly, Angela disagrees with Rebecca’s statement above in the context of the visual arts. Angela believes that rather than an expectation of having artistic integrity, visual artists are being encouraged to produce work that appeals to a wide audience, and that does not necessarily show good technique or craftsmanship – two elements which she sees as essential to her construction of artistic integrity. She commented “I don’t think there is any pressure on artists to

keep their integrity, and I think that's why people produce shit. I think some people who produce shit deliberately have no integrity. Other people produce shit though sheer ignorance". Although Angela clearly stated that she believed artistic integrity was a very personal construction, and that it was impossible to create any sort of criteria by which to judge whether an artist has integrity, the above quote sees her judge other visual artists by her own criteria of her personal construction of integrity.

The development of artistic integrity as a concept derived in large measure from the Romantic Movement, the 'myth of the artist' and its reaction to the growth of the capitalist economic system can still be seen in the above discursive constructions from each of the eight artists. What they say is, to a degree, made possible by the discursive resources delivered to them by a combination of historical antecedents and contemporary realities. Personally constructed and contextual, artistic integrity can paradoxically be seen as both important and unnecessary, a unique concept and inseparable from personal integrity, constant and yet contradictory, socially contested and still occasionally irrelevant. Most importantly, however, through these discussions with artists, one can see that no matter what the background, creative practice, level of training or experience of the artist, there will be, embedded in what they say and do, at least one construction of an understanding of what it means to have integrity as an artist.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research explored the historical roots and contemporary contexts for artistic integrity, and most importantly gave an opportunity for artists' to comment on how they view their artistic integrity. What was discovered was that the complex development of artistic integrity which has emerged over more than two centuries has led to an equally complex concept, with a multitude of different uses, meanings and constructions.

The development of the concept of artistic integrity through recent history began with the development of the Romantic Movement, in which the artist was separated out from other workers as a 'genius individual', who was seen as special and different from others. By singling artists out, the Romantic Movement also gave rise to the 'myth of the artist' which encourages the belief that struggle and economic hardship are necessities for the creation of great art work. These concepts gave rise to the transference of 'integrity' from the artwork to the artist. However, at the same time as the Romantic Movement was taking hold, large parts of Europe and North America were transitioning into a capitalist economic structure, which required artists to sell their work in order to survive, as they were no longer able to depend on large scale support from the church or state.

With the move towards the current 'art market' beginning in the early 18th century, the development of what was called the 'culture industries' in the 1940's and what is now called the creative industries, should have come as little surprise. However, due to an increase in government attention in New Zealand during the early part of the new millennium, the greater focus on the economic potential of the arts within the wider creative industries has drawn critique as well as support. One 'spin off' of this increased attention has been a focus on artistic integrity as a way of determining the motivations of the artist and therefore the value of the work.

Despite the focus on artistic integrity by government bodies, especially Creative New Zealand, and within the media, few attempts had been made to find out how artists themselves felt about integrity, or even whether or not they believed it was relevant or important. This research provides this link between the artists, policy makers, and media commentators. By providing artists with an opportunity to describe their own views about artistic integrity, those who are most affected by the positive and negative implications of integrity can have a say in what the term means to them.

Using qualitative semi-structured interviews, a grounded theory approach and ethnographic analysis and write-up, the views of eight artists from a variety of creative practices make up the primary research for this thesis. The findings of this research suggest that even the broadest definitions of artistic integrity (such as the single one offered by Creative New Zealand) do not go far enough to include all aspects covered by the eight artists involved in this research. The complexity and subjectivity of the term means that it is quite possible that every artist in the country considers their own artistic integrity differently from everyone else. However, some common themes did emerge from the interviews.

The idea of a personally constructed understanding of artistic integrity rang true for all the artists, even the one who did not see his artistic integrity as any different from his personal integrity. This would suggest that accusations of an artist breaching their integrity should hold little weight, as only the artist themselves would be able to determine this.

Importance was another theme that emerged from the research, as artistic integrity was seen by most of the artists as a necessary aspect of creative practice. However, one artist disagreed, claiming that artistic integrity is only as important as you make it.

A third theme to emerge, and perhaps one of the most unexpected, was that of the context-dependant nature of integrity within creative practice. Many of the artists explained that they thought about their integrity in different ways with different projects. Therefore, an artist may work with a certain way with complete integrity

on a commercial contract, but have a very different type of integrity when working on works created for personal expression. However, seen within the framework of Hirschman's (1983) creative orientations, it seems much more logical for an artist to not only work with different motivations and potential audiences, but also different feelings of artistic integrity.

The final theme to emerge from within this research was that of the socially contested nature of artistic integrity. The eight artists all identified times when they felt another artist's integrity was attacked. Although there was an acknowledgement that the questioning of the motivations of artists was valid, it was also felt that this could be incredibly destructive. Taking into consideration the personally constructed nature of artistic integrity, there seems little validity to labelling an artist as a 'sell-out', as an outsider could not simply look at an artists work to decide whether that artist has integrity or not.

The increase in attention on the creative industries, coupled with the development of comparatively economically successful industries in music, design, television, and film, mean that issues such as the importance and nature of artistic integrity become ever more pressing. This exploratory study has provided a solid starting point for further research into the place of artistic integrity in the New Zealand arts environment.

He toi whakairo. He mana tangata.

Where there is artistic integrity, there is human dignity.

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APPENDIX ONE

Project Information Sheet and Consent Form

What is artistic integrity? An investigation into the issues surrounding integrity in contemporary New Zealand arts practice.

Who is the researcher and how can she be contacted?

Kim Barbour is a Master of Arts Student, studying in the Department of Screen and Media Studies at The University of Waikato. Her supervisors are Professor Dan Fleming and Dr Suzette Major.

Contact details are:

Kim Barbour – kjb25@waikato.ac.nz

Prof. Dan Fleming – dfleming@waikato.ac.nz

Dr Suzette Major – suzi@waikato.ac.nz

Assoc. Prof. Mary Griffiths (Ethics Committee) – maryg@waikato.ac.nz

What is this research about?

This research will contribute to a three paper thesis investigating the place of artistic integrity in contemporary arts practice. The purpose of the interviews is to gather individual perspectives on the place (if any) of artistic integrity in the lives of professional artists.

How will data be collected?

Face-to-face interviews (where possible) will be conducted with professional artists. These interviews will be semi-structured, and will last between thirty minutes and two hours. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed at a later date for further analysis. Should a participant wish, they will have access to the transcript and be able to clarify any points they feel were not made sufficiently during the interview itself.

How will this data be used?

The data collected during the interviews will be used to construct a description and interpretation of each of the interview participant's views on artistic integrity. The data will provide evidence of individual opinions rather than generalisations.

What degree of confidentiality is there to this research?

The people interviewed will have complete confidentiality in the final thesis. A code name or identifier will be used to differentiate between participants, which will ensure that there is no way of discerning who each participant is. In addition, only the researcher and her supervisors will know who the interviewees are. If at any stage, up to the submission of the first draft of the thesis on the 14th of September 2006, a participant wishes to change or withdraw any information about themselves, or withdraw themselves and their contributions from the research, they will be able to do so. Participants have the right to decline to answer any question or questions, and may at any stage ask the researcher for more information about the project, including seeing the transcription of their interview for clarification purposes. Should a participant want a copy of the final thesis, they can contact the researcher and she will put them in contact with the publishers.

Consent Form

I, _____, give my consent to take part in the research for the thesis entitled "What is artistic integrity? An investigation into the

issues surrounding integrity in contemporary New Zealand arts practice", being conducted by Kim Barbour.

I understand that I have the right to:

1. Ask for more information on the project at any time;
2. Withdraw or change any or all information at any time leading up to the submission of the first draft on the 14th of September, 2006;
3. View the transcript of the interview, and comment on or clarify any issues I wish;
4. Refuse to answer any questions relating to this research.

Signed _____
Date _____
Contact
(email/phone/address)_____

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APPENDIX TWO

Interview Guide

Interview Questions:

Personal introduction – Getting the interviewee comfortable and talking about their creative practice.

Q. Tell me a little about yourself and your [creative practice].

Prompts: training, background, family history with art if any, style, major successes...

Q. Can you tell me about a creative project that you are very proud of? What was it about that project that made you most excited?

Q. In contrast, have you ever been involved in a project that you were not happy with? What made you feel uncomfortable about that project?

Activity one

Situation one:

An established visual artist with a well-known style is employed by a major alcohol brand manager to create a work that will be used to advertise their product.

Situation two

A band is booked to play at a major festival with international acts, but told they will have to alter their lyrics to remove swear words.

Situation three:

A contemporary dancer deliberately chooses to wear different costumes depending on who is in the audience, even though the movements within the work remain the same.

Q. Which two of these situations are most similar in contrast to the third? Why?

- Which two are most similar in terms of how you feel about them?
- Which two are most similar in terms of whether you would put yourself in that situation?

Activity two

Situation one:

A film-maker decides to abandon a film half finished rather than make the changes required by the production company.

Situation two:

A website designer refuses to take on a client whose business she disagrees with, despite being offered a considerably higher than average salary for the short term contract.

Situation three:

An upcoming singer stays with his small recording company, despite being offered a contract with a major label, as he feels indebted to the indie company for their initial support.

Q. Which two of these situations are most similar in contrast to the third? Why?

- Which two are most similar in terms of how you feel about them?
- Which two are most similar in terms of whether you would put yourself in that situation?

New Zealand arts context

Q. How do you feel about the current environment in New Zealand for your [creative practice]?

Prompts: level of support from government, level of support from public, prestige (and possibly money) associated with it, ease of access to education, training and resources, possible comparison to other countries...

Q. In relation to how you feel about this, what do you think are most positive aspects of being a [creative practitioner] in New Zealand at the moment?

Q. And what are the most negative aspects?

Artistic Integrity

Q. 'Artistic integrity' is a term which is used quite frequently. What do you think it means?

Q. How important do you think it is that [creative practitioners] like yourself show that they have integrity?

Q. In what ways do you think a [creative practitioner] can show that they have artistic integrity?

Q. Do you think it is possible for someone to lose their artistic integrity? How?

Q. Can you give me an example of a time when you felt that another artist had lost their integrity?

Q. What do you do to remain comfortable with your own artistic integrity?

Q. What do you think are the biggest pressures on a [creative practitioner] to retain their artistic integrity?

Q. How about the opposite. What do you think are the biggest pressures on a [creative practitioner] to give up their artist integrity?

Opportunity for interviewee to give any further comments, or bring up any issues that they feel are important in terms of the discussion.

APPENDIX THREE

Transcripts

Interview one
Conducted in artist's studio

10.06.06

Coded to preserve artist's anonymity

RESEARCHER Ok, um, so basically just to start, can you just tell me a little bit about yourself and your creative practice, your art, and that stuff, um... for example training,

ANGELA Training? Um, at secondary school I did five arts subjects in my final year, I did ten subjects in all, so I did specialise [for teaching] with um, pottery, printmaking, painting, 3D, and design. At that time I received a Commonwealth scholarship, um, went to RMIT, I got pass credits in all of those subjects, at secondary school, went to RMIT and completed a diploma of fine arts, majoring in pottery, but studied extensively painting and sculpture, and then in my final year changed from sculpture to print and textiles. And as I said studied design, artistry, [...] Theory of arts, yeah...

R So quite a broad range of...

A Quite a broad range, but definitely majoring in, we had three hours a week of pottery, and three hours a week for each of the others,

R Is there anyone else in the family who is an artist?

A Three of us trained as artists. With degrees in fine art. One – the oldest sister – um, specialised in print and textiles, and the next eldest also specialised in pottery, but at a different institute. And my youngest sister who is a social worker is quite involved in the patchwork industry

R oh cool! So part of growing up in your family was being involved in art?

A We were quite encouraged to be creative, um, to do things, to make things, to look at things, to see things, to... always encouraged. Parents were very involved in art as a, as a viewer, and occasionally purchased paintings, always attend gallery openings, and they were involved in that, that aspect, always interested in art.

R How would you describe your style, your current style?

A [Long pause].. I think my work is very contemporary, but it follows very strong traditional practice. Does that describe it?

R Yup,

A Do you want me to describe what I do? I could tell you that the backgrounds are gridded, to create the patterns, so that when the other images are put on top the patterns are still there, and help to perhaps make the painting move, like the long work up there [indicating a painting in her studio] and if you look at them, it tends to want to change. This is what the landscape does when you look at it, and the bush is the same, the bush is never quite the same, its always moving, its always moving and changing, and I think the patterns, the patterns do that mmm I like them. And the patterns come probably come from my weaving background, yeah

I worked as a commercial weaver, for probably about 10 years. Manufactured lengths of fabric and then designed and manufactured clothes, um, made thousands of garments over that time, had fashion parades on a regular basis at [small rural town], for um, I think about 2 years every Wednesday, as part of a tourist venture and sold I think an average of 3 to 4 garments a week, and they sold for about \$400 a piece, which, my basic bread and butter was \$400 a piece. Overcoats and things were more, they weren't cheap clothes, they had heaps of time in them. Had fashion parades at Parliament house, at the beehive and Puka Park Lodge, I had one parade, um, travelled to Rotorua for fashion parades, and Taupo, and um, often invited by local people, hmmm, so my work got around quite a lot.

R What would you... so from earlier discussion you have done a fair bit of pottery and all of that sort of stuff as well, what would you consider to be one of your, well, a major success, in your mind, as a point when you went – Yeah that's one of the coolest things that has happened?

A I think they all have been. I think the pottery, um, I returned to Australia, after I had been here for about two years I went home and had a pottery exhibition, I had twelve weeks, I had about 30 pieces in the exhibition, most of them were sets, but some of them were large pots, so there were large pieces as well. Um I sold every piece, every single piece.. and then ended up selling all the seconds and the rejects that didn't get to the exhibition as well. So I ended up with absolutely nothing at the end. Um so to me that was a major success. I think the weaving was definitely a major success, um my clothes were popular, they were stylish, they were different, um wearable and sold well. That was another pinnacle in my careers. It was very much a success in my life. Um, and my painting now. At the moment it's my painting, and I think I'm quite confidently successful in the direction I'm going. And it will only get better, with more work and more time. But also pottery, I intend to go back to doing more pottery, and will work in a much more

sophisticated way. And I think that comes with age. Its part of the [...] you work in a much more sophisticated way, I think that the work that I was doing at university is very different to the work I am doing now. And it's only through being that [...]

R In contrast to those sort of, really good things, have you ever been involved in a project that you were not happy with, creatively, or for any other reason?

A Something that I've, that I've been solely responsible for doing, no not really, I think that's one of the things that I do, that I work [...] And I'm a hard worker. And happy to organise, and... Like the fashion shows that I had, I had my first fashion parade after three months of weaving, I had 50 garments in that fashion show and not one garment was the same as the other, I hired professional models, um, for the first one I didn't have live music but everyone after that I did. Um, so that it was a success, I printed the invitations myself, um, we had a supper, and during the parade I had waitresses that I paid to offer wine, and nibbles, and there was a sweet supper where nothing was bigger than this and everything was decorated with chocolate and everything was served on silver. So that, so that, the entire show had the ambience that I wanted, I did it all myself. And I couldn't do that now, and I think that's one of the things that wisdom – your work gets better, but you actually become less prolific, because you can't. I couldn't do now, the things that I did then. I can't think of anything that I've done that I feel that [...]

R Nothing even that you have done as a part of a collaboration or

A I haven't worked with other people a lot, I was a part of a collective gallery in [another small rural town], eight people, [gallery name], that was very successful, worked very well. I gave that up when I opened my own gallery, but no, not really. I'm fairly much a loner really, Yeah. I mean I do go into things that I don't think will be particularly successful, like the exhibition at Ohaupo next week, I don't expect that will be successful. But I will take all my work, I will take all my paintings, I will set them all up, I will make a really good display, I will work when I'm not going to work. I will be there Tuesday working and I will be there on Saturday working. And if I get some work done then that will be worth it. I will do my best to show my work to the best of my ability.

R Activity 1

Which two are the most similar in contrast to the third?

A Well I think the contemporary dancer and the established visual artist are. The established visual artist with a well known style is employed to do something to advertise a product, but their work can remain the same. They're not being asked to do something in a particular style, which is the same as the contemporary dancer. The actual movements are the same, but the costume is changed to suit the audience. I see that as being quite an acceptable thing to do. But the band that is booked to play a major festival has to remove their swear words. The swear words may well be an integral part of what they are singing. So removing it may destroy the whole concept of it, but you don't know unless you know what the song is. It may actually sound better without the swear words. But I would say that this [band example] is the one that is different. Is that right? Is that the one I was supposed to choose?

R You're not *supposed* to choose any of them.

Does it change any, um, would you single a different one out in terms as the most different in terms of how acceptable or unacceptable you feel about them?

A I think they're all acceptable, because I think that's part of art, is ... You can do art I think for two reasons, you know and I think they are probably joined together. You do it for a purpose, or you do it just for the sheer hell of it. Now if you do it just for the sheer hell of it, how long can you continue doing it just for the sheer hell of it and who's going to pay for the gear? So I think an important part of being an artist is adapting what you're doing to suit the situation. This painting [for art award] is painted specifically for a space ok? Its dimensions were painted for that particular space, the topic that was chosen was painted for that particular space. The style of painting was also chosen for that space, having looked around the paintings that they have already purchased, this within my own style fits more closely than anything else. Does that answer your question?

R Yes, yes absolutely. So what I am getting from that is that because you think all these [situations] are fine, they're okay situations...

A [interrupting] Well, if the guys don't want to remove, or people don't want to remove the swear words from the band, then they won't play. That's their choice as artists. If they want to work, they'll remove... If they need the money, then they'll remove the swear words, all right?

R Next three situations.

Same first question

A Well obviously the first two. I think the one with the company, the smaller company is a different sort of situation.

R Ok, why did you single that one out?

A Because they are happy to stay where they are, and then they are obviously producing the work that they want to produce, otherwise they would move on. Whereas the other two, they have chose to give something up because their ideals are more important than their income. And if that's a concern of theirs then that's cool.

R Would it make any difference if, for example, signing with a major label would allow the singer to reach a much larger audience?

A Well it may well do, but that singer may not want to reach a wider audience, because if they did, then they wouldn't stay with that label. I mean if they're passionate about what they're doing and they want to achieve a particular goal, then, going with the bigger label gives them better results, and take them where they want to be take, then I think that's the logical way to go. But if in fact they're happy where they are, then, yeah, stay loyal to the people that are with you, but you can't stay loyal to the people that are with you, if its going to take you away from the direction that you are wanting to go in.

R Ok, are there any situations in there that you wouldn't feel comfortable putting yourself into that situation? Obviously if you were one of these individuals?

A No, I don't think so, because I think this [the singer] relates quite closely to my experiences with [collective gallery], where I was a co-operative member, and I opened up my own gallery in the next door town, because by opening up my own gallery, it meant that I could have my own studio. I could work in the studio, I couldn't do that at [the collective gallery]. When I went out there all I could do was sew on buttons and do hand work and small stuff. I needed to be in a situation where I could work in front of the public, because that was important as part of the whole image of the place. It also gave me the opportunity to sell a lot more of my own work, and meant that I was my own boss, so for me to achieve the goals I wanted to achieve at that time, it meant going away from this group, which upset the people there as it took out one of their major players. And the others, um, the film-maker deciding to abandon a film half finished rather than make changes, um, could almost relate to me and the [local arts society]. I may just say, nah, fuck the lot of you. Does that relate to that?

The website designer who refuses to take on a client who's business she disagrees with, despite being offered a considerably higher... If I didn't think I could do what that client wanted me to do, I wouldn't offer to do it. Because, I'm quite happy, I don't have any objections to designing a business card and somebody saying 'I want it purple', okay? I'm quite happy to do that, but I can do that in a manipulation by doing my own thing as well, you know, yes it's purple, I can make it more purple or less purple by putting it through Photoshop, but they're still all acceptable to me, because I've really made the decisions, yeah. I'm more than happy to work to someone else's requirements. It's something that is part of being an artist. It doesn't mean all my work is like that, but if you need some money, you know, you go out and earn it.

R What do you, how do you feel about the current environment in New Zealand for visual artist, painters?

A I think you have to remember that I haven't had a lot of experience with the viewing of art. I don't go to galleries very often. I should, I don't. You know it's a time restraint, a cost restraint, you know, whatever. I don't like a lot of what I see, as I've explained to you before. I think New Zealand art is going to get to the stage where it falls apart, possibly. Um... And I think there will be a turn back eventually to good solid traditions. I think people have forgotten what skill and craftsmanship are all about, and I think that skill and craftsmanship are a major part of any art form, it doesn't matter what it is. And its all well and good seeing a straight line on a, a red line on a black canvas but saying 'oh well I could do that', but the reality is that most people can't, and you can do it, but we can do it well, and well with understanding is the difference. And I think there is too much art work out there that doesn't show skill and understanding. Now I was reading a book the other day, put out on New Zealand artists, and it was very interesting. Reading through it provided me with 20 or 30 artists through the book, and gave me a brief history of the people, and flicking through the book, looking at paintings, I can tell you whether these people have formal training or not, and I was almost 100% spot on. And there is a lot of artwork out there that is flat pretty pictures, which is a fashion at the moment, but it won't hold up, I don't think in the future, people will realise that its shallow and its worthless.

R Do you think, in terms of going sort of to a higher level, in terms of the support from the govt and public and that sort of thing, what sort of influence does that have, or do you not even think about it, or...

A I haven't really thought about it a lot. I do get pleasure hearing that Helen Clark is interested in art and so forth, but I haven't had a lot of involvement. I did have a QEII arts council grant of \$10000, and may well apply for something like that again in the future. Um, I think that it's vital that the arts are supported. I think councils could support it more. I think Government's making a, from what little I know, I think Governments is certainly voicing opinions on art, I think councils need to do more too, local body wise. I don't think Hamilton City Council is even supporting the arts, and I think that is vital. And I'm hoping that it is just a phase in New Zealand. I mean, sport is the all and be all, um, and I think it needs to turn around. Watching half an hour of sport on the news each night I think is ludicrous. I think we should have 15 minutes of sport and 15 minutes of 'the arts', which would make for much more interesting viewing and I think the public would accept it willingly, but it's the media that isn't willing to change it because probably the sports produce more money.

R Bigger sponsors and that sort of thing... Nightline, which ranges in content really

A But could you just imagine the news at night, 15 minutes of that half an hour being on galleries and paintings and the people and... And if people were confronted with this every night I think it would make a huge difference

R Do you think it is possible for that to happen?

A Oh absolutely, with enough public demand, and if the sponsors are prepared to sponsor art like they sponsor sports, really.

R We were talking earlier [before interview started] about how easy it is to get into WINTEC and do arts programmes. Do you think that having easy access to education is positive or negative in terms of visual arts?

A I think having easy access to education is incredibly positive, but, giving people false hope is very negative. Giving someone a degree in fine art when they have little skill I think is very, very negative thing to do to a person because you are giving them three years of hope when at they come out at the end they come out and they've got nothing. And they're unemployed. Mmmm, and I think that's sad. Um, give them three years, but do it at a level with a qualification at the end that is appropriate. And I don't think that a degree is appropriate. I have a young lad I'm teaching at the moment at the jail. He's in his second year in a Maori college somewhere down in New Plymouth or somewhere, at a polytech, and he is doing a 3 year degree in fine arts. I don't think the guy can read or write. And his drawing ability is so limited that he paints every kind of line with the brush with two hairs in it. And his degree is in Maori art, but Graham Sydney is his idol, and he told me that he was into surreal painting. When I mentioned the work 'Dali' and said 'I have a wonderful book on Dali you might want to look at' he had no idea who Dali was, and its not surreal its real that he is into. But he is a second year degree student and he didn't know the difference. That kid is going to come out with a degree – he's not going to come out with degree because he is in a jail and such – but he will probably end up with a degree in fine arts that will be of absolutely no use to him and his mother will have paid a fortune getting it for him. And I think that's criminal. And the reason it is happening is because the polytechs are no longer there really for education, they're there for the money. They're just big money machines.

R Taking that into account do you think, what sort of level of prestige do you feel identifying as an artist? Is it something that you get a positive reaction back from or is it seen as 'flaky artists' or what sort of impression do you think the rest of the community has of

A Me

R of you specifically and of artists more generally?

A Well it's very difficult because I think a lot of the impressions are being destroyed by having so much art being publicly displayed that is actually poorly executed. And I think that is destroying the view that people have. Being on duty at the summer art awards and listening to the comments... You know when people walk around the gallery and say at the contemporary art awards – I'm not talking about the contemporary art award I'm talking about the summer painting and print-making - that has a \$15000 prize and they walk around the wall and say you know 'why are these nappies called paintings?' 'This is shit' 'This is crap' and they walk around with their hands in their pockets and spend two seconds looking at the works and they walk out again, I think that's giving art a really bad name, because those people will stop going. I don't take students as a teacher, because the work is not of a high enough quality for me to use a teaching tool. So I work with galleries and I don't go to galleries, because all the stuff I see is crap and that depresses me.

R With that in context, what do you think is the most positive thing about being an artist in New Zealand at the moment?

End of part one – change side of tape.

A I think the most positive aspect about being a visual artist is that I have the opportunity to be it. And I have reached a stage in my life where I can work for two days in a week to earn an income, and I can paint. And if I don't sell a painting, then it doesn't really matter a hoot, because I've got something else to support it, and having that opportunity to do that is awesome. Gives me the freedom to be me, without being dictated to by other people, telling me what I should or shouldn't do. Is that an answer or do you want more? [break assuring me she would give more detailed answers if I asked for them.]

R Are there any negative aspects do you think? For you?

A Oh, always negative aspects, yeah. Being told your painting has won, then not winning. [Laughs]. And knowing that something of inferior quality has beaten you. And knowing that the judgement has been made for the wrong reasons. Yeah, it's all very negative. Um,

R Do you see that as a personal thing, or is it distant from you?

A No it's not a personal thing at all. I mean, it could have been anyone. This painting could have been done by anyone and it wouldn't have mattered. I think this is not the only painting that was a good painting there, I think there were others that were good in that exhibition as well, and I wouldn't have been at all upset if they had won, because they would have been judged for the right reasons. But I think the disappointment comes through people who think they know everything but actually don't know anything, and they're there for the wrong reasons. [Long pause] Finding a place to sell your work. And I'm finding that quite difficult. I often go into the places thinking, ooh this is a place where I could sell, you know, my little nude paintings, my little landscapes or something, because they really are, they're done as bread and butter. This [large work] is done from sheer passion and what have you, and there is a difference and I think you want to work like that if you want to market at all. Um, there is not even a lot of places I would sell that [small paintings] sort of work, because it's of a different league. And yeah, I might be a bit up myself for saying that but I think it is. And I go into a shop and I look at it and think 'oh ok, my work just wouldn't fit', so you walk out again. I've often looked at [Hamilton dealer gallery, and I've never actually gone in there, because every time I've gone to [the street] it's been locked for one reason or another. But I've looked in there five or six times and thought, you know, I actually don't think my paintings would fit in there, with the sort of paintings that are in there.

R Is that just a Hamilton thing, like are there places that you know of...

A Well I haven't really explored galleries elsewhere, and week after next I'm going to go spend a week with [daughter] and I'll go to all the galleries in Auckland and I will be looking at the galleries with the thought of finding a gallery that I think my work would fit into, and then I will organise a portfolio specifically for that gallery, and I might find a gallery that I think that my bush imagery would fit into, and it may be a different gallery to what I think my landscapes will fit into, and I would be more than happy to deal with three, four, five different galleries, with a different type of work in each.

R Intro to artistic integrity section

A Can you define integrity for me, just before so I don't get muddled?

R That's actually my first question for you; we'll talk about it in terms of what you think it is. One of the things that I am looking at is how individuals think about integrity, artistic integrity, and so what I am hoping you can give me, is an understanding of what you think the term artistic integrity means.

A Ok. I think artistic integrity means um, my own artistic integrity is me producing work to the best of my ability. So my artistic integrity reflects strong work that um, has a traditional basis to it and I think a balance of tone and shape and form and colour and I use all those basic principles in my work, and I execute my work and craftsmanship right down to the frames I put my work on. My frames are of top quality, I stretch my own canvasses, I gesso my canvasses four times before I start painting, and to me that's all part of the craftsmanship that to me is important. I feel that that is my integrity. Is that what you wanted?

R Yeah

A Somebody else, who doesn't have the background and experience that I have, may like as an example there is a secretary at work who buys cheap canvasses from the warehouse, she paints a colour on the background, she sticks a koru of paua shell on top, and she sells them at the local market. She would sell those with integrity. Because to her they are what they are. They take her five minutes to do, she gets \$30 a piece for them, and people buy them because people who don't know any better think that they're art. [pause] So I think integrity is very much a personal thing. I

wouldn't put anything out there that I think is crap. You know if I think a painting is shit then I won't put it out there. But if I do, but if I was to put it out there to sell, I would make it sell, and it would obviously be classed in a different class to the other work. I think being honest to yourself, yeah.

R In terms of sales, does the, I mean we have talked about the exhibition at the hall, and so on, to you is it the work itself that is the expression of your own integrity, does how you sell it or who you sell it to, or the price on it, does that come into whether you feel that you are being true to yourself in terms your artistic integrity.

A When I go to the Ohaupo hall, I will the keep the price on my paintings the same as when I have painted them, but I have also produced greeting cards that I will sell. I don't expect to sell this [big painting], but I will take it, because it makes a good display, gives them something to look at. You can't have an art exhibition with no art in it. Um, it's like running a fashion parade; you have to have overcoats and suits, but you know that you are only going to sell skirts and cardigans, okay? So the nudes were produced for the hall, because they will only be \$65, \$68, um, the little nikau's, and I would like to do another 6 or 8 of them to take, they will also be in a price that people can buy, the little picture of Kakapuka up there, and you know is something that people might buy who needs it, but not necessarily buying it as a work of art. But they will enjoy looking at a work of art, and they are more likely to buy those [small works] if they've got this [big works] to look at. So that becomes a marketing strategy, and I learned that when I was doing weaving, that you can't sell this [small works], unless you've got this [big works]. So if you have this [big], you know you are going to sell this [small]. So you make one of these and 50 of these. With the exhibition I have at Ohaupo, at um Waiwera last year, which was just out on the lawn, I had all my big paintings, and people just loved them, and I sold hundreds of the little square paintings. I think I sold about 12 big ones as well. Well, medium size, I didn't sell any of the big ones. But the show wouldn't have happened if I didn't have the big works, and it's the big works that people remember. And so the idea of going to Ohaupo, more than anything, is just to get people to see my work. I'm actually very concerned at the moment that I'm not producing enough work, because I think what I'm doing with the gridded backgrounds is really quite exciting, and I think it has lots of potential, and I think I can do lots with it. I'm actually quite concerned that somebody is going to pick it up and run with it. I need to make sure that enough people have seen my work that they know that that's mine. And that at the moment is really my biggest fear. When I was weaving people would say to me 'aren't you scared that someone will copy your cardigans, and my jackets? And I said no, because I knew that there was nobody in New Zealand that had my energy, that could produce the quantity that I produced, and by the time they were copying mine I had already making something else. The same thing happens with this a little bit. My patterns will change, my ideas will change, but it will only take one person who has already got somebody who is putting a book together, to do one painting with a gridded background and I've lost it. It's then theirs, it's not mine. And that to me is probably the scariest thing. I have considered putting a full page advertisement in Art New Zealand, and perhaps one in Art News, just advertising my studio, you know particularly me, but just to have an image that has been published, and I think that will have to happen fairly soon.

R What ways do you think artists can show that have integrity? You've talked about how you put, a lot about the quality of the work, and that sort of thing,

A Well I show my integrity by being consistent, by always producing work that is of a high standard. To my standards, what I think is a high standard and what somebody thinks is a high standard is completely different. But you see, the little square canvasses, well I know people who paint big paintings on Warehouse canvasses, well I wouldn't do that, because I want my work to last forever. I don't want it to fall to pieces, because I really value my work. There is part of me in every little painting I do, and a very passionate part of me. I take it very seriously, its not just painting a picture. It's something that grows inside you. And like, this painting here, it took me [pause] to do the gridding and painting on top, it probably took four days. But there was probably four weeks of work in here [taps head], and photographs, and research, to get me to that painting. And, not only the research of making sure that I had the actual format of the mountains correct from the centre of Hamilton, which is very difficult to do, because nowhere in Hamilton can you see a circumference, so you know it was done by driving to the ends of roads and standing on top hills and knocking on peoples doors and saying 'can I take a photo from your lounge-room window', going to the tower at the airport and taking a circumference, and then putting it in relation to Hamilton because the airport is not in Hmailton. So that was one side of it. The other side of it was 'how am I going to make this work, how can I make this feel like the Waikato'? So I didn't only want it to look like the Waikato, I wanted it to feel like the Waikato. So, it took a

huge amount of headspace in that, and I think that's all part of the integrity, its knowing that you've done the job to the best of your ability. You know I was really excited when I painted that painting. It was just what I wanted. It worked. There's just something about it that worked. The idea that I had in my head came across, the feeling of the Waikato, the landscape moves, the yeah, really pleased with it, and to me it's done with absolute integrity.

R You commented earlier that the women with the paua shell koru's, you would see that as another person working with their own sense of integrity.

A Absolutely

R Ok, so do you think it is possible to lose that sense of integrity?

A To lose it? Oh probably. If most people told you your work was crap. I don't know, I don't know. Well yeah, well if I think in terms of myself, why would I stop being a craftswoman and start producing shit? Um, if the good quality work never sold, if people didn't value it and appreciate it, um, if I felt that the mighty dollar was more important than my own heart and soul. I might produce work that I know is inferior, and put a big price on it. Perhaps to get a name for myself, to become a known New Zealand artist and then just produce work to get money, because I can then ask \$18000 a painting, um,

R Do most of the way that you think that people could lose their integrity relate to a monetary or financial sort of thing, or do you think there are other influences on this?

A I don't know, I guess there will be other influences. There may be a marriage break-up so they're depressed and can't be bothered any more. Um, yeah, I think,... It's all such a holistic thing really isn't it, its where you are at at that time, and um, time and space and the support and the, how you sell your work, and I think there will probably be lots of reasons why you would lose your integrity. I think money would be a big part of it, the need for it.

R You said earlier that you see integrity as being very personal construct, um, do you think it's possible for someone to look in and say 'oh that person has lost it'?

A I think if they, yes, I think if they see a downturn in the work, but if they actually don't know you, I think it is very difficult. I mean, the kids who come out of polytech, that have a degree, um, they may well be producing work with absolute integrity, but their work may be total shit, but if they go for and don't sell anything for ten years, they might lose their integrity. But then is it their integrity they are losing, or is it just their self-esteem they're losing? So is integrity and self-esteem the same?

[Looking in dictionary???

Whats your definition of integrity?

R Um, I, I mean that's something that I am still trying to figure out. [short discussion this, - 775 on counter]

A Is it related to 'integrate'? [yes] 'Whole or complete', so it has to be a wholly personal thing, I mean you can't write list and say, to have integrity in painting you must have this, this, this, and this.

R What do you think are the pressures on artists to keep their integrity? DO you think there is anything that you see as really specific?

A No I don't think there is any pressure on artists to keep their integrity, and I think that's why people produce shit. I think some people who produce shit deliberately, have no integrity. Other people produce shit through sheer ignorance.

R In terms of the opposite, what do you think are the pressures on artists to give up?

A I think money.

R Ok, anything else? Would that be the primary?

A I would think so, yeah, the need for money.

R If there were a different way for artists to live without depending solely on sale of work, do you think that would

A They wouldn't give up their integrity. You see, I could go into, you know thinking of the little gallery we had lunch at the other day, the [name of café] or something on the way to Cambridge, and somebody had said to me, 'oh there's a good little gallery there, you should take some of you work in there', so [husband] and I we needed some lunch so we pulled in. We had a look at the place to see if I could put my work in there and my work just wouldn't work in there. You know looking at the work in there, I mean, I could produce some of the work in there, ten times faster than the person that did it, just because I am a prolific worker, and I'm confident in the marks that I make in my painting. But I couldn't work like that and produce that kind of shit. It was décor art but it was bad décor art. I mean it was not even good décor art. So if I was into seriously desperately wanting to make some money, that's probably what I would do. I'd outdo the media arts students, the arts students at Wintec,

R You are lucky because you have the luxury of having a teaching background and so you can use that to allow you to paint the work that you want because you have another source of income, and you can support yourself, and you have a partner which also helps, so do you think the losing of integrity or whatever else you want to call it, comes from...

A It could come from the inability to earn an income. I can't see any other reason why you would lose it. If you were passionate about what you are doing, if you really are an artist, and I think that's probably debateable too, 'what is an artist?' but in my view, I think of myself for the first time in my life as an artist. Even when I was full time fashion designer and weaver, um, when I was a full time potter, I never really thought of myself as an artist, I've never really had that sort of self confidence. And I think its either with age, and being lucky enough and gutsy enough to change my career several times, that it's actually given me the confidence to be confident in who I am. I actually, I think I know who I am now, for the first time in my life and I'm 50, you know, and it's actually really nice. I actually feel comfortable with me, I'm not scared any more when somebody criticises me or, I'm beginning to think for the first time in my life that what I do is actually good, and does have a worth, you know. And before I looked at my work and I didn't know, and I look back on my history now and I think, of course it's got a worth, you know, its there, and I look back at my CV and yeah,

R Is there anything else that you can sort of think of around these issues that you want to comment on?

A I think the people who do the selecting for the competitions don't have integrity, because they're prepared to accept something that might be fashionable in the publics eyes, but doesn't reflect what they've advertised it should reflect, um, but really right now my greatest concern is local art,

R Is that a sort of populist thing, do you think?

A I think what they're doing, is turning away artists who have integrity, ok, because the people who pick, a lot of the people who put work into the contemporary art awards, put it in as a joke, they don't put it in with integrity. Ok? They put it in because they know it's going to be accepted because they know that the people who are doing the selecting aren't selecting work on the basis that it's well executed, or contains craftsmanship, it being accepted because somebody might say 'oh fuck, that's awful' and to them, if it gets a response, then its contemporary art. It's not my opinion of contemporary art. Contemporary art you can still have people saying 'oh fuck that's horrible' but the work is done with integrity. Most of the work in the contemporary art award is not done with integrity, accept my piece [laughs] and it probably won't be accepted. So if the quality stuff won't get accepted, if I really really wanted to put something in, then I could produce a piece of shit. And I think the judges should choose work that is in fact produced with integrity. For a \$10000 art award, shouldn't it?

R Wrap up.

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Interview two

Conducted at artist's home

13.06.06

Coded to preserve artist's anonymity

RESEARCHER What I'd like to start with is to get you to tell me a little bit about yourself and your own dance practice and how you think about what you do.

MARK Um, How I'm currently thinking about it – I do do different things, but the overall practice – I call it 'associative kinetics'. Um, 'kinetics' because that covers the range of motion, and 'associative' to really make clear the hybridised nature of all of this that is commonly known as 'contemporary dance'. But it is kind of weird because I need it to be an accurate generalisation. And um, 'contemporary dance' is not accurate enough, because it implies that it is purely dance, and with contemporary it probably talks about other things. So associative kinetics is what I've gone back, that's what it is that I do. So that's basically me. Dance is the key modality I guess...

R Q about training, family involvement

M My family, um, are all, just about all of them actually what I would call ability, but none them other than me use it.

R Is that specifically in dance or in..

M Oh, in different areas, like my brother is um, makes extraordinary matchstick sculptures, and has gotten into photography and stained glass, and my other sister has painted and my other sister she has got this amazing voice that she could have used to become a singer, but none of them have really pursued it, other than myself

R And training, you've had some training

M Yeah, formal training. I did two years at Unitech, then, um, doing the dance course there, and then I went down to the New Zealand School of Dance, and did two years there, so I graduated from these two schools, so it was like four years of full time training back to back from two different institutions. Then, I've always done lots and lots of workshops, and so on

R Project that he is really proud of?

M I guess 'proud' is the first thing that I would trip over with that. Um, I think that where I've gotten to, is that I feel like everything that is made, it's important that it's made. So there's value, there's certain kinds of value and certain ... so that I've really got to be alright about it or I wouldn't do a thing. However there are significant favourites, and that would be, well there are a few favourites, mostly recent and one would be when I got to work with a friend and colleague of mine over in Brussels, [friends name] we did a piece together, called [name of piece one], which I'm very very happy with how that piece was actually. And there's a piece that I basically produced and directed a couple of years back called [name of piece two]. Which was a three week season ... And that was you know, hard going, but you know it was great being able to do it. And also performing with and hanging out with a group of improvisers over in Holland, yeah, they're all the high points, I guess those are three sort of immediate favourites.

M Did you ever have the opposite experience? I mean, you learn from everything you do, but is there anything that you think of that you think perhaps I could have learned that a different way that wouldn't have been quite so difficult?

K Maybe it could have been a more elegant learning process? It's hard to know, it's hard to know that because in theory yes, with speculation and hindsight yeah, absolutely. But at the same time I'm not quite so sure it could or would have worked out that way. I guess um, you know, if I was to reflect on it I might go ok, well I wish I'd gotten into this a bit sooner, or I wish I'd worked it out a bit sooner. But in a way it doesn't really matter either. I suppose it would have been good if I'd somehow managed to nail this, what it is that I'm into, and focus on that, earlier, as opposed to spending lots of years basically being unhappy, with what it was that I was doing and what it was that everyone else was doing as well. So um, that would have been good, that would have been better if that hadn't happened, coz I would have had more years of happiness.

R blah blah, what were you doing before getting involved in dance? Was it in the creative sphere at all?

M No, no not at all. A brief CV prior to dance would go something like this. I worked as a guillotine operator in a placemat making firm, I went from there to working for [company name] as a cardboard and paper layer. I went from there to an optical firm as a lens grinder and maker of prescription lenses. Um, we went on strike, so I left the strike and went to work at Farmers, as a retail salesperson, so anything from men's nightwear, to footwear to men's fashion and yeah, it was on [street name], and I was there for a while. And then I went from there to working as a

warehouse person, supervisor type person, for a tap making firm, [company name] tap makers, in Avondale, and from there I went to dance school.

R So it is obvious that you weren't happy with anything that you had done previously because you couldn't stay.

M Oh no, they were terrible, awful jobs, but um, oh nah they really weren't awful jobs, I can't say that, but I was just living a mediocre life. And, um, I got sick of it. Mmm

R Fair enough. Ok, exercise. First 3 situations, first question

M Oh, well, I'd go with the established visual artist, and the band booked to play a festival.

R Ok, Why would you link those two together?

M Oh, because um, they both involve, um, corporate relationships.

R Ok,

M I'm sure the other situation possibly does as well, but it's less obvious than the others situation. So, yeah, you're looking at a major festival, so, that's pretty much a lot of corporate money. The whole brand managing, that's for sure, that's corporate.

R Which two are most similar in terms of how comfortable you feel about the situation?

M How comfortable or uncomfortable?

R How comfortable or uncomfortable.

M Oh, well, um, I guess the same level of discomfort looking at the two first one, the third one [contemporary dancer] is neither here nor there really.

R Why do you think that those situations make you feel uncomfortable?

M um, because of the function of art versus the purpose of a corporation in my mind. Ok, so for me, I have this idea that art is a function of community. Um, community, communication, all of those things, so part of a function of that, an expression of that, so as, in some ways, as fundamental to a culture as the language. And is a healthy function of that culture. Now, a corporation is designed primarily, *primarily* for profit. Actually the way they function is for a profit. So anything that it comes into relationship with, it is going to look at how it can utilise it for that end. Um, and I'm not anti-commercialisation, but things are so out of balance right now, that basically I have a sense of mistrust, I immediately have a sense of mistrust around that, not because I don't, I think that artists should make money, you know they should make money they should be able to live well from the work that they do, um but we getting into an area where things are out of balance, then what is also happening is that the artists work is seen as a product, a mechanism to shift the corporate product. Um, so any changes that might occur, or any money, or any of the conditions of those interactions are largely governed by that corporate relationship, and that's where I get uncomfortable, because, um, I kind of feel like the artist is generally not always but generally in quite a different place, um, like you know, the artists in this country, my sort of contemporaries in some ways, um, they need the money, simple, they do need the money. Um, but for them to have someone tell them how to do what they do, or else, ... It's a two way thing, and I sort of feel like the corporation has more power essentially, they're the ones who determine how the artist lives, in that situation.

R In terms of what you've just said, you've said that these situations are not particularly comfortable with. Is there any time where you would put yourself in the position of one of the first, like if you were creating a work as part of an advertisement, or um, adjusting a work that you had created to meet outside criteria. Would you ever put yourself in that situation?

M I've been there with the dancing. For sure, especially the equivalent of the whole changing lyrics, like the way that you want to do something, um, if the choreographer wanted something else. I've also had friends in situations who've been involved in a group where they've been told to dress a certain way after the show to meet the rich people or the sponsors. That kind of thing. I've never been in that situation, I hope I'll never get into that situation, I really do. I hate dealing with that sort of thing, it's just vile.

R Same thing, three different situations.

[short discussion between R and M about the different colour of different situations]

M Oh, um, I think it would be the website designer and the film-maker are most similar. Um coz they, it seems to me that the first two are...[long pause]... Well actually I find them all similar

R okay

M I feel like in each, in each instance the um, the 'artist' is it, like the musician, um **[coffee is delivered by flatmate – brief break for saying thankyou and stuff]** that they could actually get material profit from it, but they seem to be, the scenario's, um, having, basing the decision and taking action on that decision based on their values. And not, not profit motivated. Um, so that's why they're all similar, because they all stand to profit, - Do I have to choose two out?

R um, it would be nice if you could, I mean I can go from your initial, I mean, they are all fairly similar situations, but if there are two that are more similar... laughs

M I guess the film-maker and the up-coming singer, if I had to single two out, because there is no disagreement with the um, with the um, values of the other company, so it's just their choice to stay loyal to their vision or their um, social context. I mean if you take the website designer, it's quite stark. She might actually agree, or he might agree with, she might agree with the project itself, but is going, 'well, that company, they do bad things, so, there is no way that I'm going to work with them. So that seems slightly more, slightly different.

R Ok, so are you fairly comfortable with all three of those situations?

M Yeah, from these situations, I find that I'm more comfortable with them than I am with the other ones. For some reason it meets my ideals more, as well, um, yeah, which is kind of a dangerous word really, they seem to be more like, they want to be in the world, because there is a sense that they could stand to make a profit if that was their key motivation, but....

I don't get the sense, what my imagination was doing was building a scenario where these artists are not kind of going, 'I'm anti-commercialism full-stop', they're just going, 'I'm anti *this* relationship because I feel like its bad or it effects my values, or integrity. So um, so I'm on much the same page with that,

R Would you be happy doing the equivalent as a dancer? For example, not finishing a work because of somebody else telling you what to do, not taking on a commission or whatever for your work

M yeah, I think it would totally work that way with me, um, partially out of values, and also partially out of a sense of an inability to fulfil. So say for example, um, the way that I work to make dance is um, a little bit unusual or a little bit uncommon because it's what I call real time composition and those decisions occur in the moment. If somebody with money offered me, commissioned a 20 minute work, but it has to be set, I would sort of go 'no, I don't think I'll do that'. I could, but I end up feeling dissatisfied usually, I know that, and as a dancer, if I do somebody's set work, I will usually feel dissatisfied, then there will be reasons that motivated me to do that, that won't just be financial. It could be respect for that person, to keep up with practice of being open to other peoples ways of working as well, but um, I mean everyone has their price, I mean I'm human. If somebody offered me a lot of money, to, 'here you go, here's a huge budget, and here's a big fat stinking fee for you' to go and make a set piece of choreography, I'd go oh, I'd do it, but yeah, but that's not a common situation.

R Do you think that that situation where you choose not to do something because it, you know that you don't work that way, do you think its also because you don't, you wouldn't be happy with the results? Um, like not just in terms of your own, but in terms of what the audience will get from it and that sort of thing? If you made a set work as opposed to a...

M Yeah, um, yeah, basically, it's a case of doing something that's of a lower resolution than I'm capable of. So I mean, even recently I did a um I was improvising, but I call it 'improreography' um, which means there was a time score involved, and certain things had to happen at certain times, and certain types or qualities of movement would occur. And this was a vision that was led by a friend and colleague of mine, and I went through it and I did it, and I also felt that there are going to be people in the audience who have not seen me dance before, and they're going to look at this and they're going to think of this as my work, but its of a lower, a much more limited.. Its not it. So yeah, I did take on that for sure.

R Just to take a bit of a step away from this stuff, can you tell me a little bit about how you feel about the current environment in New Zealand for contemporary dance.

As broadly or specifically as you wish to read that.

M Um, it'll be – It's purely subjective? [yup] um, I came back from Europe with a different sense of things, as one would, um because I felt what I encountered over there had kind of um, smashed open my little colonial box, um, my little cynical box about what was happening here. I came back to Wellington, and felt, and in some ways I was dead right, and felt that um, there was um, huge economic forces impacting on peoples everyday lives, that has absolutely effected the way that art was being made, and um, I seeing that there the microcosm of Wellington, because it's such a small town, I was seeing a council highly sympathetic to property developers, I was seeing space, physical space, um, shoot up in monetary value making it inaccessible for dance, on of the primary resources for dance, um, I was seeing the council then influence policies to basically regulate and have a hand in doing things for the arts that were inappropriate, and ineffectual, and I got highly frustrated, and thought, what happened to Wellington, you know? And I had this moment, when I looked, I was walking through the car park at New World, and I saw Luke Buda who's in the Phoenix Foundation. Luke and I don't even know each other that

well. There he was, with his trolley, and I think he's got a kid, there was a kid in the trolley anyway, walking up past these posters of these specials and I was looking and he was really waving at me. And I waved back, and I walked away from the car park and I had this thought, that there is so few of us left now. And I realised that what had happened is that Wellington literally has changed. There were warehouses full of um, creative types getting on with the job of creating, they weren't just living this cool kind of bohemian lifestyle. And I lived in a couple of them, and this is the space that was bought up and converted into an apartments. I lived in this place called the Factory and it had 22 people living there and it was two storeys, and mostly busy creative types, people into photography and visual art and putting on.. and really really active proactive people, and that dissipated, and that was a huge resource lost, and those warehouses all over Wellington have disappeared – there are a few left, but not that many, and all of this kind of music boom that produced Fat Freddy's Drop, Trinity Roots, that kind of thing, it's like, hardly any of those people are even living in Wellington any more. They're all gone. Um, and a lot of the theatre people, the dance people, the people I was around when I first went to New Zealand School of Dance, and there was this huge thriving freelancing dancers, they ebbed and flowed – well mostly ebbed, they flowed out of Wellington, and most of the practitioners had left, and I thought, oh, gee, you know, and I had this inkling to come back to Auckland which is where I'm from and I've come up here, and I wrote something that I've put on my website about how, basically how shit I thought Auckland was, and when I came back from Europe, and then I came up to Auckland and thought 'Oh my god, everything's happening'. Everywhere I was going there were dancer's rehearsing. There were shows every weekend, with people putting on stuff. There were tons of dancers out there busily doing things, there was **Luxemburg Gardens** that has come up out of nowhere as a kind of venue, and I've been making a living teaching at Unitech. And um, and I've just gone 'wow', and I feel that Auckland actually has in into another culture here, since I was last here, last living here. And there is more experimental, hardly mainstream stuff, that is being acknowledged as, like Metro magazine, or the Listener, or one of the mainstream magazines writing about the um, the experimental scratchy type music that is going on and saying 'hey there's a scene' and um, people going to dance performances, I mean, walking up to stuff that I wouldn't necessarily like, or hear about stuff that I wouldn't necessarily like, but these shows are selling out. Dance shows selling out! Part of that has been the popular television, *So You Think You Can Dance* and that other one [*Dancing with the Stars*]. Yeah *Dancing with the Stars*. They've actually made it okay, a. for males to be seen dancing, and b. to um, for there to actually be a public definition of contemporary dance, you know by having Michael Parminter on as one of the judges, and having a contemporary dancer um actually win that competition. And people actually having some idea about what it is. And I think partially, its been instrumental, and positive for.. and it's definitely happening in Auckland.

R Its really bizarre, when *So you think you can dance* started, I thought, 'oh yeah, whatever, they won't know anything about anything', and really really suspicious just because of my experiences trying to explain what my sister does for a living, and then I found out that Michael Parminter was going to be on it and it just gave it so much credibility, and he was the judge to give it credibility, to the show, and I was really impressed with the fact that they took that sort of risk in a sense.

M I think it's fantastic that they actually did that because I think I wrote quite a lot of, and I wrote something about this but didn't publish it, and I think that its really hard to reference or to talk about contemporary dance *socially* because a lot of people don't even know what it might be, and then you get Michael on TV, and as naff as that seems, its actually been hugely useful as a part of an acknowledgement itself. It's like *The Flight of the Concorde* who are extraordinary comedians and they're barely known here, because they haven't been on TV...

R except for 30 seconds or two minutes on the comedy gala or something.

M Yeah those guys are brilliant,..... I mean if they'd had exposure they'd be national icons. So there is power there in the media, for sure. I think that the dance that is happening in New Zealand is um, related very much to the youth of the culture here, the relative, more relative youth of the arts, and the even younger arts audience. Um, so in a way, there is this cliché of naïveté that I think can also be almost measured by our relative isolation and this means that we have things happening that a lot of Europeans would consider either unfashionable or naïve, but actually terms of reference have so little...

END OF TAPE

So what I'm seeing here, particularly in Auckland, is diversity, that I was getting so switched on to in Europe, what was great over there was that I was hanging out with people, and meeting with people and seeing people who were just basically doing what interested them. Um, and I felt for a long time in New Zealand that there was, I know for myself, maybe I shouldn't project this over

my colleagues, was that a lot of us tried to be anti or towards the three most important choreographers. And they basically set the benchmark, you either liked that or you weren't. Um, now I feel like when I've come back to Auckland I'm seeing this quite rich and diverse set of practices, that, ah, people are going 'oh, actually I like this and I'm going to work on that', and they're not being anti this or anti anything, they're just going 'oh I like this'. And there is a bit more ownership of contemporary dance. I think that's the only way that you can understand is at an individual level; you can only define it in terms what you're interested in. It's like a visual artist saying 'well I'm actually a visual artist and I am currently interested in working with black crayons and lines'. And you know, and they will talk about it in those very very simple terms. And for me as a contemporary dancer, I'm interested in real-time composition, what is sometimes called improvisation, that's how I work. And I can go, that's it. I can talk to you, I can talk to the guy across the road or at the pub, and say well that's it. And not worry about going 'oh well, contemporary dance is so hard to define'. That's just a trap. And I think as individuals you need to take ownership of that, and overall I think that's a positive thing.

R You talked a little about local government involvement or interference or whatever you want to call it in Wellington. There is a lot of stuff in the media about the support of the central government towards the arts or the creative industries or whatever word you want to use to call whatever it is that everybody does. What's your view on what is being put out there?

M Um, in that sort of subject area? [in terms of what the central government is doing] I think that what they're doing is what the Labour Government has always done. The Labour government has an agenda around the arts, um that can either be seen as interference or seen as... They have set structures and put money into structures. Um, the \$70 something million or \$80 something million injection into the arts went, almost all of it went into infrastructure. Over that same time period, there was actually well over \$100 million, I can't think of the actual figure, that came into the arts to individuals from private sources. So in some ways the Labour government has an active interest in the arts and that is actually being considered part of the cultural identity, the national identity and they're very interested in that. National basically has a 'hands off' policy, where they don't really give a shit. Te Papa happened under them, and there's occasional things that have cropped up, and there are certain structures that are always going to be in place, like the QEII Arts Council, Creative New Zealand, those sorts of things existed, but they're never really pushed. So Labour comes along and goes bang, and throws all this money at stuff, and some of it ends up at CNZ and some of it national heritage thing, some at the library thing, um, and then you see things like industry building. But industry building out of areas that there already was industry, like music and film. And it's easy to build an industry there, or easier, because um, they have distributable units. Live performance is much harder to do – it's still doable - but we haven't cottoned on to the kind of economic structures that will actually boost that. For example, agents. In Brussels there is a colleague of mine where she who makes work, and she has an agent, who then goes around selling her work to theatres. We don't have that kind of thing here. There's currently um, just a little iddy-biddy smattering of producers here for dance, which we desperately need. Those kinds of things have yet to sort of pop out of the woodwork. I really think at the moment that, there's a law of economics and I wish I knew what it was called, but basically it adds up to that saying 'if you make it they will come'. Right now I think that dance could become a lot more prolific, and more people would come to it, um, if we had that stuff, I really believe that. So in regards to what the government is doing in the arts, its, um, its simply not well handled. Having said that, um, there's no way that I blame any kind of situation on what the government has done, or has not done. Its just um, how things go. I feel like with the whole corporate culture, it's massive and it's power bearing down on the government to do what they want. And certainly something has got to suffer, and the arts is feeling that pressure a lot, because the arts have so much less power, so of course they arts suffer. So yeah, ...

R What sort of level of prestige do you think there is in New Zealand, being a contemporary dancer, or within the performing arts? Is it seen, in your experience, is it something that people say you know, do people acknowledge it as a real job, yet, or is it still that people say 'so what do you really do'? ...

M For many years I looked too mean for people to ask that question, I had really short hair and I looked like a thug so people wouldn't actually bother me with that kind of thing. I think that, you know, it's kind of tricky. I think that there are mixed levels right now. People are, various people are doing quite well in different ways, and Also, I think that there is recognition of it as an actual thing, as New Zealand culture. But that comment is really commonplace, I'll often get that, 'well how do you make money'. But I've never actually been challenged on the legitimacy of it as an option. Never. Oh, actually only once, no not once, only by one organisation. That's WINZ.

They question the legitimacy of being a contemporary dancer, or all the arts. Um, and that's their job. In saying that I don't find it forgivable at all, but it is their job.

R What do you think is the most positive thing about being a contemporary dancer right at this particular point in time?

M um, I get to do what interests me most, I have a degree of choice in my day I think, that I really enjoy. I get to keep exploring and researching which for me is um, you know, keeps me alive really um. Currently, the work actually earns me enough money to live, which is brilliant, utterly brilliant, because um I didn't ever seek to become rich, but it's actually a very simple dream to just make a nice little living, so that's actually happening at the moment, so that's really brilliant.. Um, being around a lot of um, very interesting, free thinking people, definitely, definitely. Um, having a degree of mobility that I don't think that I would necessarily have. I mean I'm currently challenging all of the stuff that I'm saying, all of the assumptions that I make about people But I guess it's really that I'm doing what makes me happiest at the end of the day, and the teaching and the relationships that I've developed through that. Actually getting to use what it is that I happen to be gifted with. Yeah.

R On the flipside of that is there anything that isn't, that you aren't happy about? I mean...

M Yeah, I'm, I feel like I wish I had more resource, both internal and external to um, to make more of an impact on the world. And that sounds a little bit corny, but for example, the Daly Show. John Stewart and all his writing team, I mean um, extremely high quality, high definition comedy going on there, um, that actually happens to be educating people incredibly well as to what's going on out there. And the amount that they can get out there in terms of social comment I think is just quite extraordinary. And so um, I kind of envy that, for example. Um, there they've got the medium of tv, they've got the genre of comedy, spoken word and that kind of stuff. I find it frustrating that I don't have those kind of resources, that I can't make that kind of impact. Um, I find it regrettable bit at times that being I guess so uncomfortable with lack of money at times. We're not third world poor here, which is good, but that's not to say that um, you don't go through some ridiculous situations just because you don't have any money or you know, no standing in the community.

R chat chat.

This is the tricky section, big questions.

M You're going to ask me what 'integrity' means

R What you think it means, artistic integrity specifically. Integrity there's plenty of stuff written about, but artistic integrity there's nothing. So what do you think, or what does it mean to you?

M I think that I can't make that distinction of artistic integrity. The only way make the distinction is by saying that I claim being an artist, and I can speak from that viewpoint, but integrity is integrity to me, regardless of whether it is mechanical integrity or... Basically what there is for me is, there's a set of values in place that are um, that the behaviour of the organism is in congruency with, and that those behaviours are in some kind of harmony or taking into consideration the immediate environment. So, um, that's sounds waffly but that's also very specific as well, so for example, I as a person with integrity, I have certain values and I act in accordance with those, and at the same time, my impact on my environment is what I'd call non-toxic. So I have an impact on it, but I'm not living beyond my resources, and that somehow I'm contributing to the ongoing healthy functioning, you know so, communication and whatever it is that I'm outputting, and also I'm contributing to the economy, that kind of thing. So that for me is what I'd call integrity. And with that integrity totally has to take in relationship with money. People try and skip the word integrity when it gets to money and I'm not sorted, I'm not sorted at all when it comes to that, but I do feel that I want to be participating, you know, financially, within the economy, and um, that has something to do with it. Um, when certain things are contravened, it might be personal, what we regard as personal, like it could be that certain values actually are contravened, so for example, um, I have a certain ideology about how I want to work. Along comes an opportunity to perform it, but I must remove.. or I must keep my clothes on at all times, - not that I ever do [take them off] - but I kinda go 'well, you know, I always get naked in my performances', and they say 'yes well if you do, you won't be in this show, and without you in this show we won't make enough money and then we won't be able to give this money to this cause', and I go 'oh right, so there's a bigger picture'. Ok, so these instances here [situations from activity] you know, are kind of interesting because um, there is a situation where the individuals values appear to be contravened, however, what we don't know, unless you know, is um, is what is more important and what the issues are. So um, that integrity, yes, there's personal integrity, but personal integrity without relationship to the broader environment, to the broader culture, the broader community, whatever you want to call

it, um, is um, ... I guess you would call it ideology, and ideology is um, kind of dangerous when it's not in relationship. What was the question? [Laughs]

Oh yeah, what is artistic integrity. Yeah, that's I guess, that's about as brief as I can make my answer.

R Yeah, that's fine. I think that's what I'm going to get, which is fabulous. Just maybe a really simple question for you to answer, and that's cool: how important do you think it is that dancers show that they have integrity.

M [Long pause.] I don't know that I can answer that actually, so hopefully thankfully, it's not that simple to me. A colleague of mine recently talked about their voice as a kind of expectancy. That there was a kind of expectancy on the artist within the broader culture, that there was this expectancy, this responsibility this obligation of the artist was to um, was to be the one who was actively engaging with the world and um, you know with the free thinking and the developing and that kind of thing, and he was saying 'NO, it's actually of more value that the person out there that's an accountant is also doing that in their thinking of their day to day life'. Um and I really really liked this, and it's like, in a way, you know, for me choosing to be an artist is no different in a sense than choosing to be a lawyer, or a street sweeper or somebody who works in a bank. It becomes a choice. That person who works in the bank can be actively engaged with the world, living their integrity, and actually they have to be, in order for the world to function, so, um, like yeah sure its important for the dancer to um, show their integrity provided that they're in integrity, and then I guess in a way, in some ways it will actually come out. Um, but if you're wandering around trying to demonstrate your integrity the whole time it's a full time job, but the dancer the baker the candlestick maker, really it's everyone, across the board, so yeah, I guess that's what I'd say about that question.

R IN terms of expressing this thing, what ways to you think it's possible for an artist to show people or to demonstrate to people that they are acting with integrity? Is there a way that we can tell?

M I think it would be hard to tell. But for me the whole thing with abstract, with very very abstract arts like some of the visual, some areas of visual arts and contemporary dance, one of the questions that comes up artistically is the idea of context and how do we contextualise this, how do we give the audience context, contextualise it for ourselves you know what it is that we're doing here. And I think that, well, um, that's not the place to look for it first. You look for context, um, ah, socially, within the community, the artist finds context there in their day to day life, then their art will have context for them. So um, if you're interacting with the world, and you know that will provide... you know it's like the whole thing with integrity, it's like, um, its not necessarily something that you can display. It's just, it comes out through your personal interactions day to day. So somebody that I have presumptions about, maybe I don't like them for some reason, - don't like what they make, don't like their pointy feet, - I've got no idea how that person interacts with other people, and what contributions or impact they have on other peoples lives, you know. They might be making, inspiring them to think and discover possibilities for themselves, um, you know, so in a way it's deceptive. I think that we can't necessarily know from visual clues. However, when we talk to someone, we can begin to see, oh, ok, you can get their word. So they might be a very congruent speaker, for example, and you can go 'oh, yes well, they believe in this and they believe in that', and then you hear stories about how they actually interact with people, and you go 'oh, well they're full of shit'. So, really the only way that you can get close to that is by being in that sphere. Like I've got no idea that the band that I most admire whose music I love and adore - Radiohead - they seem like they're making, that they're extraordinary artists with a lot to say about the world, um, but I also have certain associations and imaginings about them. I imagine that Tom York for example is somebody who was um, very dour and um, you know just locked himself away all the time and just eats heaps of vegan food and turns off radios, because he can't stand what... But then I saw a performance by them and they were onstage just having a really fantastic time and I thought, oh, oh shit, I had this image in my head about what I thought they were and so I can't really know that. If I was to meet them and hang out with them, um, you know, um... See you take someone like Bono, you know, I've got no idea what contribution that guy is actually making, because the media are both telling me, and getting in my way of knowing that. So it's that, for me I get the sense that ok, I can get up there and maybe I can be really successful, and gain a large following, but if I was all about that then I would probably not have as much impact on the world, because I wouldn't be spending time teaching. When I'm teaching people dances or teaching people yoga or teaching people movement, um, there's a whole lot of stuff that happens there that um, goes beyond simply being admired or critiqued on my dance ability or performance, that you spend ten bucks on then walk away from, so it's really hard to

know. These are interesting questions because they're not binary. There's no way the answers could be binary. Um and if they were, if you get anyone giving you binary answers, I'd be highly suspicious and dubious.

R So, if it's difficult to see that someone has integrity or not, is it possible for someone from an external perspective to come in and say 'this person has fantastic artistic integrity' or 'this person has sold out' or whatever else? ...I realise that's a closed question...

M Yeah, I don't think it'll be a closed answer though... I think it's possible for anybody to say anything that they like, to be honest. But having said that...

R Is that a legitimate option?

M To say that? I think you can, but I think that any time people say things like that they are not voicing or have not thought about the broader spectrum, because um, I for one, have no idea what has influenced my colleagues to make certain decisions in their career. Just because I have a friend who choreographs the Wearable Arts awards, doesn't mean that she's sold out. Just because you know I have a friend who chose to go on a TV show as opposed to do a dance piece by one New Zealand's leading choreographers, I can't say that um, that he sold out, because I don't know what the decision was about. However, if I met somebody, and I just think they're full of smarm and full of shit, then I know, because there's that thing, because at one level you don't know, but at another level you totally do, because people have bullshit barometers, and you meet someone and just go, 'oh, yeah' because you know what's going on, and to meet anybody with genuine humility is actually a rare rare thing, not just in the arts, but anybody, you know. But to meet them in the arts is even more rare. Someone who actually really has generosity of spirit and those kinds of things, yeah. So we can't *know*, but at the same time in some ways we can make those calls, yeah.

R How do you feel about people making those calls who aren't actually within the art world?

M That's a tough one, because at one point, in some ways I resent them, because I resent the comparative lack of legitimacy of the arts in general in New Zealand culture, and in some ways I think it's a fair call, because we all have the right to question. I have the right to question, and I exercise that frequently, so why shouldn't someone else question me? And in a way, that's how I personally want to engage with the world, to be able to respond to those things, for me to be able to go 'well I say I can say to you that I'm making this contribution through my dance because of this, I feel that it does this, and so that's what I've got to offer from that', and um, and then having said that elaborate stuff if I feel like saying it then I can say 'fuck you'. Not just being reactive. And sometimes, you feel with an individual that you know that they're coming at you from a place that's interesting, so you want to try and meet the question, like you want to try and meet the person, and other times you feel like the persons coming at you because they've already made their mind up, um, and that's when um, there's less point in expending the energy because you know there not going to be any dialogue, you know there's not going to be any communication at all. Maybe there could be, but generally in my experience there hasn't been, but I mean it is hard, even when people who are from within the arts make those calls, ask these questions, they're hard questions, but I think they have to be answered.

R Is it common for people to ask within contemporary dance? Or accuse or any other sort of, are these issues that are considered or not?

M Completely, all the time. However, they've been considered for a long time out of a place of insecurity and lack, which had led to considerable cynicism. Lately with more, what I'd call, generally a more buoyant mood and a bit more success and visibility of dance, um, these questions have kind of chilled out a bit because people are doing stuff and getting on with things, and are generally a bit happier. And when the questions do get asked they're done with more of a sense of how we can advance this thing as opposed to how can we tear ourselves and each other down, because we're all basically miserable and ... These questions, contemporary dance is very very questioning, um, and when it's not I get very suspicious. However, when the questions are asked in an emotional tone that's basically arsenic, it's poisonous because of that, or else if they're done in a way that paralyses dance, then I don't think I have any time for those questions. And there are practitioners out there who are lost, but it's not dance which has made them lost, it's where they are in their life, and a lot of people are lost.

R What do you do in your own practice to avoid sort of [losing your integrity?]

End of tape

M What do I do to avoid losing sight of what it is that I want to do? Is that what it is that you're asking?

R yeah, to make sure that you remain comfortable with what it is that you're doing all the time.

M Oh right, um... Well luckily for me I keep meeting what I perceive to be opposition. That helps me square things up in the world actually. Um, maybe it would be better if I didn't meet so much, or didn't look so hard in some ways, but it tells me where I am, and also I sort of rail, I find myself railing against things. That's why I wrote, that's why I write the kinds of stuff that I write. I get a bee in my bonnet about something, and I've got to communicate it. So I write, and I question that way. And when I write I basically organise my thoughts, much more succinctly, and in doing so, basically it makes things clearer, what my values are, what it is I'm trying to talk about, and then I happen to be teaching and working with something that is relatively obscure, and so I find that I'm constantly having to communicate about it and sort of justify it in some ways and legitimise it. And so that takes considerable amount of thought process I think as well, and somehow, life just tends to knock off edges as well, so you kind of end up being, so I kind of feel like I'm ending up more in the right shape because I'm Certain kinds of ways. So just in trying to meet the circumstances of life I feel like that tends to... I've also chosen not to do certain things. I've chosen not to um, to have children, for example, that's something I've chosen. It's a very clear decision. It could change, but no, but I feel like well, I can stay a bit more true to my vision, and also I think my mum accused me of being selfish for not doing it, but I think actually I am being a lot more selfish if I put more, a couple more consumers on the planet. So there's that, there's certain kinds of life decisions that I make, as well as the practice of writing, of collecting, of conversing, of doing my practice, of teaching, um, interacting with other artists, um, and people, you know, I taught yoga for four or five years, which gave me a whole different perspective on the body and how people are doing what they're doing. Um, which took me well out of the sphere of dance and well out of the self-indulgence of all that, so I think actually teaching is something that keeps me in check. And that happens to be something that I'm really really good at and I'm now getting paid to do, so that's very lucky.

R Where does your audience, or the people that come to your shows, where do they fit in with these ideas?

M Oh well, they're crucial, because without them my work has no relationship with the world. None. So they are at one level they are collaborators, because when they come to see the dance, they bring that relationship into the room. And then, they imagine the dance in ways that I can't. So um, they walk away with that as well, so there's that. And part of my job in a way, is um, it's weird because there's this word that's come up recently for me and that word is 'communion', that I'm communing with them, I'm communicating to them and um, being myself in front of them, being witnessed to be being myself, and then in me being myself, they can get to imagine a part of themselves, as well. And that's how that interaction works, so um, without them, I'm dancing in my bedroom and having a good time, and that's okay, coz its nice to just... the act of dancing is the act of dancing. To perform it is something else. But in a way I need them to get to those parts of myself as well. I totally need them. I can't just do that otherwise. Yeah.

R What do you think are the biggest pressures on dancers to either keep or to give up their own values, their own integrity, in terms of their dance, so on either side of that, if you think there are any at all.

M The thing is that because there aren't many economic opportunities for dancers, so they often end up in situations with choreographers who are the dance makers and actually hold a great deal of status in the dance simply because without them dance doesn't get made. They also hold some the purse strings, or have access to some of the purses. However, there are very very very few relationships that I've heard of or encountered that aren't unhealthy with these people. And I can't make any real broad generalisations as to why that is, but it seems to be the case. A lot of choreographers also happen to be people in some ways, as inspiring and as knowledgeable and as charismatic as they are, are often unhealthy and unhappy people in certain ways. And some say that people like that shouldn't be interacted with [laughs] because everyone has something to offer. But dancers end up in situations that they are compromised in terms of what it is that they are required to do, or they are not taken into consideration, they are not looked after, so there's that. I think that dancers are compromised at a, at the level of national identity, or at community identity, because they're starting to get recognised, but in a lot of ways they're not recognised, or else they're considered slightly odd, you know, odd thing to do. So there's not a huge amount of legitimacy yet. It's definitely climbing right now. I think they're compromised emotionally, in terms of what they practice, because dancers are not taught to, encouraged to, or don't necessarily have a habit of, examining that in their practice, so you go ahead, you be a good dancer, you work with your body, but most dancers don't even know how to breathe. They really don't even know how to breathe properly, breathe well, breathe efficiently. You know, they're out of touch with certain aspects of their psyche, because so much energy goes into being the athlete, that their

emotional body isn't considered, it simply isn't part of the practice, so I think that's lacking. I guess that there are all sorts of compromises really, but I suppose those are the main ones.

R Just as a final sort of thing, can you think of a time when you were concerned about another dancer in terms of loosing their integrity, in terms of doing something that you thought that they, that didn't sit with how they had...

M Oh yeah, heaps. Heaps, lots of people, lots of people I would have considered. But they're in these relationships because they need to work, but unfortunately that's where a lot of the shit happens, is in the workplace, yeah. So yeah, I'm frequently concerned. Also, in training, I get concerned for dancers there too. I guess that's all, isn't it? You've got work, and training, so that pretty much covers it [laughs].

R Is there anything else...?

M We've covered a lot. And I feel like there's a whole field of questions but I can't quite pinpoint them.

Offered transcript for clarification – he agreed.

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Interview three

Conducted in researcher's office

27.06.06

Coded to preserve artist's anonymity

Researcher Basically just to start with, do you want to tell me a little bit about yourself and in terms of your music history and training and that sort of stuff. A potted history of [Matthew].

Matthew That's really vast, I could go on for ever. Basically I didn't really get into music when I was younger, I didn't get into music until I was 15 or 16, I'd never considered music as a thing that you did, I thought it was something that these amazing creatures did, you know, I just yeah, I didn't get into it until late. But I always loved it, always sung, always liked listening to music, and was a frequent buyer. But then I started, um, writing, I actually wrote poetry and short stories when I was about 12, 11 or 12, I wrote stories and I wrote poetry and I used to like typing it on mums typewriter, before computers – showing my age - and used to write stories for my friends and stuff, then I wrote poetry, then my mum bought me, I don't know why, buy she bought me this guitar, I've never known why – I'd never shown any interest in playing or singing or anything, but she just bought me this guitar at this garage sale and I went 'oh ok, thanks, a guitar, that's great, cool' and went 'plinky plinky plink' on the guitar, and thought that was quite nice, and I'd written this poem, and I wrote, started playing this tune to this song that I um I finished up writing this song with these four chords that I knew, and I went 'wow' and I didn't know what the feeling was, it was just sort of, man, it made me feel really emotional, it really felt that I was expressing exactly the way I wanted to express it and what I wanted to express which was cool, my communication, because I had a real hard time communicating when I was little, that was just my way, and I thought 'wow'. I can play, I can sing, and it sounds exactly the way I wanted it, to express it, and it can say what I want it to, so from that moment on I thought 'wow, I could be a musician', and then thought – I was in my teens – and I had no idea how to be a musician or anything but I had this friend who was a great artist, and we just made up this band, and he played this and I played that and done this and that. We didn't do anything, he just drew all these pictures of us on stage, of me singing and playing and stuff, and from there I left school, I only did music I think in my last year of school, how I found it was way over theory, way theoretical and I liked that in some ways because it was mathematics, I sort of like maths. And um, so I got up to grade 8 things like that in theory but um, I didn't like how they talked to you about Mozart and all the old school stuff, and I was into Neil Young and Led Zeppelin and all that sort of stuff you know, and they never really showed how it applied to that sort of thing. So I sort of gave up on music at school and left school and had a bum around year. Then I moved from Palmerston North to Levin, and started doing some gigs in Levin, I got asked to – I used to do lots of busking – um, and so people started coming up to me in the street and say, 'hey I want you to come play at my café' and this happened several times, and I was 17 or 18 and doing these gigs. I was still smoking at this stage, and I gave up smoking because um, I remember I was coming home one night and I was like [makes choking sound] and after three hours of a gig, and I was like 'nah I can't do this, I've got to be able to sing' you know. So yeah, I was singing away. I tried to do as much of my originals as possible, because I was all about originality and integrity and stuff, and 'you've got to play your own music' and I wouldn't play the radio hits and stuff, I'd just play what I liked. And um, moved to Levin, met up with this guy who was just setting up his own studio, and he said 'oh do you want to come check out my gear' and so he recorded me onto his equipment, and I thought 'oh yeah that's pretty cool' and um, it didn't cost anything because he wanted to set up his stuff, so I thought I'll try and make a tape. So I made this cassette of my stuff and got my girlfriend at the time to take some photos of me in this cool old theatre in Palmerston North in black and white. Took some photos of me in this theatre watching this, I think I had my eyes down and had my guitar next to me. That was the cover and stuff and it was all black and white and I got it printed up properly and it cost me about a thousand, a thousand dollars yeah, which was all the money I had, um, and I sold it. I released it and sold it and did it all myself really, funded it, did the promo on the radio which was a bad thing for me cos I thought 'ooh I don't want to sell out' and I talked on the radio and did things similar and did shows at the Levin Rock Shop thing, and did signings things and it was all really geeky. And I sold, like, heaps of them aye, I sold like hundreds of them and I got number one on the Levin Community Radio and it was really cool. And I was like 'wow, I can actually do this' you know, I can do this for a living, and I didn't really think of it as a living, I just thought I could do this creative thing that I do. Never even thought about it in terms of price, just in terms of the music. But then after I did that I thought maybe I should find out

more about that sort of stuff, so I thought about, when I was doing music at school I had a teacher and she talked to me about this ah, Polytech course called, at Whitirea Community Polytech down in Wellington and you know, I would be interested in doing that, and this is when I was 17 or 18 and I'd spent a couple of years working and I was, I thought, oh yeah, and I wanted to get away from Levin my parents because my father was in a stink relationship so I wanted to get away from that, and so I thought, oh I'll check this place out, so I went down and checked it out and it was really cool. And it was just sort of starting up, it had only been going for a few years, and they, to get in you only had to have a decent musical knowledge and um, to play um guitar, bass, drums, saxophone, whatever that sort of thing

R some sort of talent

M yeah yeah, so I went down to do my audition, sweet, got into the programme there, did the three year diploma course. Got into a band in my last year there, my last couple of years where I sort of mainly sung and played guitar, and that was called [band name], and we did lots of gigs around Wellington and stuff. We were kind of mucking around, we didn't really know what we were going to do. Obviously at the course we learnt business, all the stuff that you'd need to know, like musicianship, theory, and composition. And I wrote this cool violin concerto thing, which was really really cool, and um, from there, after the polytech course, I left the course, met up with this girl who was in a band, we started going out, band dissolved, me and her stayed together, started doing solo'y duo stuff together, doing gigs at RSA's and stuff, and um, to try to make money to do some recording. Made enough money to do some recording of just me and her. So we started selling stuff, made up this budget website and sold them via the website, sold like 40 or 50 of them, copies of this CD, which was really really poor. We sent it away, sent it to Creative New Zealand for the indie hit disk, you know, when they started doing that. In the mean time we organised a festival, the first of what would later become [festival name]. It was called [name] and we started it on the anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights signing, which was, '97, '98. Must have been '98.

Phone in office rings

M Yeah, so we did that for that year. It was pretty cool that we ran that. That was on parliament grounds. There were about 500 people. We did most of it ourselves. Band wasn't really happening at that stage. Doing not very much. Um, from there, we decided Wellington was too cold. Fed up with Wellington, let's go somewhere warm. So we decided to do some study and stuff and Auckland, oh too big, Tauranga, oh a bit far away. So we decided we would move to Hamilton, this was about '99, 2000 I think. We had never been to Hamilton, I'd never been further north than Taupo [laughs]. So we packed up all of our things into a car and drove up to Hamilton, found a place to stay..., and at this stage we were in a band called [band name], with a guy called [name] who was in a band called [band name] in Wellington playing drums. We all three decided to move up here and try things up here, where we, 2000, 2001 we did the Band Experiment, Battle of the Bands, stuff. 2001 we won everything. 2002, we went to um, then as [band name] we went to um, Australia. We did some shows in Melbourne. We were still organising the [festival], but it changed to [festival name] in the last few years, and then we'd had drummers leave, all that time there, seven drummers or something like that, a crazy amount of drummers, and then the last, 2002 to 2005 I guess, we've had the same drummer I guess, and we had a tour, it was just after our album was released, um, and all that sort of stuff... We were going to go to England last year but then our drummer left.. so now it's sort of pretty much dissolved as such and I just sort of went.. I just came back to study, and finish a degree or something, in a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Music, or ... Do some English or some things that interested me. So yeah, right now I'm pretty much solo, and looking very tentatively at playing music. But when I think about the hassle, I just go,

R Easier if you can share it around or...?

M Yeah, yeah. I just can't be bothered. I guess I've done all that I could to get on the hit disks, try to get played everywhere we can, but, then you go out touring and you spend all your money and you're working at the same time, and it's just such a slog, and you think to yourself, why do I bother anyway? I really don't want, I really don't want any, I've never done it for any sort of fame or anything, I've only done it coz I love doing it, but if you're not getting anywhere with it it's sort of like.. That's sort of the impasse that I'm at at the moment. I wanna keep on being a creative person, keep on being a musician perhaps, in any way I can, but I'm not prepared to slog at it, and, you know what I mean?

R When you've done it for however many years and ..

M And it's not, it doesn't seem to be that, it's not really recognition it's that you don't, it's not really that you don't feel appreciated either because that's not the right word. It's like, you go to

places and you've spent a whole lot of money and we've bent over backwards to get things done, and you've put in so many hours, and you go to this place and you play, and there's ten people there, and they love it, which is great, they love it, but, and you know, you feel really great about that, but

R That's still only...

M That's still only ten people, and you've travelled miles, you've spent money, you've worked hours, and it's not really worth it.

Knock at door - answered

M So yeah, that's where I'm up to I think. I did [magazine] for two years, until last year, and I was arts co-ordinator at [local high school], and I've done other events, helped manage Party in the Park and stuff like that..... Help set up other shows and ... There's lots of other stuff like that as well. Yeah, at the moment music is, well... I was over it, from last year when we did our last recording and I was over it and just went Nah, I don't want to do this, until end of last year I started writing these songs, and thought 'wow, these are pretty cool' but as soon as I started thinking about doing any of them, I thought 'nah'. But I'm compelled to be creative, I can't help it. I have to do things creatively, to be creative. I love singing, I love playing music and it's just so beautiful. But when I think of squeezing it into some sort of bin I can't do that. Obviously if I had unlimited funds it would be so much easier, be so easy because...

R it wouldn't matter if you were only playing for ten people...

M Wouldn't matter.

R Can you pick out one thing out of all the stuff that you've done that you're really really proud of? Is there one thing that you can think of out of all of that?

M I think, just in general that the one thing is just that I've stuck with it. I think that's the one thing that I really, I really believe in it. Because I really questioned for the first time, this year really, when I started Uni, but man I look back on those 14 years or 15 years and I'd dedicated my whole time and energy and everything to that, those goals, so that's the thing I'm most proud of. I remember talking to people as I'd been going through and they'd go 'what do you do?' and I'd go 'oh I'm a musician', and they'd go 'oh wow, I wish I knew what I wanted to do?' You know? There's so many people who don't know what they want to do, and for that time, that beautiful period, when everyone was so confused, I knew exactly what I wanted to do and exactly what I was doing and where I was going and how I was going to do it. And now I'm...[laughs] I've sort gone back to my teens in a sense. But yeah, that's one thing I'm proud of.

R Is there sort of a flipside to that? Is there anything that you've thought 'oh god I wish I hadn't done that? Or is there something which you wish had happened differently or ...

M You know what, I've never had any regrets about anything. I'm just not that kind of person.

Even if I've had something happen that was terrible, I still think that it was worthwhile, you know.

R You get something from everything...

M Yeah, ... I had some friends over the other night and we were talking about that, all that sort of life type stuff and a mate said to me, oh we were saying that if you could do your exact thing you want to be, where you want be right now, and have everything set up the way you wanted it, what, where would you be? And I said, right here, right now. Yeah, I wouldn't change it.

R Activity. First set of situations. Which two of those are most similar in contrast to the third?

M I think the beer [visual artist] one and the swear words [band/festival] one.

R (clarified two situations) Ok. Why?

M I think the contemporary dancer, you could sort of um, you could rationalise it a bit easier, because, um, the movements are all the same, you're still expressing the same stuff, you wearing different, wearing a different thing. And you could actually change it to work in with the different costumes that you're using. Whereas the others are sort of more integral to the actual art itself. You know you might need to swear, you know I don't really care for it, but you might need to swear to get the intensity, and this one's a bit more, the alcohol one is a bit more serious, a bit more straightforward because alcohol is a specific evil, or you don't have to think in those terms, it's actually advertising a specific thing.

R Is there two that you would feel more comfortable with than the third?

M Two that I feel more comfortable with, probably the swear words and the dancer.

R Why?

M Um, I don't think.. I think swear words are a waste of breath anyway, I mean the only time I think that really maybe, they are effective is if they're almost out of nowhere, you know? But to actually write them down as a lyric is a bit silly. And the dancer one I don't see, or I don't think it really matters too much, with costumes. As long as it's the same movements, and looks the same I

don't think it's too much... I mean they are sort of integral in some ways, but you can still work with that.

R And then the, choosing to advertise a product, or being employed to advertise a product, an alcohol product or any other type of product, is that something that you...

M It's sort of an endorsement isn't it? It's saying that you, if you, if you're selling, helping them sell their product then you're aligning yourself with them as well, by putting your work with their stuff.

R Could you see yourself in any of those situations?

M Um, I've been in all of those situations. [laughs] Yeah, um, I think alcohol, I mean we didn't particularly use sponsors ... oh I don't think we've ever had to use anything like that, Asked to wear, I mean I've done TV, and you have to wear certain things on TV, and swear words and stuff for different... But you know, you just go 'ok, we're playing to plus 50, you know, 50 plus, or we're playing to a family crowd, you know, we're playing to lots of kids.

R So you just sort of tone it down a little bit?

M Yeah, you know it's not about them, it's not going to affect their art. You sort of weigh up the integrity of the band, the integrity of the music. Is it going to be effective? Which is going to be affected worse – if you are going to swear in front of a whole bunch of kids, or if you're not going to swear in front of them, you know?

R Something that I've found quite interesting in terms of my thesis, is something like, um, New Zealand bands being hired by places like KFC and places like that, or their songs, to use their songs and lyrics for iPod and stuff like that. How do you sit in that sort of situation?

M I think ten years ago that would have been a lot more cut and dried for me I would have been like 'NO THAT'S SELLING OUT!' You know? But when you, when you're actually in the industry, and you're working and trying to get somewhere, I think it's way reasonable to do those sorts of things, yeah. Even though for me personally I wouldn't like to do that sort of thing, I think that other people, other situations, other bands, can easily rationalise it, and I wouldn't feel like they'd sold out. Yeah. Because at the end of the day, although the ends should justify the means, otherwise it's a bit of a worry, but, the ends do justify the means in some cases, you know, especially if you're not, if you're not a band that goes out and says, Kentucky Fried Chicken is pretty bad and they're killing chickens and then you go and you know, ... That's a bit different. But the music has to be funded somehow, and sport and whatever, McDonalds, ... [trails off]

R Second activity. Again, same first question, which two are most similar in contrast to the third?

M [long pause] I think perhaps the singer and the website designer. Mainly because the film-maker has already been contracted to do something. So you're banded, something's already started. Whereas the singer's been offered another opportunity by someone else, and the website designer also has been offered another opportunity but did not take it.

R Is there two that you feel more comfortable with?

M All of them sort of, I think to myself 'fair enough'. Because um, I actually find, I mean it would probably be the singer, probably be the singer because I could see myself in that situation. I mean they're all fairly...

R You feel fairly comfortable with all those situations...

M Yeah yeah, I just think the film-maker is a bit more difficult because in that situation you're already contracted. So leaving it, I mean if they're interfering then it's obviously a fair enough thing to do, but you've made an agreement, you're under contract.

R So you say it's a fair enough thing to do, you think it's completely okay to leave something because someone is making, or trying to get you to change what you want to do? So in terms of being a musician, if somebody came up to you and said 'oh, you have to change your sound' you'd go 'oh, ok, I'm going to walk away from this'.

M Yeah definitely. I mean if you're contracted to them, which film people are obviously in that sort of situation, there's a lot of stuff like going to court and wrangling stuff where I am at this point and where I am at that point, and all of that stuff, ... But yeah, like anything I'm like, yeah, with all those three I'm comfortable with them but the film-maker is just, he's already half-way through something, whereas the other two are being offered other opportunities and they've gone 'nah, I'll stay with our lower budget stuff that we want to do'.

R Do you see deciding to signing to a major label as *necessarily* a bad thing?

M No, most of the major labels have the smaller labels underneath them anyway. They all belong to the same thing anyway...

R So it doesn't really matter which level you're on...

M Yeah yeah, you're still part of Sony, still part of Warners... 'No I'm independent! I'm with 'Little Rock Bands Productions' you know,

R Yeah 'we're an independent recording label'. Mmmm, yup.

M That's just the nice face of that company, yup.

R In terms of, you know you've worked a lot in New Zealand, how do you feel about the current environment in New Zealand for musicians?

M Wow these are really tricky questions!

R Yeah!

M You can't ask nice closed questions... [Of course I can't...] How do I feel about the.. Sorry what was the question?

R The music environment currently. As broad or as narrow as you want to read it.

M I think that you are in between a rock and a hard place in New Zealand because you've got low population in terms of a market, and so you have to be, it has to be worthwhile doing something. If you're going to have an industry it has to be making money, and with bugger all people, you're going to have to, really be careful with what you fund, obviously, whether you're business or government or both, in order to get a return on your investment, and so, because of that, you have for the last ten years or so when New Zealand music has started to get promoted again, you've had bands that are definitely going to make something, you know, are getting the funding, and you have the trickle down effect in theory that everyone else will get some of that, and it has, it is happening, but like all these things it is happening very slowly. So you're getting mainstreamers burgeoning in a sense, and you are getting things happening, but you're still having the same problems that as soon as those people start doing something somewhere else, it's very very difficult for them, because the industry here is very limited. And they go to other industries, and those industries are really huge. So it's going to take a long time. But I think it's positive, positive steps, and I think those steps are in the right direction, but I don't, I think there are ways that it could be done better, but it would be even slower, and a harder slog, and it would be better. You know, you give money to, not just sure fire things, but also creative endeavour and things. How they fund a lot of other um, a lot of other artistic practice. Not just music, coz with music it's a whole, it's very much about how's it going to effect money, how are we going to make money out of it, and all that sort of thing. Whereas you can have some other thing visual arts – not really film coz film has the same problem we do – but you know how sort of creative it is, whether it is stimulating creativity in the individual and the environment and the community and Maori, and Polynesian peoples and stuff like that, and it's not really about how you're going to make money out of it. But the music industry hasn't got that, hasn't got that luxury. It's really about making money.

R So the more commercial nature of it makes it more difficult for the less commercial sounds to get out there?

M Yeah, yeah, you've got to somehow cross over into the mainstream in some way, which is been the way for, since I started playing music at 15. Yeah. So I think that's difficult. Obviously the really good thing about hip hop and that sort of stuff is because it's come from the Polynesian, Pacific Island, Maori sort of stuff, they've got a really cool funding regime, and they really sort of support that sort of stuff, in music, like roots, reggae, that sort of stuff, and the street art, entertaining, dance, all those sorts of things, performance, they really stuck at it, and they see that as part of their culture. Whereas in New Zealand we don't see dance, singing, playing music as part of our culture,

R Is this Pakeha New Zealand?

M Pakeha, sorry yeah, ... Exactly they don't see that as an actual thing, they see it as white, and rugby and alcohol and that's what you do.

R 'Culture' as a luxury, kind of thing.

M Yeah yeah. 'Culture' is going to have coffee with your friends and talking about the rugby.

[Laughs] You don't think of it as going out to see a band, and having a great time, and then going to a film or something. Or going to an exhibition or something.

R Yeah yeah, it's not terribly high up peoples list of things to do to go to an exhibition opening on a Friday night.

Considering you've had some formal training, what do you think of the sort of access to education and training and that sort of thing in New Zealand?

M I think it could really good. I think it's getting better especially now that Mike Chun or whatever has got going that thing for music in schools.

R Play It Strange.

M Play It Strange, yeah, the Rockquest and Smokefree Stage Challenge, and all those sorts of things that were, which is really really cool which I didn't, you know 'back in my day', [laughs] I

had cello, or to play the flute or something you know, you couldn't be in a band or something you know... you had to

R To be in the string orchestra...

M Yeah, it was, and so everyone went off music straight away cos you think of music and you think of doing it cos you had to, and you went there and you wrote things in your book and you

R watched The Carpenters movie

M Yeah, but nowadays, you've got much more initiatives to do stuff, and access to it, obviously, they've started to make it core. That's what happens when you do that, you get much more. And that's really cool. And then as you go through, you can go to polytechs which have great courses now, and all of those things just sort of add together. The main thing is what are they actually teaching you, and then once they're teaching you the thing is are they, are they um, are they supporting them to go on to further, like you know, people think 'oh yeah I'm going to do this now, but later on I'm going to be a doctor' you know. They don't think of it as a career, you know, still, I mean it's really ingrained in New Zealand that you do music as hobby, and on the side, you don't do it as a career, and it's no wonder coz you'd be mad if you did.

R You mentioned earlier that the course that you did at polytech in Porirua you did some business sort of stuff. Do you think that the training that is given, I mean I realise that for you it was a while ago, the training that you got prepared you for actually being a functioning musician?

M Nah. What prepares you more than anything, like anything else, is doing it. If you can find someone that will help you do it, that you can have the experience of doing it, that's what's best. I mean I learnt how to write sheets of all the money you've spent and all that stuff which is beneficial, but setting up stuff and how to run it and how to fund it and all that stuff, you don't know that stuff until you do it, and the same with when we were learning technology and stuff, how to work in a studio, its all well and good plugging something in and mixing and playing something and listening back to it, but it doesn't actually have any sort of value or anything until you are sort of doing it, you know. You don't realise how hard it can be and how great it can be and all those sorts of things. But the business side of things, nah, you don't learn half of what you need to know. You don't learn half of it. ... I found that in school as well. Most of the stuff you learn in school you don't even use. Once you've learnt everything up to 14 or 15, you pretty much know everything you need to know, the other things you need to know you will learn as you go, you know?

R chat chat

M I found, I always asked people to show me where I was going to use it, give me a real application of how I was going to use something .

R chat chat.

M Experience is invaluable aye. Like I don't have a massive academic record, but I've done shitloads of stuff. And people ask what I've done, and they're like 'oh yeah' and that's what counts.

R What do you think are the most positive aspects about being a musician in New Zealand right now?

M You know I think they are two separate things, like being a musician in general is great. And being in New Zealand you're in the most beautiful country in the world, so there's the other thing about New Zealand is that it's blossoming, it's burgeoning, , it's like this fresh thing, so there's really nothing you can't do in New Zealand. It's like little America, back in the days when America was great, when it was the land of the free and freedom and all that stuff. I think New Zealand is like that, we've got that number 8 wire thing obviously and creative sort of people, and you can do whatever you like here, but the problem is, along with not having many people, is that you can do what you want here, which means that a lot of people are very conservative, and I mean they've got their own crazy ideas and stuff in their heads, but yeah.

R Do you think that sort of freshness is reflected, or is seen overseas as well?

M I will find out when I go overseas I think, I've never been that far away. I can only really go on impressions and what...

R Oh yeah, completely subjective.

M Yeah yeah, I don't know. I think, the impression I get, from people that come over here that I talk to is that they're surprised because a lot of people think that we're just running around in grass skirts, yeah

Text message received – distorts tape

R Is there a flipside to that? Is there anything that you think is really bad about being a musician in NZ right now?

M Yeah, its that tyranny of distance that Split Enz talks about isn't it? Yeah, yeah, you're just so far away from everything aren't you. Yeah, it's a blessing and a curse. An analogy from our own

country is Gisbourne, don't know if you've been to Gisbourne very much but it's actually incredibly beautiful, and up in the coast there, its beautiful. But getting there is [there's like one road] yup [laughs]. It's six or seven hours by the time you get there you just want to go to sleep but it's just amazing, and I think it's the same thing with New Zealand, go to other countries and getting somewhere else you don't have to go that far afield, but I think it would be a major culture shock and you'd just think 'oh, I wanna move back home' from all this space. But I think there are advantages if you're not close to these people, but like if you're living in a village, you're not influenced by all these people. It's always a horrible catch 22 isn't it? Because you're over there and you have access to all these things, but it can be way too much, and it can be difficult to get anywhere because you've got the same thing, you've got all this competition. In New Zealand you've got lots of competition, but, you've also got the {smaller market}... So yeah, that's the, that's the catch 22, you can't have one without the other.

R Get the freshness and everything and you don't have outside influence, but then you can't sell anything?

M Yeah yeah. We can take what we want because we are so far away that we don't have direct influence, so we can get the influence but not be subjected by it, but at the same time we can't really develop our own thing from it, you know? You sort of rely on all those outside influences to keep you here, you need those channels because that is the way the world is set up, and we can't really change that from where we are, our position. But at the same time you can fall through the cracks and get away with lots of stuff that you can't get away with in the bigger economies and markets.

R Tricky questions. Completely subjective answers. What does the term artistic integrity mean to you?

M I think for me, it's doing something because.. I was thinking about it on the way actually, and I think the difference is, and it's a very thin line, but what can I *create* out of this, and what can I *make* out of this. You know, what can I create is what can I develop and how can I go forward, and what can I make is more about what can I get out of it. I think it's the difference between artistic integrity and just doing something to make money or whatever, you know? And I think that obviously with artistic integrity you can still get money and recognition, and still retain artistic integrity, so it's a real fine line to find out how that can actually be done. So yeah, I guess that's the best way I can think of to word it. So artistic integrity for me is ah, doing something that you love to do, um obviously create something, but you don't, you don't think about why you're doing it, why you're really doing it, you just do it because you have to do it, you know, or not even have to do it because you don't feel like you *have* to do it, but it you're compelled. Yeah, so yeah, I think that's artistic integrity, that you do it because you just love doing it.

R So is it kind of the starting point for you, is it, if you started out saying, I'm going to get rich, so I'm going to be a musician, then that...

M You'd be insane to do that [laughs]

R Well yeah, [blah blah] Then you have somebody on the other hand who says, 'oh I want to make music'

M How can I make money out of this music?

R Or, 'hey look everybody's buying my music'

M Yeah, I think it's sort of like 'hey I'm a musician and I can write stuff, that's really cool, I wonder what I can create with that?' and going off on that tangent. Or going 'wow, I'm a musician, I can write music, I could write some songs that will make me some money. I'm going to create a band call the such and such girls, and call one posh and one this and one that, and we could market it and sell pens and pencil cases and tee-shirts, and do a lot of touring and make a shit-load of money'. Or, 'I'm a musician and I write. What can I write?' I think artistic integrity is more linked in with developing yourself as well, as a person, as a human being, whereas the other this is what you can get out of the material. What you can make and what you can accomplish, maybe, in a material sense.

R How important do you think it is that musicians show that they have integrity?

M I don't think it's important at all. It's only as important as you think it is. For me it's important because that's how I feel about it, but it's just a piece of art, you know? Like, at the end of the day, like other people just think it's this, you know, other people think it's that, and that's the beauty of it, of music or any art, yeah.

R How do musicians show that they have integrity? Is it something that people can see?

M I'll come back to U2 as my example, that's sort of what.. um, and even though they're fabulously wealthy and rich, they still retain their integrity.

R How do you see that? How do you understand?

M Yeah, [pause] I guess a certain amount of it comes with longevity, having stuck with it for so long, and still using that medium as your expression, and it's still being effective, and people still listen to it and say 'yeah that's beautiful' just because of the beauty of it, rather than hearing it and saying 'wow, they made a whole lot of money off that. I guess that's part of it. And I guess the way that they've um, conducted themselves, you know, basing it around personal integrity. What sort of causes if any do they, that they are involved in, how they spend their money, what ideals they uphold, morals, how they are with other people, have they gone through their career shagging 2000 women, you know, all those sorts of things. Are they into drugs? You know. And all those sorts of things, that's what's integrity to me. But um, when you start talking about morals, that's when it gets really sticky, because other people don't think it's really anything to worry about. You know, with drugs and sex and everything, they might not think there was any moral issue there or not. To me I don't think its artistic integrity to get caught up in those sorts of things, coz... To me, art is expressing your feelings through some sort of medium, and that's art, or reflecting something that is in the world in some way, and sharing it with people, and them saying 'I agree with that' or 'I feel this way about it' or 'I understand this part about it', and so in that sense it's very broad. And in that sense as well, integrity doesn't really matter anyway, the artworks doing its thing. So, artistic integrity, See for me, up until a couple of years ago, it was everything, to have integrity with what you're doing and stuff, and I think now it's still very important to me, but I think it's more as a person. In some ways I feel like I personally relied on music as my crutch to hold me to integrity, whereas now I sort of just want it to be a part of me as a person, and that's that. And whatever I express in whatever way, whether it's artistically, or just communicating with the bum on the street, I want to have integrity. And I think that artists are trying to appeal to people about some sort of thing that they understand or want to communicate. Whether they have integrity with it is up to them, and they can have integrity in whatever they see in it. But to me I think, to me I think that integrity is really important to it, to art.

R How do you think it's possible to loose your integrity, if you think it's possible to be lost?

M Obviously that comes down a lot to how they've set themselves up and whether they've come out saying, 'blah blah' you know what we were saying before, come out saying 'we don't like world hunger' and then they write a song about 'we don't care about starving kids'. So I mean you loose it those sorts of ways. Or they've got a clean image, and they're nice, and they're super sweet sacrine image and then you find out they're doing drugs and shagging 14 year old girls and

End of tape

I think again it harks back to that, why does an artist have integrity in the first place? Because you don't really need to have integrity to create art, you can just create something, and it's all just about expressing something. And um, you don't need to have integrity to do that.

R Do you think you need to have integrity to make *good* art?

M No.

R Ok. Because that's a distinction some people make, you can tell, because it's better...

M Well look at Jimmy Hendrix. I mean if you think morally, you know, he was a waster, and shagged lots of people or whatever and all of those bands, Jim Morrison and all those sorts of people you know, they had no integrity whatsoever, but they created amazing pieces of art. And I mean, visual arts the same, you think across the board, so many great artists, and I think it's because, you know, humans are flawed, flawed human beings, and that's just another reason why we create art. To try and create the perfect person, you know, so if we can keep that balance, if we can keep creating something beautiful and perfect, maybe we can attain perfection for ourselves. I think that's where the integrity comes in.

R What do you do to, either now or in the past, what do you do to remain comfortable with your own feelings of integrity?

M When I was younger, and I still was first playing music, playing guitar and stuff, and was starting to sing a bit more, I swore that I would only ever play in my bedroom and I would only ever play for my family or my friends and so forth, and then – that was very easy because I was living at home [laughs]

R Why was that, do you think, was it just fear of rejection, or ...

M No, not at all, I just thought that's what you do you know, this is my art, this is pure man this is what I feel, and I'm not going to let other people listen to it you know, and I can't sell it, it's not a commodity, it's my pure essence and it's not for sale you know [laughs]. And then when I left home I went, I couldn't make money with out doing it, and I couldn't really make money with

music either but that's what I'm going to do. And then I started thinking about, I went on the dole obviously, because I didn't want to work, because I can't even work because that's ruining my integrity as an artist because if you work then you're not spending time on your art, and that was a real big deal. So then I couldn't work, and it took ages, and then I was piss poor, and thought, well I'm going to have to do something other than just play music and not making any money, so then you do some sort of work, but you know, it will be work with integrity you know, so I'd do gardening and nice things like that. And when I worked for [magazine] that was my first proper, tax-man knows about it job, and um, that was um.

R Wow, I'm impressed that you got that far...

M Yeah, I was like 26 or something...

R You never did the waiting on tables in cafes or anything? [nope] Wow I'm impressed... How did you not starve?

M I just didn't spend money. I didn't spend anything. I'm a real, yeah, I'm really tight with money, I don't like spending money on worthless things, I don't like buying worthless thing. And I guess it ties in with the whole integrity thing again, and I don't know if that came after I became an artist, or if it was there before I started thinking about being an artist, whether that integrity was already there. Yeah, not that I have a lot of integrity as a person per se, you know, but that's the goal, you know, that's the goal.

R IN contrast to sort of that sort of life that you were living then, what are you doing now?

M Now it's like I say, it's not so implicit with the music. I wanna be more, to have more integrity just completely across the board, with everything I do. And I referee football as well, and obviously if you're out there in front of the people and you're supposed to be controlling a game of a whole lot of other people, you've got to be really in control, and have, you know, you've gotta have integrity. You know as soon as you have a lapse of concentration and you make a mistake, your integrity goes [poof out the window noise and action]

R And everyone remembers.

M Yeah, so I think that's really, I use that as my sort of indicator, in the day to day, as to how I'm sort of going as a person, coz it really affects me, when I make a mistake and people come down on me, and I think myself overall I must be loosing my integrity personally, you know, it's sort of a little gauge, yeah, to my overall integrity. Because if I make a mistake in the refereeing, and I'm feeling good with myself, it won't bother me so much. Yeah, and with music obviously, where I become um, where I become engaged with other people using my art to communicate, how am I keeping my integrity there if I'm not even doing music at the moment, but I do it, and when I do it next, I'm not going to worry at all about making money out of it. I'm not even going to go for it. I'm just gonna, you know I've got enough contacts that I can use to make videos, and I can ring up some dude I know through television and ask him to help me here, and that person can help me there, and use those contacts, you know, rather than having to suck up to this one or that one, or having to push this or having to work this one to get to there, you know. It's going to be a much more natural process, you know, even though it can sound a bit more contrived, yeah.

R Would focussing on money be something that you see would contravene what you think would constitute integrity?

M No.

R So it's just something that you are concentrating on at the moment, if you do go back into music it would not be for the money it would just be for the love.

M Yeah.

R But, if you changed your mind and decided that 'no actually I want to make a living out of this' that would be..

M That would be alright. I just think at the moment it hurts, it hurt me to be doing music and loosing money on it and loosing lot of time and sleep and having to work and stuff and it really hurt my music and hurt me as an artist. Whereas now, like before I didn't put any work in other than being a musician, I was a bum, and then I started thinking 'oh I could do a bit of work' yadayada, and it was really difficult doing [magazine] and that sort of 50 hour a week job and doing music as well and doing tours at the same time and trying to Creative New Zealand funding and so now its sort of like ok, I've done the work that isn't music, if I'm going to do that lets do some work, make some money, don't worry about that I'm making money that's not from my music, and have music be the thing that I do because I want to, which is pretty much like being at home again with your mummy, because mummy's looking after you, so I can play my music, it's just that, I'm my mummy, I'm having to work to make the money to support myself, and then I can play my music. So yeah, I'm not putting any pressure on my 'artist' self to make any money.

I'm saying 'hey arts self, you just sit in that chair and wank away as much as you want, I'll take care of the bills'. [laughs] I'm not schizophrenic.

R Do you think there are any pressures to retain or give up musicians' artistic integrity or whatever you know? Is there some sort of external source that says 'you must have integrity' or 'give that shit up'?

M I think it's much more visible in music and in art in general when you're young, when you have no realistic ideal of how, of what it's all about, because you're, you've got hardly any responsibilities, to anyone or anything. When you start getting more responsibilities you start going 'I can't keep this balance up'. So when you're younger you're like 'oh yeah man, this is what it's all about, this is what I'm doing, this is the purest form of anything, and your form is not pure so you're not, and you're wearing this so you're not..' and then when you get older you get a lot more realistic about it, you know, whether its, it doesn't really matter what form takes, you know, whether it's got integrity or not, it's just what it is.

R People talk, specifically in music more than any of the other areas of the arts or the creative industries or whatever you want to call them, about people selling out. [yup] What do you think that means? [laughs]

Coz you know it's chucked around all the time, like with Greenday with their latest album, there was a lot of stuff saying 'oh blah blah blah they've sold out,' you know they've got a Grammy and stuff. What do you think?

M Something I think, it's that thing where, it's kinda supposed to be anti-establishment, you know, anti-work, anti-everything. So, you can't be playing punk and making money, and you're part of the establishment. It's just a contradiction in terms, so you're selling out. And if you're a rock band, and you're playing U2 type music, or bands like Pearl Jam or Nirvana or who have that punk sort of ethic of singing stuff because you mean it, all that Neil Young sort of ethic, we mean this stuff, that four dead in Ohio sort of stuff, the world is going to hell in a handbag if we don't do something about it, you're making millions of dollars with those statements, that's selling out.

You know? You don't write that sort of stuff for money, you write it for the betterment of mankind. Any money you make off it, you know, you should give to the World Wildlife Fund or to children in Africa. You know? Yeah. When I was younger I was all for that, you know I was like, yeah man, that's exactly it, and if any band that I liked I was like, yeah, I don't know, if they weren't like that I didn't like them anymore, you know?

R Yeah. What I find really interesting and like the Greenday example is one that really struck me because, one reason is because it was so vicious, the attacks on them, and two because the music they were making was reaching a much wider audience, and it was still kind of getting across that sort of anti-establishment ethic of really strongly anti-government statements really well because it was being played on MTV 50 times a day, and because they got recognition for it through the Grammy.... Is there sort of situations where the accusations that are chucked around like that example are as in that example sort of missing the point?

M I think, because what's difficult in that sort of situation is like with Greenday and another example is Rage Against the Machine, they made these songs that were hugely popular, and sold all these records, and they're saying, we shouldn't be doing that you know? Or whatever, so I think.. Sorry what was the last bit of your question?

R I can't remember. Just go for it.

M Yeah yeah, so that balance is really hard to strike up, where you're saying 'don't be glued to the man, we've got to bring the power back' and all that stuff, anti-government and yadayadayada, plus making money out of it you know? And that's the thing, its like...

R

M Exactly, now that you've made the money, you can get more people into it, because there is more people hearing the message. That's the way to do it, whereas, you know, it's that catch 22 again isn't it, because you can't do it any other way. If you want to get mass exposure, you have to go through that channel. Even if you are doing it through 'Little Rock Band Records', who are owned by Sony, sooner or later, if you want to get further, they're going to use that, their Sony bureaucracy, to get it out to, you know, they're going to say 'we've got this little band who're good' and they'll use it and get out there like that. It's unavoidable if you want to go further obviously, if you want to have your music heard really. So if you're a person who thinks she's got something to share, you have to go through that channel. And um, that's selling out, in the harsh definition of it, that's, you know. But to me, now, I don't think that's selling out. What people call selling out now I don't think is selling out at all, because you have sports people going onto a field to run around kicking balls and grabbing each other, being paid thousands, millions of dollars. That's not selling out. So why is... and their making entertainment, they're entertaining

people, and for some people, it's drama, it's soap opera, it's their lives, for some people it creates their whole being, to be watching it and be involved in it. Music, culture, art, is the same, if not more important in a great thing like that. People who are creating it should be paid lots and lots of money to be doing it you know? Especially if what they're saying is really important. Who decides what is important is the hardest thing. Who decides what will be recorded and what will not.

R Anything else?

M I know that I started getting lost in the artistic integrity part.

Chat chat

[artistic integrity:] because it's such a fine line, it's such a thing that doesn't really matter, you know? You could so take the view that nothing actually really matters, you know? If you want to express something beautiful then express it, if you don't then don't, if you want to do nothing, do nothing, you know? So, integrity, yeah, it's almost not important as well, unless you make it important.

R Do you think it's possible for somebody to look in and say 'you have sold out?'

M I think definitely through the definitions that are bandied around, that people do that all the time.

R Is that valid?

M It's valid in the context of that person, but I don't think it's really important, no. Like, yeah, like I was saying, Rage Against the Machine, did they sell out? Yes, but they got their message out to all those people, you know, Che Guivara's face is on tee-shirts now because of them,

R chat chat

M And the dude burning himself on the cover, and I used to know his name and exactly why he was doing it, and obviously he was protesting against Vietnam, but now...

Yeah, artistic integrity, I mean, as long as the art itself fulfils it's role, I don't think it really matters what the artist, who the artist is and what they've done,. You know, I think the important bit is the music or the picture or the film or the, just the piece of art, you know? Because that, obviously it's harder to separate the art from the person in music, because they're both coming at the same time, whereas in art, you look at the picture on the wall and you don't know what the artist looks like or what their background is, you know? Music is so much harder. Yeah, daily lives, people are taking photos of them all the time, interviewing them, talking to them, much more in the public eye.

R Kind of also being asked to justify what you're doing all the time as well?

M Yeah yeah, 'why'd you write that song? What do the lyric's mean?' [what does your band name mean?] Yeah! They're the most hated questions. So yeah, I think that's where it really hits home, because I think because music is so successful and so available and everyone, you know, music is the soundtrack to your life, and everyone listens to it, everyone is moved by it in some way,

R do you think it is becoming more pervasive now? Like with all the new technology and stuff? Mp3 players?

M Because if you're an old bugger like me then that stuff just passed me by, because I listen to a lot of music, but it used to be on Sony Walkman's in my day,

R chat chat...

M I think definitely with the technology more people are exposed to lots of different types of music, yeah, younger people are listening to the older stuff because they can listen to it on the internet, and older people who didn't even used to think about how they could have music here, chat chat

DISCUSSION ABOUT DOWNLOADING... interesting but not relevant.

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Interview four

Conducted at researcher's home

27.06.06

Coded to preserve artist's anonymity

RESEARCHER Tell me a little bit about yourself and your film-making in particular, but your creative practice in general.

BEN Sure, ok. First thing, name: [Ben], born in Palmerston North, age 34 with his hair, rocking. Work as a director for a company called [name] making TV commercials for a living, which doesn't have much creative input in it [laughs]but is being a director. Um, have made one feature film so far, called [film name] in 2003, got another one in the pipeline. Studied here at Waikato Polytechnic for film um, what else would you like to know, made 3 short films, two animated, one live action. Have made 78 music videos so far in my career. I'm aiming for 100, but don't know if I'll get there [well, only 22 to go] yeah but I'm kind of stalled at 78. And that's pretty much the film-making side. I write, I wrote my first film and I've written two others since then and they're both in kind of development right now which is cool. Um, don't want to be a writer but no-one else wrote anything I liked so I just wrote my own shit. I thought 'ah well, I'll just learn how to write and do it'. And um, in my spare time, which is few and far between, I paint, and I have a very healthy painting career/hobby going on, which is unbelievable. Um, I have an exhibition up in Auckland coming up in August which I'm painting hard out for at the moment hence the dirty fingers which you can't see on the tape but make me look like a motor mechanic, and I have been painting for 10 years. And yeah, that's pretty much me. Oh and I play in three bands, which is also a nice outlet. For creativity.

R You said drums earlier? [yup] Drums in all three?

B Yup, drums in all three, because after working in advertising all day um, driving to Hamilton and beating the shit out of drums is like 'hello stress relief'. And I can go back to Auckland and go 'oh yeah, I'm totally calm, I'm not going to get grumpy with anyone'.

R Is there any history of creative ability?

B OH, um, to a degree, no-one ever took it the.. I mean, for years my father was like 'when are you going to get a real job, I mean, you're studying film-making?' And I failed my course at tech, you know, 'you're studying art, and you changed to film-making, What? When are you going to get a real job? Why don't you get an apprenticeship or something, why don't you learn a trade? Do a practical skill' which you know my whole family had done, and then um, I got my first, I think it was my first short film in the film festival and he went and saw it and started twigging that I could actually do this, and then my feature came out and it was at the movie theatre in Palmerston North and it was next to bloody American Pie and all that other shit, and the poster was there and I was being interviewed in the paper and on the radio and stuff and he was like 'bloody hell. My bloody boy is actually making a career out of this'. I'm kinda the first to go down the film-making path. I've got an uncle who's a painter down in the South Island which is cool but I'm kinda the only one kinda bumming it around trying to do an arty kind of career. ... I like your questions. You're very organized.

R blah blah Can you tell me about one of your creative projects that you are especially proud of, or something that you were really really excited about?

B Um, I think the best one would have to be the [film], cos that was like, I mean it took me two three years to get the script written, and then to go through what's called 'development hell' where you know, I mean think about it, I'm this young punk who's made music videos asking the film commission to give me two million bucks, I mean, when you look at it from their side it's like 'no way man'

R And from your side you're going, 'it's two million dollars'

B It's like 'gimme some money gimme some money, I mean it is two million dollars, it's only two million'. But yeah, so far, from whoa to go, that's been the best single creative achievement I've managed to do. Firstly writing a script that worked, which took ages cos I wasn't a good writer and I had to get lots of help, and then convincing a whole lot of men in grey suits around a big board table that they could trust me not to go spend their two million buck on beer and at the casino, and then to actually get on set with you know forty people and in the middle of a Waikato field at zero degrees and say action and cut and tell actors what to do and call the shots. It was, oh, fantastic. And then yeah, to actually go and sit in a cinema and for example sit in a cinema in Spain, I got to go to a festival there, and watch it with a packed house of Spanish horror and thriller fans, and watch them enjoy it, and afterwards have them go 'hey I really liked your film' and it's like 'wow thanks' it's the best. It's like payback for all that shit for that. And now, I've

got the poster on my wall at home and it's like 'made that one, sweet, got to make another one'. It's that feeling, I've got to make another one. But yeah, I'd say that is my biggest creative thing so far. Is that the kind of stuff you need?

R Yup, is there something on the flipside of that? Something that you were involved in that you went 'oh god no, why did I do that' or that in hindsight you thought back and thought that at the time you weren't happy with?

B not really, nah. I mean a lot of the stuff I do I have to invest, most of what I do as a director, especially things that I don't have um, I mean commercials are a little bit different because they're, I'm hired to do a job, I do my job, you know. I invest a lot of my time in it, you know, but often I won't invest as much love in it, as I would something like my own film, or music videos [cat interrupts]. But I mean, there's music videos that I've made that I've tried to make really good and they've turned to shit, and I've looked back and gone 'uh, I wish I'd done that differently' but you kind of learn from every single cock-up that you make. That's the way this whole process works, it's like, well I made heaps of cock-ups on the [film] and there are parts of it that I just hate, and things about it I really don't like, but you know, I can see the positive side and go 'oh, you know, I won't do that again'. I learned something and the next film will be 20 times better because I'm going to make all those cock-ups good, and probably all the good stuff will turn into cock-ups, [laughs] oh no!

R That kind of distinction that you make between the commercial work and your own work, is that quite clear in your head?

B Well, no not really, because when I'm on set directing a commercial I'm that guy who directs anything, you know I act the same way that I act when I direct a clip that has no money, to you know a commercial that has a hundred grand for thirty seconds, so it's like, I have to be the same guy, I have to be myself, I have to be true to what I've learned so far and my instincts, but there is kind of a line you reach where like with a commercial you will reach a line with the client where they go 'nah I hate that' and you go 'well I could battle you all day, and yet you're paying a hundred grand for this, it's your thing, I could fight you, but why? I've been paid to do my job and I've done it and I've done it well, and I'll just step back'. Whereas on a, on my film, I'd battle for things to the death man. You'd have to prove to me in blood that it was a better idea to do it your way than my way, and I would fight you if I thought I was right. And a couple times I was totally wrong and it was like shit, next time I'll learn a bit more before I do that, but you know you have to fight your battles. I think you have to choose your battles, as another kind of way to put it?

R Do you have the same sense of ownership over the advertising slash music video kind of stuff as you do over your film?

B No the film is like a child. The advertising stuff I see it on TV and go 'oh cool, looks good on telly, did a good job', you know, and occasionally if one does really well and people remember it, like yesterday I found out that an ad I made last year was the most complained about ad in all of 2005. It was that shaker ad, with the [does action], the wanking ad. Not that it's wanking, it's teaching you how to shake up milk, but I was so proud. It was like, we did good! [Lots of people remember that ad] Oh yeah, which means that I did a good job. Yeah, the product sold heaps, and the client liked it and yeah, we got a script that no-one thought would ever fly on the screen by just being clever with the way we showed it so we couldn't get in too much trouble. So I felt, that ownership is there, but compared to the film, yeah, that's a different thing, because I've written it. I mean, film-making is just like advertising, it's a business, but you have to be so much more, you have to almost slice off a pound of flesh to do it, so I don't know. How does that sound, hope it's worth it.

R Has it been so far?

B Oh totally. Yup. For years I was like this struggling bum, living out of my money box. Like I had all these coins in this jar, and for a while there I had to live off that, in between trying to get paid gigs, learning to be a baby director, you know, and it's still kinda like that, I still live job to job, but it's totally worth it. It's like, man, today I left work at three o'clock to come to Hamilton to play drums. That's pretty cool, not many people can say 'oh, I'm just going, I'm leaving, I'll see you tomorrow', and no-one even questions where I'm going, I love that. If I was going to do a nine-to-five job, I'd become a disgruntled worker in about two weeks. I'd be stealing stationary in two weeks.

R Activity.

B [laughing] I pretty much have been in all those situations in one way or another so.

R Excellent! Okay, which two of those situations is most similar in contrast to the third.

B. Oh wow! Which two. I would say it would be the band and the dancer are similar [in contrast to the visual artist?] Um yeah. The visual artist is um, it's a different kind of thing. They're

going to be paid to use your thing to sell someone else's thing, whereas this one, you're just going to change your thing to make more people see it {dancer?}.

R So you see having an established style or whatever is kind of similar to what you do with making...

B Oh yeah. I mean I have a style, of directing and I, you know, but I will change it to get a job. So, it's... The swear word thing and the dancer changing the costumes, that just seems like changing small elements, and if you've still got the bigger picture, you've still got, the dance moves are the same, you've still got the chord structure of the songs is the same, and if you have to flip the words around to get it onto radio then sweet as you know, bring it on, but that's probably because I do work in ads, you know, and I know that, um, I have a kind of commercial sensibility, and it's like 'well, what do you want to do? Do you want to make something that you're really proud of but one person will hear, or do you want to make something that you're really proud of that five billion people will hear?' [laughs]

R Okay, which two are you most comfortable with in contrast to the third?

B Right. Um, I have to say it would probably be the same two. The band changing your lyrics, or changing your outfit, no worries. The other one, it's kind of a weird one coz their all so similar. The visual artist being booked to draw or do whatever to um, boost, or um, but I guess it depends what the thing is [laughs].

R Why do you single that one out? Is it something to do with the fact that it's an alcohol brand, or that it's...

B It could be anything, yeah, I mean...

R Is it just the advertising focus or?

B It happens all the time by um, by Telecom will buy the entire Dawnraid crew to advertise *Hookup*, you know, and they did it, and *Hookup* and Telecom got the Dawnraid guys bought into it, and if you change the timing and they got a lot of money and also sold some product, you know, and sell phones, and that's cool, you know, and I guess that's what that [situation] is. I mean changing the costumes, if that came from a, that's the dancers choice, you know they've deliberately chosen to wear different costumes you know? And well, they've made a conscious decision. And this person, is ah, the visual artist has obviously been seeking work, and has been booked for that, so no worries, and being told you have to change something, well you know, it's not so bad, and it's always going to happen. And yeah, I kinda put those two together, because in that one the dancer is in control, and this one here, the band aren't in control, but they still do have the choice, whether they can go 'fuck it, we're not going to change it, we're leaving the words in'. Whereas in this one, they've gone out and actively sought work, and they'd've already known that they would probably have had to you know, bend over, kind of thing. And that's cool, if they want to...

R And it's not like there isn't a history of that sort of thing happening anyway [oh totally] especially with visual artists. When you look at the Absolut brand and stuff..

B Yeah, designers love touting alcohol. I know a designer who worked on 42 Below, and he had a lot to do with the [film], and um, yeah man, he loved it because they gave him free reign, like, he was like 'I like the product, and I'll happily do clever things to sell it', and I was like 'cool'. And one of the questions I always get asked, when I get to talk at like, film schools and um, universities, and I'll show music videos, which everyone likes, and perhaps a film or something and people seem pretty cool about that, but the minute I show any ads, you know, if I show a - not that I've done any for a long time - a McDonalds ad, um, I'll get like totally torn into by, you know, everyone in the class, coz they'll be all revved up. 'Why would you sell out and work for McDonalds?' Well, when you've been living off two-minute noodles for two years, and you want to be a director and you want to break into commercials, sometimes you have to take the good with the bad, and go well 'I'm going to do a good job of this ad, so I can get into the industry, and then get up to that level in the industry where I can pick and choose who I work with.

Chat chat.

K second activity.

B [Reads out film-making activity dramatically] More likely to be the investor, because the production company is more likely to be on the side of the film-maker, but that's cool. I am in that situation right now.

R Which two are most similar in contrast to the third.

B Which two are most similar? In my opinion?

R All these questions are really subjective so just go for it.

B Yeah yeah, of course. It's weird coz I always go for, like last time I went for the visual artist coz you know, that could be me, and this one I went well, film-maker, that's definitely me. And

singer, I can understand the music thing coz I play in bands, so I can understand how that works, um, The two, ah it would be the, oh, it's quite a good one actually, [long pause] Um, the first two, which would be the film-maker and the website designer are both refusing to bow down to the man, and number three, the upcoming singer, is choosing to stay with the ah small man as opposed to the big man because of some kind of debt which they'll probably regret later. Which is cool, you know, good on them but that's great. [laughs]

R So in terms of how comfortable you feel with them, are there two that you are more comfortable with?

B No I think I can totally understand, a website designer refusing to take on a client that's um, you know if the Nazi party came in and said 'hey man, make an ad for me' I'd be like, 'well probably not' you know. But then again, you have to look at every job on its merits, you know, it might be, it might have some good merits, but I doubt it. [laughs]. So it would probably be that one. But the other two, its like, I mean, a film-maker deciding to abandon their film rather than make the changes required, that's like, it's all like dependant on the situation, you know, if it's a first time film-maker then they're a fool, and if it's like a, you know, if it's like Steven Spielberg going 'Nah, I'm not going to do it then' then that, it's like they're so high up the shit-heap that they can do that, you know. I mean, I made a few changes on The [the film] to get the money, and in the end I'm so happy that I did. But for a while there I was just so wanting to turn around and go 'ah, no way, all those old men in suits can get fucked, I'm not changing nothing.' And then I let my hot head cool off, and six hours later I was like 'actually, they make a lot of sense'. So the website one was the one that, yeah she's the one that is making kind of the choice, like this one here is like it's habit as well, with the singer, it's habit to stay with what you know whereas taking the big leap... So what was the question again?

Chat chat

R Are there any of those situations that you wouldn't put yourself in?

B Um, wouldn't put myself in? Like how do you mean? Like would I refuse an advertising job because it's for something that I just personally don't agree with? [yup] Um, no I think I could probably be swayed on all three. You know, dependant, you know, if I want twenty million dollars from Fox to make a movie, and they want me to make the lead a female instead of a male, I'd probably do it, so I can shoot a movie, but then, that movie would get another movie, and another and another and another... You know, um, and yeah, for ages I just stayed with what I knew, kind of thing, but looking back, sometimes it was a lack of energy, and a jump would have been a good thing, you know, and choosing ah, a client based on their morals, maybe, but ah, it would have to be something pretty full on, that was really going to ah, I dunno,

R And you would have to be snowed under with work as well?

B Yeah, if I was ah, if I was basically starving and my little boy was starving, and I was offered a job by – I can't think of anyone that I would turn down, you know, coz they all have their, you know, they all have their good sides in some weird way, or you can change them from the inside if you want, you know, it's kind of a weird one. I don't think there is any that I would completely get myself out of. It would have to be, it's very subjective as to what the thing is, who the client is, who the production company is. 'Change that script' 'okay'. That's happening now, I'm doing that right now, I've got two scripts and one is in front of the film commission and I have to meet with the script editor on Thursday. [Re-write, re-write, re-write]. Yeah, I've been re-writing for a year, you know, how many more years is this re-write shit going to go on for? You have to take a stand, you have to take a stand sometimes, and just go, nah, I'm not changing that, but you have to also listen, and sometimes people do see stuff that you don't see, because you get so close to shit that you go, well...

R Do you ever go back to your first draft, and go, is it the same thing?

B Ah, yep, totally, I've gone back to the first draft and gone, this first draft is awesome, I might just change the number on the front and submit this again, and see if they notice. Yeah, I have, but usually I manage to retain some kind of, you know, they can say 'change everything' and you can say 'okay, I hear what you're saying, let me have a go at it'. You change some things that they've mentioned because they might be right, and you don't change other things and they look at it again and go 'hey cool, you did exactly what we asked for'. It's like when you edit a commercial, you can leave in one really, you can leave one really obviously bad edit in the cut, that you know they're going to be – you have to be careful that they're going to notice it – so they focus on that and they won't look at anything else. [laughing] So they'll go 'oh, that person's upside down!' 'Oh we better fix that, oh, we're glad you noticed. Excellent!' And they go 'oh that's awesome' and you go 'thanks for your input'. But it's very dangerous to do that, because if they don't notice then you're rooted, and you see it on TV, and you're like, 'oh man, I wish I hadn't tried that trick.'

Sorry am I giving you, are the questions too wordy? Are the answers too wordy? [no no, it'd be difficult to do that]

Chat chat

B They're going to go 'this guy started answering this this way, and then he flipped right around and answered it backwards. He totally contradicted himself!' Hey well, contradiction is the spice of life, come on. What is it? [stage whisper] Contradiction equals identity. Oh yeah. [laughs]

R Very broad question. How do you feel about the current environment in New Zealand for film-makers.

B Ah, I think it's great. Totally great. I mean there's too many of them, we need to do a big cull, and wipe a few of them out, for sure, but um, it's great, it's really um encouraging, and there is a funding body which you know, is unbelievable, and there's the Film Commission, and there's Creative New Zealand, and there's a huge swell of fantastic crew who are all Peter Jackson trained, and there's Peter Jackson, who's you know leading from the front. He's like the little Napoleon going 'whaa' making all these, like carving this big path and creating all these studio's and all this post-production, and creating all these film crew people who know all this great stuff, because they've worked on gigantic movies, um, and little dudes like me get to come along and go [high pitched squeaky voice] 'hey I've got two million dollars to make a little thriller, um can I have' [normal voice] like half the crew on my film were from Lord of the Rings, and it was like sweet, and they loved it coz it was like this six week shoot rather than a six hundred week shoot, and they could say something, they could say 'hey what if we did this like this' and I'd say 'yeah' and so like they wouldn't have to call twenty people and put it in writing 48 times. So I think it's really good. The only issue I'd say is that there's a whole lot of film schools and polytechs and stuff churning out people who are coming out saying [deep voice] 'I'm a director' and you're like 'oh no'. you know I go and talk to classes some times and you can see that there is ten people in there who already see themselves as directors, which is cool to have that confidence, you know, you come out in the real world and you go whoh, there's a whole lot of people battling for the few commercials that are made and few big films that get done, so you know, you need to start at the bottom. That's the only thing. But I think it's a very good, positive environment at the moment, and people seem to be busy, so, as much as I gripe about having to develop my script I'm quite happy with it, you know. The fact that in New Zealand, there's how many people? Four million? Five million? Four million? It's a pretty small pile to get to the top of, you know what I mean? Think of it like that Playstation ad with all those people climbing up to get to the top pile, which is a terrible reference for Playstation, 'okay all you people come jump on this shit pile with all these other people and climb to the top and crush each other, awesome'. Um, but it's like that you know, it's easy it's easier for me to get to the top and get two million bucks out of the government here than it would have been in the States or in um, Australia, or in any larger country. Small pile, easier to claw your way to the top. Not that I'm at the top now, but I've seen the top, I've been there once before, and I will get back [laughs].

R There's a lot of stuff chucked around in the media about, Helen Clarke being minister of arts, culture and heritage and all that sort of stuff. How do you see what's being said in relation to what's actually happening?

B Um, there definitely has been um, yeah there definitely has been a change for the good, like for the creative good. I think it takes, it always takes a long time, a politician says something and two years later, a slight look [funny voice] 'oh look, they're giving us five dollars more to do creative stuff'. It's that slow, but there does definitely seem to be a change for good. There's a, um, people seem to be confident and um will actually go after it because they're like, 'wow, Labour government, and Helen's into film-making, cool, lets go get some money and make a film.' So yeah, I think there is definitely a positive response to it now. I mean I was pretty scared of what's-his-name getting into power, old Brash, getting into power, because it's like, well [stage whisper] he's going to make it even harder to get some money out of the film commission if I want any.

R Yup, he might take it all back.

B Yeah, he might say 'hey, remember that two million we gave you to make the [film]? Nah. We want it back, with interest. [laughs]. But you know, it's that thing, you know, film-makers seem to expect that they can get money, which is kind of rude, coz it's like, working in advertising, you know, there's money out there, but if someone is going to give you a lot of money to make a piece of art, your art, they have to be able to sell that piece of art and make some money back off it, or otherwise it's not worth it for them. Why would it be? Why would you, why would I give you 100 grand if you weren't going to give me back something that I could make 150 grand off? That's just bad business, you know? I've kinda learnt that now, so now when I'm writing my script I'm like, 'oh wow, this could be sold in any country and you can basically translate this into

any language and ah, it has a universal theme even though it's set in New Zealand. So yes, great. And yet it works from a New Zealand side so I can get money out of the film commission, but it works internationally because it's a horror so it's got a good genre.'

R So in relation to that sort of stuff, what's the most positive thing you think about being a film-maker in New Zealand right now?

B Apart from that it's a small bunch of us trying to do it? [yeah] Um, I don't know I think maybe that New Zealand is, as a nation we're kind of proud, because basically because of Mr Jackson. We still have this little [funny voice] 'wow, we did that, we made Lord of the Rings, I mean, we didn't, but he did' and a whole lot of really smart people with computers did

K And there is only 4 million of us so it rubs off

G Pretty much every single person did, yeah 'we did that'. And so you can, you know, when you um when you go and say to someone 'hey man, I'm shooting a film, can I use your farm? Can I, you know, can I burn your bridge? Can I set fire to your house?' or whatever, they're like 'cool, is it going to be like Lord of the Rings?' And so New Zealand is kind of supportive of film-makers, at the moment, until someone burns them, in a bad way.

K Is there a flip-side to that? Is there anything that is particularly negative about the current environment?

G Apart from the fact that there is too many film-makers being spewed out of learning institutions?

K yup.

G Um, probably that... Ah, no, not that I've seen. I have a pretty positive outlook on most things so it's hard for me to see the negative. And I'm sure it's going on but I haven't seen it. I just go on my merry way and go 'keep writing and film-making and ho ho ho'. So I haven't yet had to encounter anything super-negative, you know, nothing that I can't get over in at least 12 hours. [laughs].

R Big questions.

B Oh yeah, you warmed me up, punched me a little bit, so now it's like the big smacks in the head, ok.

R What does the term 'artistic integrity' mean to you?

B To me, artistic integrity is trusting your own instinct, and being able to back it up. That's all it means, and knowing that deep down, you are right, and what you're doing has a meaning to you that you love and you're going to fight for it, and that's all it is, I mean, I've learnt that now, I've learnt that inside here 'taps on chest for um emphasis' inside here, if I'm going to make a film or a painting or whatever, it has to have an element of truth in it, and the only truth that I can give it is the truth that I know, so I'll just make sure that it feels true to me, and then it's, it will retain some sort of integrity. If you listen to a whole lot of other people, you know, great they're all really brainy and that sort of stuff and they might have really good opinions, but if it doesn't have any element of your own truth in it, then it's not um, there's not any integrity left in it. It's just going to be another, like a copy of a film or a painting. I find that a lot you know? I used to listen to people heaps about how much shit I should put in my script and now I just listen to it a little bit. You know 'I hear what you're saying, and I'll take some of it in, but deep down, I'm going to make the film I wanna make... kind of. But if it means I have to do this, and I have to shave all my hair off, so you'll give me all this money, then I'll do it. But I'm still going to remain true to my project. [Laughing] It's a weird one, you know, I think it comes from within, you just have to stay, have a belief in yourself, and if you don't you're gonna, just sort of get dragged along.

K Is this something that you think about?

B Is it something that I think about, now I do yeah. Now I've done it once, and I've learnt from my mistakes, and I've kind of you know, parts of [the film], for sure I've, I go 'yeah yeah that's exactly how I wanted it to be' and other parts I go 'I listened to too many people on that, it's muddled it's confused, it's wrong' and I go 'that was not working because...' I don't blame other people, you know, it's myself, 'you didn't stay true to yourself there, you didn't vouch for it,' um yeah,

R Do you feel that it's easier to retain a sense of integrity when you're doing things like painting and music where you have less, sort of outside stuff?

B Absolutely. Yeah, I'd say I paint totally, from a totally different head space, and I, you know I can't go into my painting room and paint a picture that I've already thought of, pretty much, because already I'm lying, I'm just copying something out of my head and it never works. I try it and go 'that looks like shit', and I usually paint over it. And I have the same problem when people commission me to do something. You know, someone said to me 'I'd like you to paint a large picture that is blue with dogs', so I went into my studio and painted six paintings, one of them was

blue and it had a dog in it somewhere, but you know, none of the others were, and the person came around and went 'I like the blue one, but I wanna buy the white one' and it was like, well of course, you know, that's where I started, that's what you said, and that's what I ended up with so you know, painting for sure, it's totally um, yeah, I don't listen to anyone, and when I do, when I listen to my other little voice in my head going [funny voice] 'you should use a nicer brush on this or you should prepare your boards better' that's when I fuck up, oh well, I cocked up because I listened to the little fine art guy in here, I didn't just go with the emotion, the flow, so.. And it shows, the paintings that I just went with, you know, unconsciously kind of made, are way, way more resonant and people just look at them and go 'wow, I like that' or 'whoa I hate that' and that's great, it means that it's not 'oh yeah', it doesn't become wallpaper, it becomes, it actually says something to them, whether or not they like it, it doesn't matter, as long as it makes them go..

R Spend more than the two seconds that we're supposed to spend in front of paintings

B I don't know, maybe it's because a lot of them are really, really big, and bright red, and there is blood and gore all over them, sometimes I'm like 'well, maybe that could have something to do with it?' but maybe not, hopefully it's the painting itself. [laughs]

R How does artistic integrity relate to the work that you do in commercials? Is it there?

B Yeah, it is there to a degree, like it's there to like, ah, I want to do a really good job as a director. So I'll get given a script, which I haven't written, and I will um make suggestions on it, and go 'hey, it would be funny if this was outside', or 'not one guy, but two guys', that sort of stuff, and they might turn around and say 'nah, do it our way' and I'll go 'ok, cool'. And so I'll do it there way to the best of my ability, and that's where my artistic integrity can come out. I'll make the performance really good and I'll make sure it's shot really beautifully and it cuts together really well and the music is rocking or you know, and it works, and then hand them back a bunch of stuff, and go 'hey I made this' and they might go 'well it sucks', but most of the time they go 'cool' because you should keep the agency and the client involved in the process, but like I said before there's a, there's a line that you reach, where you go, 'you know, I could stay up all night, and do this and re-write this and do this, or you know, I could work my crew 20 hours, but really it's not going to make a difference. You know, it's not going to change the product that much, and I probably won't sell any more things so, plus I'm in the sort of industry where you go 'well, I've got x amount of dollars and x amount of hours to shoot it so you have to you know, to have any kind of integrity you have to make sure you meet those deadlines or stay kind of within them, so you get more jobs, so people go 'wow, we liked working with [Ben] on that ad. A. he made a really good ad, and B. he brought it in on the schedule that we agreed on, and it was pretty much on budget'... Or usually a little bit over, but you know [laughs].

R There's bound to be a bit of a slush fund somewhere...

B Yeah, or it's a bit weird, you can say to them, we need more film. We need more film so I can make extra shots for you so we can make a 45 second version as well and they're like 'oh really, a 45 second as well, oh yeah, lets do it'. It's not all bad, advertisings not all bad, I mean sure you might have to sell burgers to fat kids, or you know, stuff like that, but if you can rationalise it in some way, then it's a really good way to learn your trade, to learn you know, learn how to be a good director. Think on your feet.

Chat

B Yeah, well I don't defend advertising at all, I think advertising is a load of arse, and a lot of people who work in it are dickheads, and you know, they'll go five years, they'll burn out, and have heart attacks while they're in their thirties. That's why I go 'well, I think I'm on the right side of it'. You know, I can get to play with all these great toys and get to shoot these little short films, 10 second, 20 second, 30 second films, and um, get paid to do it, learn my craft, get better at my craft, you know, establish a reputation that is going to keep me in a career for as long as I can stay in it, and um yeah, and if I can sell product for the client then that's good. And if I get free stuff that's even better. Especially when it's chocolate products or anything good like that.

[laughs] It sucks when you do, I've done a couple of medical products, and it's like, 'oh man, I don't need an asthma inhaler'. 'Here's 12 asthma inhalers.' 'Oh man, I don't want any! Don't give me that!' [laughing]

R I don't have asthma, isn't that irresponsible?

B Yeah man, I'll just shoot a funny ad with a fat guy dressed up in an asthma suit, and then, I don't want an inhaler! [laughing]

R Cool. How important do you think it is that film-makers show that they have integrity?

B Um, I think you have to, you have to show, you have to show the audience who are completely savvy and treat them with respect, and as a film-maker you have to show them that you do have some integrity, because then they will come along for the ride. You know, when you watch a

movie you sit down and in the first five minutes you can usually tell if you're in the hands of a good director, in a weird way, you know you go 'oh cool, this is going to be good' and you know that it's confident and it's got a, there's a heart and soul to it, and you go 'oh this is going to be good, I'm going to follow this story'. But then when it's not good, when it's not there, there's been too many cooks making this broth, or you know, the director was not there, was away, mentally away on holiday when they made this, you know, I think that's the sign of a good director, is someone who can just put a little bit of themselves in it, and take you on a good ride, so, you have to have some integrity to do that. [pause] Or just shit-loads of money and drugs. [laughs] Just kidding. Sorry you can delete that later on, it was a joke, I make bad ones. I mean, I have an Adam Sandler collection, I mean come on! I can only know bad jokes.

K Oh dear. Um, alright. Do you think it's possible for someone to lose their integrity?

B Absolutely. Yup. I think you can um, I don't know um, I could easily lose my painting integrity by just painting the same thing the painting that people want. You know there's one painting of mine that sold on TradeMe for, two paintings actually that sold for, they sold for five thousand dollars which is unbelievable you know, it's like a, like I usually sell paintings for like four hundred bucks, so five thousand bucks... [you're probably under-pricing] yeah, it was crazy, you know I could just paint that same painting for the next ten years, and sell them for that amount, and make a lot of money, but you know, would I feel happy inside? Nah. You know I would feel a bit like, yeah, it would be selling out, it would be losing you integrity, 'hey he saw a, he saw that people wanted that thing and so he painted heaps of it...' [jokingly] I just paint it slightly different and change the colour now, and it's still [laughs]. Nah man, I've been painting the same painting for ten years, I just haven't got it right yet. They're all variations of a theme. [laughing]

R What do you do to remain comfortable with your artistic integrity in each of your

B In everything that I do? Um, that's a good question. I guess yeah, I guess you just have to find a little piece or something in it that you can project yourself onto, you know, if it was an ad for, you know usually I do ads that have funny situations, I usually do comedy ads, and they usually have youngish characters in them and I go, well you know um, I may be selling a product that I wouldn't buy, but I can identify with these little characters in this film, in this ad, and yeah, keep it kind of interesting and keep it kind of real. Keep it real, yeah. And the same with music videos, I wouldn't shoot a band, I wouldn't shoot it, I mean all I know from a band is from watching it from sitting behind a drum kit, so I will shoot clips as aggressively as I would play the drums in a song, and they show that so I have my style I have my way of doing it and that's great, and the same with the paintings, I just make sure there is a little bit of me in all of them, not just blood spilt on the boards, you know that, you know just make sure that they have one little element of truth in them, you know Ben-truth.

R What do think are the biggest pressures on film-makers to retain artistic integrity, along with keeping the audience and everything?

B Like I said it will always come from the people who are investing in the project, because it costs so much to make a film that a grey-suited banker is only going to want to see bums on seats at the other end. They don't give a damn what's in the film. You know, they don't care what colour it is, if you shot it in black and white and did all these wicked special effects. All they care about is 'are we going to get x percent return on our investment?' And that's um, I think that's a huge pressure that you have to be aware of and understand that it's a game. And it's good when you can understand it, coz you can go 'well, Mr Banker is going to want a big return so, you know, I want lots of people to watch my film, and I want it to be good, but I'll make it good, in a way that is going to bring people in that I still feel comfortable with. I'm not just going to cut to a nude woman for five minutes, just to get people talking because he said so. I'm going to do it my way, and hopefully retain my integrity that way. So yeah, usually it comes from the people who put money into it, because money needs to make money. There're other things, like you always have to compromise, as a film-maker you always have to compromise, like you write a script, you write a scene that is set at a bridge over a river (that's the [film]) a bridge over a river at twilight. Yeah great. Awesome, reads really nicely. Try and find a bridge over a river that you can shoot on, and twilight lasts approximately 15 minutes, um, yeah, yeah no, you kind of have to compromise a little bit and go, 'hey well my river is 12 times smaller than it is in my head, the bridge is like four lanes narrower, um, the twilight ain't looking like twilight any more because it had to be shot at dawn, but the essence of the story is still there, all that stuff, you have to compromise, you have to compromise, but you can compromise in your own way, and not um, as long as you don't um, bow out. But always I think the biggest pressure on a film-maker will be the money person. They'll always go to be.. I mean that and the respect of the audience, yeah man, you don't want to get

them on the wrong side of you. If you treat an audience like dickheads, and spell everything out for them, you know, they're going to go 'oh man, so primary school teacher directing film. Primary school teacher explaining everything to the dumb audience'. A lot of cheesy American films do that, but then who are they talking to? Maybe the audience are really dumb-asses. So money first, that's a big pressure, money, the money thing, and secondly keeping the respect of the audience. Yeah, keeping them in your mind, the whole way through. If you loose them, then what have you got. You've got a whole lot of film going through the projector in the cinema and nobody watching it. [laughs]

R If money is one of the biggest pressures to keep your integrity, is it also one of the biggest to loose it?

B To loose it? Absolutely, because it's easy to buy into going 'hey cool, so and so is going to give me heaps of money if I cut, like I said, if I change my man to a leading woman or the other way around, so and so is going to give me twenty million dollars so I can afford a better actor, oh wow, mmm' and then you just have to, you know you have to weigh it up. Will it be better for the project in the end? Yeah, and will I walk away? Probably not, I'll probably still, still get that twenty million dollars to get a better actor, but how can I make it work for me? So, I dunno, I think it works both ways. For sure.

R Is there anything else that END OF TAPE

Is there anything else that pressures people to loose their integrity, to give up their artistic integrity?

B Um, I don't think so. Nah, I mean nothing is going to make me give up my integrity. Maybe the pressure of time, you're always going to have to compromise, but you'll never loose you're integrity, as long as you believe in what you're doing.

R How do you feel about people who come in and say 'that person has sold out' or 'that person has great artistic integrity but that person doesn't'?

B Oh, well, I mean it's happened to me. People have gone, 'oh you're a sell-out man, you make TV ads'. And I've gone, 'yeah, ok, I could sit at home on the dole and try and write films, but, and that way I'd just feel like I was bludging off you, so well, mmm... How do I feel about it? I say bring it on. Um, and you can think that some people have sold out, and you can go, 'well, maybe they have, maybe they've decided to take the money and run' and then they're going to go off and do something else better. I mean, it really depends on what it is. Yeah, I mean I can think of musicians who I think 'yeah, they've sold out' and they're just making shit pop, but then again hey maybe awesome, they could buy a mansion and you know, have a great huge family life now because they can afford it, and maybe they've made a good choice. So yeah, I think you have to look at each case individually, separately I think.

R Do you think it's possible for somebody outside, not the artist themselves to say, to determine whether somebody has integrity or not, or is it to you is it a more personal thing? Like is it a social construction or a personal construction?

B Um, predominately personal, I think you can have your own gauges of it, like you have your little engine and your little integrity gauge [makes buzzing noise] whoop we're into the red in the integrity, oh shit. But um, yeah, with a piece of, with one of my paintings hanging in a gallery and somebody comes along and says, 'he's just painting pictures like blah-blah-blah and blah-blah-blah because they're popular' or whatever, and it's like, that's their opinion, so whatever. I didn't do it with that intent, I had personal integrity when I made it, so it's fine. And that can protect it like a little shield, so they can say whatever they like. So I vote for option, personal option.

R And yet, people don't talk about their own integrity very often, or they certainly don't talk about selling out very often. It sometimes comes through from external media

B Yeah yeah people will always you know brand you as 'you've sold out mate' and it's like 'well I don't think I have'. No-one wants to be called a sell-out or told that they're not doing something original, they're just copying to make money, and it's like well, you don't want to hear that so you do your best to not hear it. But maybe you are just copying someone or just ripping.. So yeah, you're right that it's from a, that it's from external sources, but you know, I just operate purely on what I know myself and I do what I do and I do it well, so if someone says I've sold out it's like, lets get in the ring and take the boxing gloves off and then we'll see. You know, it's like I can always back up anything that I've done pretty much, um, yeah. Anything that I'm proud of. Maybe I can't back up an ad that I've made for a shit product on the grounds that it's making kids fat, but I can back it up on the grounds that its directed well. So, that's a tough one.

R Is there anything else around this that has sprung up in your mind that I asked a question over top of it, or ...

B You've asked a lot of good questions. How many people have you interviewed so far? [you're the fourth] Ah, so I'm down the chain! [But the second today] Oh really.

R I finished at quarter to five so I was stoked when I got your text.

B Saying 'I'm running late'.

Chat

B Nah, it shows that you've been interviewing lots of people, because you have good questions and you don't ask the same question eight times. Although that can sometimes be a good trick, ask the same question eight times and chat chat chat...

Random talking for another 5 minutes, lots of interesting stuff about his work, and approaching people within the industry for jobs, and having the right mindset when entering the industry, but nothing else about integrity...

Indicated on tape that he didn't want to read the transcript, but that I could approach with any queries.

-----end-----

Interview five

Conducted at artist's home

07.07.06

Coded to preserve artist's anonymity

RESEARCHER To start with, can you tell me a little bit about yourself and the visual art that you make, history, training, that sort of thing?

JAMES Um, well I haven't really had any formal training as such, just um, well, I just started off painting and had a couple shows that were pretty successful, and then I won the art award, that's what everyone knows me for, that guy who won the art awards, and yeah, that's basically it basically. I've just started painting so far. I'm kinda more interested in other stuff at the moment, like installation and stuff, but I haven't, yeah, I don't have a lot of time to pursue those I guess, so yeah, just kind of mucking around at the moment.

R And your family is quite involved in art?

J Yeah, well my uncle [names] is ah, works down at [university name], he's head of some art department, and my, he did his masters at Elim and stuff, and yeah, he's quite a, he's quite an underground sort of artist, but he's well respected in certain circles, yeah, cos he's not really into the commercial side of art, so you don't get known if you don't get into that sort of thing.

R Does that mean he just doesn't sell or...

J He doesn't do the whole gallery, dealers thing [ok] and yeah, my aunt is [name], and she is a water-colourist, painter and she's pretty good, yeah. And that's about it I think, yeah.

R Um, so coming in from no training, that sort of thing, what sort of got you to the point where you started doing shows and that sort of thing, coz that's a fairly big step for a lot of people to take, and you just sort of did it

J Yeah, I don't know, I just didn't really think about it really. Most people kind of make such a big deal about it and um, and I just thought, nothing to loose really.

R Yeah? At one point you just woke up and thought 'I'm going to do a whole lot of paintings and do a show?'

J Oh well I was wanting to go to art school, and then, but I didn't do seventh form, so um, so I thought that to show that I'm serious about it then I should do that. So yeah

R Are you still going to pursue training?

J Um, nah, not at the moment. I'd be in debt for the rest of my life.

R Yeah, tell me about it. Can you tell me about a project or a piece of work that you're really proud of or fond of particularly?

J Um, I can't think of anything. Oh, there's a few, but um, ah, well, I mean I was happy with the one that won the awards, I liked that painting, yeah, it was just... what do you want to know?

R Why, is there something in particular that makes you really pleased with the end result?

J Oh, ok, um, oh, just all the usuals, you know, um, hopefully it's, well I kind of like things that are um, that are hard to, that you can't kind of figure them out in the first sort of, yeah, I don't know.

R Does the way that you look at it have more importance than the way other people see it?

J That's such a hard question because it's such an unconscious sort of thing you know?

R All my questions are really subjective so feel free to just go for it.

J Yeah, um, Well, you'd like to think that, in a way you'd like to think that you do it for the sake of it but then when people give you bad feedback obviously you feel negative about it so, yeah, um,

R Have you ever had a piece that you put out there that you really liked that you put out there and then thought 'oh maybe it's not as good as I thought it was'?

J Yeah well it definitely does, you start doubting yourself, and you know, you might, yeah, and if someone says they really like it you start to think, 'oh yeah, this is good' so definitely external influences are a big thing, I think for all artists, yeah. And they're just lying if they say they're totally you know um, oblivious to it, but yeah, it's complicated.

R So what makes to you a work that you're happy with? What is the combination of things that makes it good?

J Well obviously there is how it looks, because I'm not a completely conceptual artist, whereas I suppose some artists the art object is secondary to the idea that created it, but I generally like something that is, has an aesthetic sort of appeal, and then there's, you know, the content, although I don't usually have obvious meaning or metaphors or anything. You know, something with balls, not kind of, just um I don't know,

R Not just something pretty?

J Yeah, not just something pretty, I mean obviously, yeah, well yeah, I mean it has to have a bit more depth, maybe not some obvious sort of meaning or like, something I'm obviously trying to express, but it has to be yeah, have some more depth to it.

R Is there something in contrast to that, have you ever been in the position where you've looked at something and gone, nah that's crap.

J Yeah, well of course, but you always have to remind yourself that you know, that it's all subjective, really what is crap? I don't know. It's impossible to judge, you know, conditioning you know makes you be you know inclined more to one thing than another but that's all it is, it's not it's not like a, a universal truth, that this is good and this is bad, you know it's just your own sort of your own conditioning really. But um, so that makes it a bit hard. And I suppose that's why most people find contemporary art hard because there are certain standards that they can judge it by and a lot of art doesn't kind of go by those standards. So if you don't know what to judge it by then you can't put it, you can't know whether it's good or bad, I think that's, people often don't think it's good or bad, they kind of just don't know, it freaks them out,

R Easier to walk away than try to figure it out maybe?

J Yeah.

R Activity. Which two of those situations are most similar in contrast to the third?

J I would say the ones where they are changing what they do to fit. Whereas the other one, I know it doesn't specify, but it seems that they're just using what he's already doing

R So the visual artist has a style and it's just incorporating that style into an advertisement?

J Yeah, whereas they had to change their words and their costume, which is different. Mmm, Yeah, I'd say those are the two that have the most in common. Although the other one just doesn't specify, you know they might ask him you know, can you paint, well they're commissioning him to paint, to do something, so obviously he is going to have to, well, he is creating something for them rather than changing something he has already painted so, yeah.

R Are there two that you feel more comfortable with than the third?

J Not really, I mean I'm not really, I'm not really that fussed about, I'm not really that puritist about all that sort of stuff you know? So, that's all fair game.

R Yeah? Ok, fair enough. And so in that case, in a sort of similar situation um, yourself, would you put yourself in that sort of situation? Would you um put yourself in the situation of creating an advertisement, would you change parts of a work to fit in with outside criteria?

J I guess it just depends on the kind of work you're creating really. If you've got a certain style which is just about, you know, if your style of art is anti, maybe it is anti-commercialism then you wouldn't, but then, maybe it's just, just painting with different motives. It's really motivation I suppose, taking that into account,

R But you personally

J But me personally, um, oh I wouldn't do it. It's like, if you're doing that then you're sort of stop being the idealistic vision of an artist and almost become like a sign-writer, I don't know, you just do it for the people that want it, to make money so, that's, I don't know, some people might think that's really bad, but I don't. [laughs] They just need to relax.

R So for you, it's ... I don't know how to say this without it sounding really accusing because I'm completely along your wavelength. Um, a lot of people, a lot of visual artists especially, see um, a situation of changing a work, or creating a work along specific criteria to be [selling out] selling out or not following their own artistic vision or whatever...

J Yeah I just think that's just some, just like a cheesy romanticized image of some sort of, well, I suppose people have different views on art, some people see it as some spiritual deep sort of thing, and those sort of people, they probably work, they wouldn't like what he did, but if you don't really value artists in that sort of way,

R It's not so much of an issue?

J Yeah, I suppose it depends on how you value art and your opinion on it, you know. Yeah, I guess, I don't really see art in that sort of um, sort of way.

R For you is it more of a job or something that you do, rather than something that you are compelled to do?

J Well obviously it's more than it's more than just um, a job, but, but it's not like, um, I can't really explain it.

R Something that comes up quite often with visual artists is they see their paintings as their babies, and they have that sort of connection with them. Is that the same with you?

J Oh, not really you know,

Tape breaks into really bad static due to James' cellphone

J How can you be so attached to your opinion when that's all it is, you know? It's nothing concrete, it's no law of nature, it's just your opinion, what is it, what does it mean. So yeah.

R I'll swap you – second activity.

Same first question, which two are the most similar in contrast to the third?

J Um, probably those two there, the website and the film-maker, because they, they make it, well I guess he's there, and he could move away from that where as they, oh I don't know how to explain it. It just seems like they, they've had an opportunity which they've declined, whereas he's, well he's had an opportunity which he's declined as well, so, I suppose they all seem quite similar.

R Again, how do you feel about these sort of situations?

J I think everyone, everyone has certain ideals and um you know it's good to, it's good to kind of live up to those, you know you don't have to, you don't want to completely sell yourself out, but still sometimes you have to question what, you know what, um, whether it's beneficial or not you know, it might not be, it might be a trivial little, you know, it might not actually harm anyone. Whereas that person is not going to go with the people because it could you know, maybe it's a company which creates some harm in some way, so therefore I think that that would be a good choice, whereas um, yeah I don't know it's complicated. If you're making a film you might, you're making a film because you have an idea and what's the point in making it if you're not going to I don't know, go with that idea, but then again, it might be, I don't know.

R Can you see a situation where you wouldn't accept a commission because you didn't agree with the person or the company that was commissioning it?

J Yeah, if it was something like McDonalds or something, and they wanted something then obviously I wouldn't want to do it, but, I don't know, you just, I think you've got to ask yourself whether you're just getting caught up in your own shit or whether it's you know, you're think of others you know. Maybe if you're thinking outside yourself, then it would be a good choice not to, but yeah.

R So you separated out the one with the singer, kind of, I know they're very similar...

J I guess it's just that everyone has their own opinions, I was just thinking, yeah,

R do you feel like, when you read these, are there any that stick out and you think, yeah, that's really, really cool, or oh, that's a stupid move or is it just not an issue?

J I think that one, is probably a good move, whereas that one is just some sort of idea in that persons head that they have some sort of, I don't know, they owe them something. And that one, [pause] I guess it depends on how much conviction you have in what you're doing, if you are that fussed, yeah, I don't, I guess sometimes it's kind of dumb, you know, when people, people say 'oh I want this to match my couch, can you please do it that colour' but um, but then again it doesn't really matter, you know, it's not the end of the world.

R Have you had that request?

J Oh, not that exact request, but, um, well, I've had people say, oh I've got a photo of my dog, sort of thing, can you paint it?

R did you?

J Oh, no. In the end I guess it comes down to it, I wouldn't enjoy it so I'd get sick of it and I wouldn't be able to do it, I guess. I've probably just contradicted myself a whole lot, so yeah.

R Just to get away from this sort of stuff for a bit, how do you feel about the current environment in New Zealand for visual artists, as broadly or as narrowly as you want to read that?

J It seems, it seems good enough, I suppose. There're lots of opportunities, I suppose, there's quite a bit of funding out there, so yeah.

R As somebody who's just sort of starting to, I don't know if you are still classed as emerging or not, but you're just in the transitional period of people starting to get to know who you are, um, what do you see as sort of the biggest positive things about the art scene in New Zealand.

J I suppose there is the whole thing of being recognised as important in an economic sense. I don't know if that is a positive or a negative, but that's quite a big thing, the whole creative industries type thing.

R Do you see it as positive? All the stuff that is coming out from the government?

J Oh, I mean, you can make it positive or negative, really, I think, you know, yeah, you can go either way depending on your approach to it I suppose. Yeah. You can look at people like Andy Warhol and his whole artistic kind of, his whole idea was around, well, a lot of it was around money, commercialism and stuff so yeah. Mmm, it seems like the current government are quite interested in the arts and stuff, keen to put money into it, but I'm not an expert, so yeah.

R Nah that's cool. Do you see the move towards a more commercially based arts scene, like there's a lot of stuff on arts, business workshops and training schemes and the PACE scheme from

WINZ and all of that. Is that in line with how you see your career, like the sort of more business orientated parts?

J I think it's always been a dilemma for artists since the start of time you know, artists have been funded by the bourgeois or whatever and they make art against them, you know, whereas they couldn't make the art if they didn't have that support. So it's always going to be a dilemma. Um, I think it's similar to that, you know like, artists would like to think that they, they're anti all that sort of stuff, when really their, they can't do without it. [laughs] So I suppose if I was going to make a career out of art, I'd have to go along those lines, you know? I'd have to use those sort of channels, but if I just wanted to do art for art, you know, didn't care about money then, yeah, probably wouldn't want to do that sort of thing. Yeah.

R How much support do you get financially from your art practice, and how much do you get from the rest of it?

J Well I haven't really been selling anything lately, I haven't really been making any, I haven't really been doing much art at all lately, just working and stuff so, I couldn't say I, yeah, I probably wouldn't have been able to live off it, you know?

R Do you see yourself wanting to be able to live off it? Would that be a good life choice for you? [laughs]

J Mmm, ah. [pause] That's a good question. Mmm, I don't know, not at the moment, no. Yeah, I don't know. I don't think what I want to do with my art would be commercially viable anyway. Yeah. I mean, yeah, I could have kept on painting lots of [particular style] pictures and probably sold heaps but yeah,

R Lost interest, or?

J Yeah, lost interest, mmm.

R What do you think of the ease of access to training, education, either actually practical skills, or business skills or whatever? Obviously you've chosen not to go down that path but you considered it and turned it down because of the money side of it. Is that a huge issue in terms of people getting training?

J Um, I think so, I mean, I'm sure that there would be a lot more people, you know, wanting to do it if they, if it wasn't going to, you know, because if I went to art school I would probably have to get a job as a teacher or something and I wouldn't want to do that, and then you don't have a lot of time for your own practice anyway so, so it's kind of... [Catch 22] Yeah, it's a bit of a deterrent really, um, although I suppose I could still go, so I don't know yeah.

R And there is also the additional thing that a lot of people don't realise about going to art school is that you're not just paying for your fees; you also have to pay for all your materials as well.

J Yeah, yeah, and then I would have to pay for living costs and studying and stuff and yeah, it's really crap.

R Okay. What do you think are the most positive or the most negative things about being an artist right now in New Zealand?

J I think there are a lot of, I mean artists are accepted and people almost revere artists in some way, I don't know why but I suppose they think they think they, I suppose people think they have some special talent

END OF TAPE

Yeah, I think it's positive that artists are accepted in society, you know, I don't know I guess years ago people would have discouraged people from being artists but you know when I thought of doing it, you know everyone was happy and they thought it was great. But um, yeah, so that's good, there's lots of support, money-wise you know, grants and all that sort of stuff, um,

R What sort of reaction did you get from people, if like, have you ever been asked 'what do you do?' and you said 'oh I'm an artist'. [yeah] What sort of reaction did you get from that? Was it always positive?

J Ah, oh, generally it's positive, you know, people are like 'oh, that's cool, art's cool', but sometimes people are like 'oh', well I suppose sometimes people think that it's not a proper job, [what do you really do?] Yeah, yeah, like 'oh, that must be sweet, you know, cruise around, sort of thing' you know, um, but it's not that, it's quite stressful, well I found it quite stressful doing it full-time you know, um, Yeah, people, yeah there's kind of two responses, there's one 'oh that's just cruisy' and there's one that's 'oh that's hard work', or yeah, that's the other people that just say they think it's really cool, yeah. Um, I can't think of a negative really. Um, yeah, there's lots of possibilities for artists these days, not that many negatives really.

R Alright, um, this is the hard questions section. [laughs]. Ok. Artistic integrity is this thing that is thrown around all the time. What does it mean to you?

J Um, well, I don't really have that much conviction for art to be honest, to be completely honest. I'm not really that devoted to it. Um, I could sort of take it or leave it really, um, ah, but I mean, if you put the effort in to do something then you might as well do it well, and you might as well take it through to its logical conclusion or whatever, you might as well go the whole way, if you've got to put the effort in to start something then you want to do it properly. Um, so, and in a lot of ways doing it properly is, you know, remaining consistent with your art, with your ideas I suppose, so um, yeah I suppose it's just kind of, yeah, it's just, um, going through with what you, you know, what you want to do, I suppose.

R Do you think that – you know we talked about selling out earlier – that's something that's thrown at people as an accusation. Do you think that that is something that you can tell from an outside perspective?

J Um, I suppose superficially you can. Maybe you could say, you know, but in some cases I suppose it's probably really obvious, but I don't know, you know people change and, and if you stuck to the same old shit you were doing when you know, then you, oh being an artist really, you can't, it's almost as though, it seems to me that a lot of artists they go through a period where they have original, an original idea, and then obviously that idea isn't original and unless they come up with a new idea which is original or develop that idea and keep it original then it's, um, you know people have gone and criticised them for not doing something new, whereas if they change or try and do something different then, I don't know where I'm going with this [laughs]. Ah, It seems like it's a hard thing not to do I suppose, like a lot of artists they get, yeah, it's going back to what you were talking about before, the influence of people's opinions about your work, it's, I think it's really hard not to get influenced by them, so naturally if people are saying 'oh this is good' then, then you kind of almost feel like you should do that. And then, yeah, if you do it for too long then I suppose, you're kind of just doing it for them. Yeah, it's funny, because I think you should consider your audience when you do art, it shouldn't be totally a mind wank kind of thing you know? [laughs] not just kind of boosting your own ego you know you should think about your viewers because really that's, you're nothing without, without an audience, you know, so, I suppose it's a fine balance. I mean you don't want to just do it all for the audience, I don't know, so yeah, it's a fine balance.

R So your, sorry I can't remember the name of the exhibition but the [particular style] one, [yeah] they sold really well, didn't they? Was that the exhibition that sold out or?

J Oh, nah that was the one before, it was, the [particular style] ones didn't sell that great, but obviously I got that award and stuff, and got good... Yeah, the first one sold out and the second one I got pretty good feedback and good critical response or whatever.

R I've just seen your work on the web and stuff, other than at various award shows when I looked at everything and there were too many people around, um, but there was a reasonably marked change between the first exhibition and the second. The first one which sold really well, if you had continued to make things along that line, they probably would have continued to sell? If you had done that instead of deciding to change stylistically or whatever, would you have considered to be in some sense 'selling out' or would it have just been...

J I mean, I still like that, I would still like doing stuff like that, but it's just that I have so many different ideas, you know, like yeah, I don't really have a one track mind, you know so I mean I could easily do paintings or whatever in that sort of similar style and not feel like I was selling out, but then again I would probably get a bit bored. Yeah, um, mmm, yeah.

I don't know, yeah, for those first two shows I kind of, I you know...

R Still sort of finding your feet in some senses as well aye...

J Yeah, yeah and also I kind of, I had ideas and you know, when you're an artist you've got to look at your ideas and choose what you want to run with and actually do, and I suppose I chose, for those first two shows I went with those two ideas and kind of went with the ones that were more accessible and people could kind of, like with the kung fu one I was still kind of technically good, people could see the technical skill and go 'well hey, he painted good' and that sort of thing. Whereas, I could have done something a bit, that people would've looked at and gone 'whaaa?'

R That you would have been really proud of and happy with but was perhaps slightly too obscure for the audience or whatever,

J Yeah yeah, I mean I was still really happy with the kung fu ones, but yeah, I just chose to do them. Yeah. There's a lot of different factors. It's like, you know there's so much stuff going on in peoples minds and in the world, that you can't pin something down yeah.

R So when you were talking about the situations in the activities you were talking around a lot of the context and the extra stuff that wasn't included in the actual written situation, and you were kind of making up these stories and stuff, and for each of these you could see several different

contexts for each situation. Does that mean that the way that an artist works is influenced by a huge range of different things?

J Yeah, oh yeah, I mean everything has an influence, um, yeah I mean you could never pin something down to one thing I suppose.

R So in terms of like a rule for finding out whether somebody has artistic integrity or not...

J Um, Yeah, I think life is messy and there is nothing clean-cut. You can't, yeah, I don't know, I mean, you have to ask yourself, 'maybe I'm just being, my view is coloured by something' you know, 'maybe I've got some prejudice or bias or, maybe they're, I don't know, they could be remaining true to their integrity but not to yours. I don't know.

R So can you hold, do you think that people force their own standards?

J Oh yeah, everyone projects their own sort of stuff onto everyone else I suppose, you know like, everyone thinks 'oh, that's not what I'd do' and then [it must be bad] yeah, yeah, so yeah, everyone does that constantly I suppose. Not just with art, but with everything else.

R Do you think that there is any way that an artist could show that they have, that they're acting through their own sense of integrity?

J Um, I don't know. Ah, [long pause] Oh, I suppose there is the obvious things like if someone makes the decision to make a lot of money and it's obvious that they're doing something that they wouldn't...

TAPE BECOMES DIFFICULT TO HEAR DUE TO CONSTRUCTION IN BACKGROUND

So I mean there is obvious things where you know someone is doing something different to what they actually want to do or would do just for money, I guess that's an obvious thing. Um, but then, you know, there is all different levels, you know, there is different subtle sort of things that go on, yeah, there's probably different ways for different situations I think. [laughs] You can't stick with the same thing.

Um, yeah.

R Anything else...

J I think that artists you know are in a way just doomed to just be some washed up old hat sort of thing because you know the world is just changing so, you know art is, just goes through many fashions and it's bound to, no-one can you know constantly stay up, constantly, eventually you're gonna be an old biddy with your zimmer frame who's not trendy or can't come up with something completely original so, yeah, I don't know, in a way yeah, that you're bound to go down one way or another. I don't know, it's a bit of a negative thing, but I don't know, um, and yeah, I don't know, yeah, people have to make a living, so, if someone has to sell out to make a living then good for them, that's their choice and you know, you

R Is that a legitimate choice?

J Well it seems to be pompous and stuck up to say 'oh, I wouldn't sell out' you know, 'that person is selling out', you know, but when they've got their own shit you know, and they have to make their own way and make their own living and do their own thing, so it just seems a bit egotistical to try and pretend, try and say 'oh well, they shouldn't sell out' when really you know, what's it got to do with you? It's their life I suppose.

R And they might not think that they're selling out at all anyway...

J Yeah! So, it's all just subjective I suppose. Yeah, art's one of those things that's almost impossible to, you can't really pin it, well I suppose like all things you can't really pin it down, yeah. It all just starts becoming an opinion, and that's never truth, I suppose.

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Interview six

Conducted at artist's home

08.07.06

Coded to preserve artist's anonymity

INTERVIEWER Can you tell me about you and your history with dance projects?

REBECCA Ok, contemporary? [or whatever] Ah well, I think I started learning dance when I was 12, and, which was quite late, with jazz, and then I went on when I was 18 I decided I wanted to teach dance, so I started up my school in Christchurch, and then taught the syllabus, the New Zealand Association of Dance syllabus to kids, and by '95 I think I had about 120 students on my books and I sought of employed a couple of teachers to help teach, but by that stage I was also studying, I had studied um, zoology at Canterbury University, um, and came across the course for Unitec, contemporary dance, and I was, how old was I then, 23, so quite late to start professional training so I decided to audition for it. And um, got in, and um, yeah, did training at Unitec from '96 until '98, (is that music ok? [should be alright] yeah) um, and then after that, yeah. The training was interesting because it was a real switch from the jazz practice, and it was the first time I'd ever done ballet and contemporary and sort of looked at contemporary art practices and concepts and all of that stuff, so I was kind of learning quite a lot, it was quite a massive change at that point for my whole life, you know? Everything changed, all my perspectives and everything, over that time, and um, yeah, after I left, I guess because of the training that we'd received, um, and the group that we were, none of us, we were all older, which made it a bit more difficult for most of us to walk into a company, because we weren't technically of that – I wouldn't say calibre but - of the style, in which the people had been, at the stage that those particular artists needed. We sort of decided to start up our own company anyway, so we started up the [first dance company], and we kept working on ideas, um, and kept the practice of making dance up. Um, and then I also joined [second dance company]. That was that thing that [name] had started so I was part of that collective as well, so I was part of kind of a lot of initiations, and people doing their own thing, and then I also, I guess because I'd always been interested in choreography I was really interested in choreography at school and that, I knew I wanted to, I knew I wanted to choreograph as well as dance you know. By the third year I had sort of switched into the, I had decided I wanted to dance more than I wanted to choreograph but pretty much that changed. I got a job instantly after working, after finishing Unitec, I was quite lucky, I got a job choreographing on [dance company], um, [name] who is the artistic director for that company had seen my work, seen my work at the end of the Unitec graduation ceremony and asked me to choreograph, so that was sort of my first contract. And then, I also got asked to choreograph for [major company one] which is another company, and then, um, just kept working on our own shows. I think the [first dance company] did three or four shows, that we initiated, and then I also got into sort of project managing and kind of helping out on other projects, and sort of just, which gave me income, and then I started writing proposals. Well I had written proposals for the graduates for a while, so I understood how that all went, and I started writing proposals to do my own work, and I got them, which was really good, and then the first, I guess the first big piece that I made was in 2002, and that was called [name of show] and that was a collaboration between – oh the show was called [name of piece 1] – and that was a collaboration between [name] and myself where we shared resources to sort of get the show happening. And um, yeah, and then after that just sort of been doing a mixture of bigger work and then smaller things, yeah, so um, after that, I started work on the [fashion show], so I was choreographing for that, which is a different type of choreography. Not, it is contemporary, because it's contemporary ideas and contemporary practice goes into it, but it's for someone else's artistic vision so, but that also becomes part of the, at the end I guess, it all influences everything you do, everything you make artistically. It's a job but it's still a choreographing job so, yeah. And so I still performed with [dance company], still worked with them for a while as a dancer, and then ended up starting up a company with name and we made work together. Um, we made [name of piece two], which toured and has now been performed over 62 times I think, and then I did an independent project called [name of piece three] last, not last year but the year before, which also toured, um, and then, yeah, and now I'm starting work on a piece called [name of piece four], but I've also choreographed a piece called [name of piece five] for [major dance company one] this year and I'm also choreographing a new work for the New Zealand School of Dance students so, [busy busy] yeah, that's about it. So that's a very long paragraph!

I Because you started relatively late with dance, did you have family members who were in dance specifically or wider sort of arts areas?

R No, nobody in the family was into dance. I think my dad had to dance when he used to be in the game shows, and, but no, there was nobody that danced around me, or any part of my family.

I So it was just something that you just latched onto?

R Yeah, I started dancing around, and dressing up, and pretending I was Joseph when I was about 3 or 4, playing mum and dad's records and, I actually remember watching dance or when any movies that had dance in it I just could, like I think one of the first movies – we lived in the country so we didn't really get movies and we weren't allowed to watch television very much – but I remember when *Footloose* and *Fame* and *Grease* and all those movies came out I just absolutely adored those movies and that, I actually ended up watching a bit of, I remember seeing, vividly remember seeing when I was about 8 or 9, 'Limbs' on television and I was just transfixed. I had no idea what they were doing but I just loved it [laughs]. I was like, 'oh that looks cool'.

Um, yeah and with my kids, with my school, I was choreographing shows with them every year that would sell out to parents and mums and dads and, but I would conceptualise how the show would go, and what kind of dance pieces there would be and I'd, and a lot of people would say 'oh what kind of dance do you teach?' and I'd say 'Jazz' and they'd be like 'mmm, I'm not quite sure if that's jazz', [laughs], so yeah, without really even knowing it I think I was heading towards...

Yeah. But both my parents are musical, my mum plays double bass and piano, and my dad can play instruments as well and he also used to put on shows. Because he was my principle actually, so he was organising all the concerts and things. So they were very, they were into performance, but yeah, not dance as such.

I Can you tell me a little bit about a project that you are particularly fond of, something that you've done that you think – and I know most things stay with you in some sense – but something that you look back on really fondly?

R Um, there's three. Um, one of them is [name of piece six] which is a piece, a show that [name], [name] and myself, [name], who's a musician and [name] put together, um, on a shoestring budget, I think I got, I think [name] and [name] actually applied for money from Creative Communities and we got the funding and it was an anti-show. We decided after doing [name of piece one] that, because it was quite full on doing that first show, really overwhelming. Now doing something like that doesn't phase me but back then it was kind of really exhausting and just looking at the energy from the very point where you conceptualise what you want to do, through to actually explaining it to people to try and get some money, then trying to get people along, we did all that ourselves, all the marketing all the publicity all that, and I think at the end of the day, when you count up how many people came it's really depressing. So we were like 'ok, so the energy per' you looked at the energy that you put into it and how many people came and then you looked at how much money you spent on the show, not just from Government, from Creative Communities from government funding but your own expenses, the seat cost, it was hundreds per head, you know, subsidised, you know what people were paying to come to the show paid for about, only paid for about a quarter of what the cost was. So that sort of made us go 'really, that's really full on'. So we made this show called '[name of piece six]' and we had ten days to rehearse, so we had no production value, no lengthy rehearsal time, just making work, from scratch. Finding short little ideas that we could actually do in ten days, that were achievable, and that also meant that we could be a little more fun and silly with it, that had sort of not emotional importance, and then no marketing, no publicity, all the costumes had to come from the second hand store so. So we kind of thought it was a bit of a joke, but we actually ended up having this amazing time making that piece. So that's really memorable and it also kind of, um, influenced all the work that came after it. Because we had no production values and no props and no set, we had to really think quite cleverly about how we designed the show so that, because at the end of the ten days rehearsal we still were quite stressed, we were like 'oh we have to actually present a show' and um, it has to be good... We didn't want it to be a shit show, so we'd created these sort of scenario's in which um, to give it um, because we were touring it to little kind of halls, and you know, places that you could hire for like ten bucks an hours and, so they were pretty hideous sort of places so we still sort of had to define our space, so we taped out little squares and triangles and boxes that the performances would happen in, so people would come in and they'd see all these taped out area's and the musicians would be down one end and we were down the other and the audience would sit in the middle cushions, and the musicians would play and they would turn around that way and that was our 'backstage'. That meant that we didn't have, that they weren't watching us set up for our next bit. Then they'd stop, we'd turn the lights on and they'd turn around and we'd start the dance piece there and, so it ended up being a really fun show, really

cool. So that one stays with me as a really cool experience because we travelled to the Coromandel and we just wrote up on the pavements and stuff 'come to our show tonight'. The chalk would be there but we knew that it would wash away so no sort of major publicity campaign except for sort of chalking the pavement [laughs]. And the other piece that is quite memorable is [name of piece two], because that piece came, it's sort of quite a substantial work that came a real success, but we never planned it that way, as it happens, but the concepts for it were never thought of, they happened through the creating of the work. So what we started with transformed into something that we would never have thought we would make, so that process sort of was interesting in terms of, oh understanding the process of letting work sort of make itself, in a way, and it was also probably the first time I'd experienced a true sense of collaboration. It was really, it was [name] and me, which was, which was actually really hideous some of the time because we would fight quite a bit about what we were doing because we're quite different, but, but also, because we knew each other so well I guess it sort of meant that all of the interrelating and all of that was already taken care of, so we were really concentrating on the work. So there is that one, and then I think the work that I'm working on at the moment is really memorable, because it's the first time I've worked with a director, and so she's, and so we're coming from two different camps, because she's a scriptwriter and a theatre director and I'm a choreographer, and the two worlds are very different, very difficult to combine so it's really challenging. So I'm really enjoying that at the moment, even though it's really hard. Yeah.

I Cool. Is there a flipside to those things that you're really proud of or really fond of? Is there anything that you, not necessarily wish hadn't happened, but that you perhaps thought maybe this could have gone differently or better or maybe you would have been happier?

R I think that even in those, even within '[name of piece two]' and in '[name of piece six]', there was also very difficult situations, that happened with them, um, that could have happened differently. But then the outcome, or the process from that was probably influenced by the fact that it was very difficult as well. There's no way that any of us would want to go through some of the issues that arose during '[name of piece six]' at the beginning, but now it's become a fond memory because of lots of things. But there has been, I guess... I guess when I look at the things I've been interested in creating, yeah, I wouldn't say that any of them would be things that I would regret, or wish that had happened differently, but I think there are definitely things in working the way that we do or having the lifestyle that we do means that we have to take on creative projects that we're not interested in, which is quite destroying. Like corporate or, kind of taking on jobs that as dancers you, where you feel humiliated and, or objectified in a way that you have no control over and that you're getting money for but at the end of the day it's a bit of a battle because dancers choose, or most artists choose to make work, so there's always a conflict when it comes into that area. Yeah, there's been a couple of projects, creative projects, where, you know, have been hideous. You sort of go 'why did I do that?' A product launch for Phillips was one of them, although that was quite fun at the time but it was a very hideous performance experience. Um and also we danced for Sky City when it went to 2000, and we were in these really weird outfits... It was choreographed by, it was choreographed by another choreographer, but she had to leave before we found out that the conditions under which we were dancing had completely changed. So beforehand we were, we had imagined roaming around the whole outside area and we would have points where we would do different things that related to the environment. But about a week before we found out we were on a stage about twice the size of this table [standard dining room size] which is quite different. It's like a stage rather than a roaming, so we kind of had to choreograph something and it was not good, it was hideous. We had people yelling at us and telling us to get off the stage, which we thought, because they were really drunk and it was just sort of gross and um. Trying to come up with something to fit someone else's thing which they give you at the last minute is not, yeah, didn't end up benefiting anyone at the end of the day, so those experiences are the worst ones.

I Activity. Which two are most similar in contrast to the third?

R Those two.

I The band and the dancer?

R Yup.

I Why do you separate out those?

R I think, what is it, in terms of similarities? Ah, no. They're probably more similar actually [visual artist and band]. Well these are [reads out visual artist situation]. It's sort of like, there's someone on the outside, someone with money, um, having control over the artist in both of those situations in terms of their product, having, yeah, having some sort of ownership or control over

what the artist or the group, whereas this one is someone within the work altering the work through a personal, possibly, by the way that that's written, it's just different.

I Which two are you most comfortable with?

R I'm probably only comfortable with that one. [visual artist?][why that one, and why not the other ones?] It's employed, so it's a, the employment is an agreement between the two. This one is employed but they are asking them to alter, so it's already a work that they're saying 'well you have to change something in it to suit us', whereas this is like 'well we're paying you for your established style which we're going to use', um but that's kind of an agreement from the outset, whereas this is after the fact that it's been created which is just um, um yeah, what do you call it, um, I can't think what it's called, Sort of like, not respecting the work, really, yeah, if someone chooses to do that, yeah, so I guess that ones, that one I have trouble with.

I Have you ever been or would you ever consider putting yourself in any of those situations?

R Um, definitely not [dancer situation], either someone in my work or myself. It's difficult, it depends on costume or costuming... No, no definitely not. And I understand that one [band] but I would have issues with it.

I so if somebody was – and I know it's difficult to translate that into a dance context

R like taking out a nude section or something

I yeah or yeah

R yeah, I wouldn't be happy about that, yeah. Whereas this one I would say, I kind of, it just sort of depends. Like the alcohol, it depends what.. if it's specifically alcohol, or what the product is I guess, because I have been employed by other establishments because of my work to promote it, but I would say that one would probably be the one I would be most comfortable with, depending on who it is.

I 2nd activity. Same first question, which two are the most similar in contrast to the third?

R I guess those two [film-maker & web-designer], for me, maybe, for different reasons, but yeah, this one [singer] is sort of loyalty to, but then that's [film-maker] kind of loyalty to the idea I guess, um, it could either be those two [film-maker and web-designer] or those two [singer and film-maker].

I Ok, so why would you put the website designer and the film-maker together?

R Um, because it's a disagreement. Yup. Um, in terms of, well this person is, ah I guess it's, they're all kind of loyalty things really, but she's [website designer] kind of being loyal to her, her morals, I guess. Um this person's [film-maker] being loyal to what they think their, the artistic integrity of the film is, and that one [singer] is being loyal to the band, to the support that they, that he'd received since the beginning, so...

I Yeah? Why would you put the film-maker and the singer together? Are there different sort of things?

R um.. [pause] no... ah, it's interesting, if you think about it [laughs], um, Yeah, I guess this, I guess this one's interesting because this person is in control of their, I mean this person really, it depends on the film-maker really, and I don't really know a lot about film, but I know that film-makers are, are, they have to be indebted to the production company, it's a relationship because unless you have the money or you have the money yourself to make those decisions, that's why they have directors cuts really, because every film-maker has to make those compromises, um, it's part of the business. So that one's an interesting one, because it's sort of like, it's more odd than that [singer] like they don't have as much right to do that than this person [singer] does I guess.

I Um, is that because there is a contractual obligation?

R A little bit more. It depends on the situation, I mean 'the changes required by the production company', it depends on what those changes are. Like if those changes really are, if they're really changing the artistic integrity of what that film-maker wants to do then it makes sense, depending on what sort of film-maker that person is, whether they're, or if they're changing the characters or changing the people or um, yeah, it sort of depends. If it said an independent film-maker they'd probably have more right, but a film-maker, or a director is usually a contracted job, mmm, they're contracted by the producer or the production company to make a film, so it depends on who has artistic rights to the, yeah,

I So would that mean that you are less comfortable with that one than the other two?

R Depends on the situation. Yeah. If that person is an independent film-maker and the reasons why they are abandoning the film are integral to the artistic integrity of the film, the reasons why they want to make the film, then I think that it would be important to do that. Um, and I have no problems with that [website] either, I think it's fine to turn down prospective clients, yeah totally, I think that lots of people, well if you're only interested in money then that's fine, but obviously that person has sort of moral dilemma's, and I know people, especially in the industry that I work in

who do that, where the salary isn't the thing they concentrate on. And that one [singer] is common as well, um,

I I don't know if that can translate, maybe somebody staying with a smaller company despite being offered a job

R Yeah, yeah, it depends because sometimes it can be silly, I mean, because people who make work often start at that place, at a small, a smaller place and then it depends on how interested they would be or what the major label is going to offer them in terms of their art, or whether they just go with it. Being indebted to someone's initial support doesn't necessarily make sense in terms of creative work, but it's great to be loyal, um, that, that's always a, it's always an issue, it always comes up.

I At what point to you let go of the ties...

R Um, I think that it's quite good to communicate them, because um, it happens with dancers that you employ right from the beginning the people who support your work and then you, your vision changes and you need to let those people, you don't work with them any more, because making work is a personal thing as well, so people who work for you, create with you, because dance is never created alone, it's always a collaboration no matter what way you do it, yeah, and those people aren't necessarily going to stay with you that whole time, so you sort of have to break those ties sometimes, and they're hard and um, yeah. [pause] And also I guess you have to kind of find of find a way to yeah, keep that, there's ways of working out how you can keep that, how you can still get support and give that support back later or um, yeah...

I So would you put yourself into all of those situations, if you translated them into a dance context?

R Yeah, I probably would, like I said I've had all these experiences on every single level, yup

I Just to leave this sort of stuff for a little bit, can you tell me a bit about how you feel about the current environment for contemporary dancers specifically or dance in a wider sense in New Zealand at the moment? [In terms of...?] In terms of um, the kind of stuff that's happening, the support or lack of that you've seen...

R Um, I think that, I don't know, it's an interesting thing when you're in it to get an objective, an objective vision, because I'm doing what I want to do at the moment so for me that's great, so I have decent funding currently. I have contracts coming up and I also have, I guess a future with it. So for me it's ideal at the moment, but in terms of the environment for dance at the moment, it's a poverty stricken industry, and it has been for while, and it's unbalanced in terms of opportunity I guess for people.

I How do you mean 'unbalanced'?

R It tends to, like the money and support tends to get given out in lump sums to certain individuals, instead of being spread out, and that's the sort of shift that CNZ has made, and there's different sort of shifts that CNZ make at different times during the time that I've been a part of it, um, where they'll go 'we're interested in development' so they'll put a whole lot of money into developing projects, or 'we're interested in touring, we're interested in developing audiences' or 'or we're interested in only giving support to work that is well marketed, well publicised and well produced' so it means that companies that want support have to be quite organised. [and probably well established as well] Reasonably well established even to have those people on board to do that. So there has definitely been a shift to look at dance creating as a business, and I think that's not good. But, um, that's just my feeling, I feel that the other artists within the industry that don't naturally tend to operate in a business sense, that means that they're alienated from being able to do the stuff, so like myself, I've started up two companies, three companies, and I got interested in that, as well as making work, so it doesn't phase me the grant writing processes don't phase me but, I know for some people that those things do. Um, yeah. So systems prevent some artists from being able to do the work, but the systems are seen to be set up to support them, [not understandable comment]. Yeah, there are two companies at the moment who are funded annually, [major company two] and [major company one], um, and there's issues with both of those situations, um, from people within the community, because they're, [major company one] has established themselves as a schools touring programme, but also say that they're a representative of the contemporary dance programme, um, and I think that a lot of people in the dance community think that they, that that's trying to do too much, and that they should really just stick to being the schools touring programme because what happens with their work when it's presented in the theatre is that it's under, under where the standard should be, from the rest of the communities perspective. Um, because they just don't have time to do everything, but because they are doing everything it means that they can apply for more money, they have more resources that they can call upon that. [major company two], that kind of scene is a kind of icon of dance in

New Zealand, but it's exclusive to certain groups of people so it doesn't, it excludes a big part of the dance community, even though that that is a great product that they can market themselves because of that really well, and they can also access audiences that other contemporary dancers can't so it's, yeah. It's a small community so everything becomes, can implode on itself. Um, but I think that saying that the work that gets created here because of the poverty and because of the, the lack of resources on some levels, the pieces of work that come out are really interesting and it really comes from people wanting to do it, because it's not really very economical to do it here. So people make it because they really want to, and I think it stands up against the work from overseas really well. I think it's quite unique, because it is so isolated as well. Um, the standard of the work artistically is really good. I think the level of the dance behind it is probably not up to scratch in terms of international standards, but that's because dancers here can't really work fulltime, so they're not trained up, they're not practicing enough. Same with choreographers as well, it's just lack of experience. Not lack of potential or talent, but yeah, just lack of actual practice, work practice, they don't get, there's no full-time companies except for those two companies, and they only take about eight dancers all up, you know? So everybody else is just working project to project and in between waitressing or doing whatever else they need to do so they come back into the project unfit and projects here have a life of six weeks. Projects in America are like a year, so at the end of the day, people create really good things out of six weeks I think, or eight weeks or whatever they get, but versus a year, it's just...

I What do you think of the formal training system or schools that we have here? Is it, does that compare internationally or is it easy to get in or access to?

R It's interesting. I think that at the moment the environment in Auckland is weird for training. There's been a dilution of focus on what training there is. Unitec is still really the only place to go to in Auckland where you learn all of the practices of dance towards the profession, and the choreographic skills that you need to actually go into the industry of choreography, unless you're just naturally inclined, and that has current arts practitioners, dance practitioners working with students on current ideas. So it's theoretically the most up to date course in terms of where the industry is at and it has in the past established itself as being comparable to international standards. In fact there is dancers that have come out of that course who are in heaps of different companies overseas. Um, New Zealand School of Dance trains technicians towards the dance industry for ballet and contemporary but they are not the arts, they're not practicing the current debates on the conceptual side of dance. So the technicians and the dancers and the level of dance that comes out of that institution is very high, but very technical, um, different to Unitec. But what has happened in Auckland is that Auckland University and AUT have started up dance courses and it's diluted Unitec. So the competition for the course, so it's diluted Unitec. Unitec you used to have to audition and it was hard to get in, now anyone can get in, because they need the bums on seats, so it's now becoming about three courses trying to compete for, which is stupid because it's a small enough community as it is and you only need one professional training institution training dancers. AUT have shifted and the marketing says we're the only course that trains professional dancers and gives you a degree which is bullshit because it's not true and also, but they're not established enough to have any meat behind them in terms of the practice or the people that are actually teaching, and that's detrimental from my perspective but it's also kind of acknowledged in the community as well so, which is a real shame because at the moment Unitec dance course is I think under threat and quite majorly under threat in terms of the level of students that are coming in. The level has lowered. But also AUT trains dancers, says that, because of the shift in the education programme to have dance in schools, there's a gap there for teachers. Unitec doesn't say that they train teachers, although through learning you can teach at the other end, but AUT specifically targets all of those people who want jobs. At the moment that's more appealing I think that people that are interested in dance want to have some sort of sense of security at the end of it. There's no job security in New Zealand in dancing. [laughs] Unless you get in the ballet company or [major company one] or [major company two]. Yeah.

I What sort of level of prestige do you think there is for contemporary dancers in New Zealand?

R Prestige, does that mean recognition?

I Yeah, um not just recognition but also how important or how well people view it, view contemporary dance here.

R I guess I would probably say from my general experience there's not a lot of prestige for contemporary dance in New Zealand. Not like there is in Europe or even Australia. Um, it's, I guess it's the struggling one, the struggling art form. But then, it's one of the hardest art forms, because it's continually a collaboration, it's not, it's visual, musical, you know, it's um, yeah, it's a funny one, it's yeah, the Douglas, Michael, Shona era that came out of Limbs, because Limbs,

because contemporary dance is relatively new, um, and the prestige that they had and the mana that they had from the general public is quite high, although considering both of them, the three of them are the most famous contemporary dance choreographers in the country there are still people who don't know who they are, as opposed to being the three most famous rugby players or something, or even visual artists like you know are fairly widely known. But, but then it's hard to say because there was a survey done in Dunedin, in the South Island I think, a few years ago, when Douglas Wrights producer did a survey of the audience members and they had seen that, they said that they thought that Douglas was quite mainstream, so that's interesting. [Quite interesting, not a word I would associate with Douglas Wright!] Yeah, not mainstream like his work is mainstream, but that he's considered, he's really quite well-known. Like, yeah, as opposed to the more fringing artists, he's more mainstream in terms of contemporary artists, so um, Yeah I think, yeah, it's weird. You sort of say, yeah I've talked to people who choreograph, the work that I really love, really care about, choreograph and things, and they're ok, and then I say that I choreograph the [fashion show] and they're like 'oh, ok', so it's sort of because they know it, and um, so it has a relationship to what people have seen. A lot of people haven't seen contemporary dance work. A lot of the contemporary work happens in Wellington, or here. And the audiences that we present to are the same audiences. They are contemporary dance audiences. Most of us are contemporary dancers that go and see it. [laugh] So it's like that, a little bit of a cycle so..

I Do you see any increase since the recent spate of television programmes around dance?

R I've seen a definite increase in respect for dance, I think. Not yet an increase in participation from a contemporary perspective, but um, yeah I choreographed the [television programme] contemporary section for that programme and that was interesting being behind that. And originally the contemporary dance part of it was actually less than what it ended up being. I actually saw the dances that were being created for that section and they were like 'oh okay, we'll have you there more' and because they had researched dance kind of, the producer had researched dance and there are so many different styles of dance within ballroom, like there's about 28 styles. There are 28 styles that are labelled as styles, but they're all quite, some of them are quite similar, they look the same to an untrained eye. And then there's jazz, and there's actually quite a few different styles of jazz, like Chicago jazz, and there's hip hop jazz, then there's hip hop and break-dance and then there's the Latin, which is, which some people think is kind of ballroom, but then there's Latin with, there's about 17 different styles of Latin, and then there's contemporary. But there's no, within contemporary there's sort of heaps of styles of contemporary but there's just one [one for every single person who's creating] yeah, so they go 'that's a style on its own' and I was thinking, this is interesting. The contemporary people would be learning my version of contemporary, but um, so over all those styles contemporary was only one of a whole heap so it wasn't actually in many series. Then they, Michael kind of argued that that needed to be shrunk and that contemporary needed to jump in because it was more distinguished [no need to see the three different types of waltz] yeah

END OF TAPE

I Alright

R I think from that experience it definitely shows how difficult contemporary is.

I Is it, what did the dancers that came in, obviously they weren't mostly contemporary dancers, what did they think of getting contemporary as a choice?

R I think they liked it, I think they thought that, yeah, they were scared a bit, which gave it kind of, like contemporary was kind of, they were excited by the challenge of it. Some of them hated it, because there was lots of bending and getting onto the floor and being locked and grounded and stuff, um, yeah, it's not sort of beautiful as waltzing. I mean, it can be, but the techniques behind it sort of yeah, you have to be quite tough I think, just to do it. Yeah, so they definitely respected it from after that programme, yeah. It's the hard core, hard core one. [More so than hip hop?] The hip hop was hard, um, hard as well because it was very time based and there was a lot of material and isolation of the body that they had to get into one minute. So yeah, some of them were scared of that as well [laughs].

I What do you think are the most positive elements of being a contemporary dancer in New Zealand right now?

R It's hard to say because I think that being a dancer in New Zealand is totally almost, it's a choice but it's also not. It's like something that people are driven to do, so I guess when the opportunities happen then it's a great place to do it. And I think also it's a good country to be poor in. So if you, there are other countries that you can't choose to do that, but then there is the other countries where there are more resources and stuff so, but I think that if you want to be a dancer in this country then you can do it, you won't starve to death, so I think

I It's okay to be a dancer here because it doesn't matter how little money you make?

R Yeah, you're not going to die, you can at least go on the dole or something, you can get by, but um, I think that this country also, I think that if people want to do stuff they can. They can choose to create work and have an individuality here more so than in other countries I think. I think that if you wanna do your thing, then you can, and people just get on board and it's a very, and you can encourage people to come and watch your stuff and they will.

I And there aren't a lot of people standing in the way

R Not as many no. I mean, I think that there are always risks, but I don't see it as difficult here as I see it could be in other countries. There are the rules and regulations, but it's not like the States or Australia where those kind of standards are kind getting in the way to be able to do stuff, where you have to have certain things up and running before you can try things out, or take risks or do whatever. Yeah,

I Is there a flipside to that, other than the obvious lack of reward financially?

R Yeah, yeah definitely. The isolation means that it's much more difficult to get current practitioners over from, who are doing stuff that we'd love to learn off, like teachers are really, teachers are rare here, um, we've got, we've got good teachers here for beginners, but then, ah, the people that want to keep up their practice, like I, there are not many people that I can learn from here. I mean I can, there are still people, but I feel like I'm at the point where I can still learn a lot more.

I And everybody else is at the same sort of level?

R Yeah, all the choreographers, all the people that I work with we definitely still learn off each other. I mean [name], who's a friend, has been overseas and when I did my development project the first thing I did was have him come in as a tutor because he had fresh information from overseas, and he brought that into the workshop by me employing him to do that, so I did learn off him. You know, it's learning vicariously. [laughs] Um, so yeah, I think that's the main flipside, opportunity and lack of teachers and um, up to date sort of stuff from overseas which I think we are really thirsty for, yeah. And jobs basically you know overseas you know if you're in Ireland as a dancer which is a smaller community then you don't care, you can still fly to Spain or to Germany really cheaply to go to auditions, you know. Even if you're in a smaller country overseas it's just so expensive here to try and audition for anything, and if you had a choice you probably wouldn't, you know? In Ireland when I was there, me and [name] went to an audition and there were 250 people that had flown in from other countries to Ireland for this company that I was like, I wasn't even that interested in auditioning for it. It's just so many, yeah, I mean it's a poverty stricken industry everywhere I think, if there's 250 dancers flying in from London and different countries to audition shows, that they need to do that, yeah.

I So artistic integrity is the term that you have used quite frequently. What does that mean to you?

R I guess it means to stick, I guess basically it means to follow through with your own ideas and your own practice. Um, it doesn't necessarily mean being unique, um, but you need that to come into it, but it's sort of because, especially with dance, the practice of dance that goes into your work which you have to own, that belongs to everybody, movement styles, ways of structuring, ways of putting together movement, even movement ideas themselves, how you get to the floor, how you roll or, it's sort of a universal language. And then there's what you do with that, and that makes it your own work. Um, So I guess integrity is sticking, sticking with stuff, really investigating and following it through and um, coming up with something that belongs to you, that really belongs to you, to you as an artist. As opposed to being artistically unintegral, [yup?] [laughs] yeah, which I guess could mean doing what ever you need to do to satisfy other people.

I Is that a fairly set rule for you? A set sort of line? Is there a line which you draw which you don't cross between doing what you want to do and satisfying other people?

R Um, it depends what I'm working on. If I'm working on [fashion show] choreography then that has to satisfy the audience, that's its primary objective, it's entertainment. So I have no problem understanding that that's the conditions under which I work and I'm not there to push any buttons or to make, to cross any ... yeah.

I You don't choose that stage to exercise political views or whatever.

R No, and I think that, like Morag used to choreograph on the [fashion show] and one of her objectives as an artist is to always do that, which is integral to her work, and when, even when she's doing a commercial event she will question what is this all about and how can I make it more this or more that. I don't really have that agenda when I work on that show, um, at all. Um, but then with my own work it's kind of about finding, again I'm not interesting in breaking ground as a, as I, as a, that's not what I'm about, or drives me. I wanna make work that, that means

something to me or the people that see it so it has an impact but it doesn't necessarily have to be political. Well it could be, it just depends on what the focus is, and yeah.

I So it's kind of contextual for you?

R It is for me, yeah, and I know that other artists would find that a problem because yeah, some people take that ... In the work that I do where I'm contracted, like I will choreograph modelling events or you know, other things, um, and so I guess with the [fashion show] I think the area's that I've challenged are the rights and the conditions under which the performers work. I mean that is definitely something that is of interest to me and something that I feel very strongly about so you know. And also the quality of what people do, has to be, and I definitely need to follow that through, which is, it's in the inner sense of having artistic integrity, but it's more of a quality that people have as opposed to, yeah, and then, yeah, I suppose it's contextual.

I How important do you think it is for dancers to show that they have integrity to start with, within the New Zealand dance environment?

R Extremely! Yeah totally. I mean every, every choreographer that uses a dancer has to know that that dancer can be integral to how they are as a dancer. That's why they'll get employed, and that two they'll be integral to the work that's created, yup. That's, that'll be the first thing that we allude to, yeah,

I Is it something that's sort of discussed?

R It's sort of ingrained I think, yup, I think it's just, it's known and it's one of those doesn't need to be spoken about so much. I think when you, because dance isn't necessarily competitive, I mean there's competition, there's competition within the industry definitely but there aren't hoards of people lining up to be dancers, so the people that choose to do it have a sense of integrity by the mere fact that they are willing to put themselves through that, the process of becoming a dancer. And you can't not have integrity to actually end up doing it, so, if that makes sense?

I So does this also relate to sticking with it despite other things that maybe, I mean you wouldn't see a lot of people who are business owners staying in the business despite the poverty of it, the lack of return with the incredible amount of hours, physical and mental stress,

R Yeah I definitely think there are dancers that leave it because of that, but um, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're not integral to, it's just that breaking point for everybody, that's to do with conditions rather than integrity, but, it gets in the way, conditions get in the way of people's ability to, to stick at it, but in general, yeah, and there is definitely dancers that are drawn to different choreographers for different reasons, for example there's [name], there's people who are very integral to wanting to work with him, that just want to work in that kind of way, and then there's dancers who will work broadly across a lot of people, rather than pigeon hole themselves to certain types of work, and then yeah, and then whether they're that or whether they're across the board is up to them. Most of them that I know anyway they're very integral to the work that they do, what they create, and all the choreographers that I know are very integral to their, to their work, yup.

I Do you find that there's a different, are there any differences of in the sense of integrity within dancers and within choreographers, or is that... I mean I realise that most people who choreograph dance as well ...

R No I think dancers expect choreographers to be the most, the people who are most integral, the most artistically integral to their pathway attract dancers the most. The ones that really care about what their, what their ideas and what they want to achieve, the dancers sort of flock to those people because it's a very true sense of investigation which is exciting, but someone who is not that clear or not integral to something within their practice, it just, I guess it doesn't give them anything to aim for or be passionate about so yeah, wanting to just create a dance piece is not what dance is, yeah.

I What ways do you think people, or how do you see the integrity of a dancer if it's sticking true to a vision, having more than just wanting to create a pretty little piece or whatever, how do you look in and see..

R When you're looking at a dancer and go 'I want to work with that person'? [yeah] Um, I think with dancers, the dancers, the dancers that really interest me, and there's lots that really interest me, but are that they have a relatively rigorous approach to their technique, that they've been, um, yeah, disciplined, and that doesn't mean to put upon, but that they have a sense of their own discipline to, to push their body physically, and to push their mind in relationship to their body artistically, so and there's the 'x' factor that you either have or you don't I guess and then, so there's maybe technicians that don't have the 'x' factor and there's people that have the 'x' factor that are lazy and could be amazing on stage that get away with working in a way that other people don't because they're just, great, but the practice and support that may not necessarily be the same

but I look for a combination between those two, and kind of yeah, and I guess also the way in which they work. Like we will audition people and look at the way that they approach, approach tasks within the work. Um, they have to be relatively open to trying things that are new and experimenting and putting themselves on the line so it's quite good to see how people do that. You can tell pretty quickly if people are going to shut down or um, will go too far, you know, and it's sort of finding, its, it's, I mean looking at the dancers they also have a sense of boundary or what they want to do, because it can be pretty full on, like within some contemporary contexts, some of the issues that you might work with, they can be pretty full on, so you have to know that and you have to deal with that, and want to approach those things too. Um, yeah, there's sort of a variety of things that you look for, it's like any relationship that you create with people that you work with, I mean having done simple work it's a personal relationship, it's very personal about what you want to make so it's a personal relationship in a kind of way, as well as a working one. Um, yeah, it's not a handshake and a business relationship, you kind of get to know..., but then it's also about people who have supported you in the past, like, like the people who have been there and those people have often been there in your face so they're the ones who end up working with you again, mmm. Did that answer your question?

I Yup. Do you think it's possible for someone to noticeably lose their integrity?

R Yup. It's easy enough to do it in the dance industry, through having no energy, in a way, I mean, or just losing faith in what they want to do. Often, like, the path of dancing is, um, for a lot of people a spiritual one as well, so if you lose your faith in it then you lose your integrity to it I guess. I guess it's sort of similar to that. And then choreographers can lose their integrity for similar reasons, in that you can be driven out of it, by exhaustion and disillusionment as to why we are doing it. Um, yeah, because at the end of the day it involves an audience so there's a certain amount of ego that goes into the desire to do stuff and that ego needs to be intact in a good way, so if it gets out of proportion with reality that sort of, yeah, you can see that that can explode someone's integrity. Someone might start out being driven towards this thing and they get, they get really far into their career and lose sight of what that was. So yeah, it's easy to see it.

I What do you do in your own practice, both dance and choreography, to keep yourself happy with what you are doing?

R Um, my dancing is suffering, because I'm mainly choreographing and teaching. Um, I could be more vigorous about it. It's sort of like going, it's really difficult sometimes for a dancer to have integrity into which, because dancers are really hard on themselves anyway so you know, in an ideal world you would have a two sort of three hour work out everyday, and you'd be keeping your practice up but if there's nothing, if there's no outcome for that, then that practice can slip. It's different to being fit for life. Being fit for dance means being fit for the next project, which means to be in the next show or to be in this work, so dancers, unless they're really genuinely that type of person anyway who will do yoga practice or even when you're doing yoga, there are people who practice yoga, it's different, it's about doing yoga or being fit for life. So sometimes I'm into that, but, so it's hard to maintain an integrity in your practice if there is nothing to practice for. So if I have a project in which I'm dancing, that will be followed, prior to that by doing classes and maintaining a level of fitness, getting ostio getting treatments ready to go into that project as ready as I can be given the time I can put into it. But currently I'm slack in terms of my dance [does it affect your body?] I mean, with [name of piece two], I did that piece and my body and my ability to perform it were at a point that it seemed that it was fine for that work, so um, on a day to day level it doesn't bother me. I guess on an ideal world level it bothers me, it would be great to be in ideal body condition all the time, yeah, but um, and I guess choreographically, for me, at the moment I'm in the process of practicing so yeah, there's not much more I could be doing. So I'm in a world at the moment where I'm experimenting and with concepts and stuff and trying out and it's really difficult so that was backed up by a development process prior to that, so um, at the moment it feels like that is intact, then that will slip again once there is no outcome. So it's always trying to create a sense of outcomes and planning, yeah, you have to plan

I TO make sure that you always have constantly got something to strive towards?

R Yeah, for ME. That's how I need to operate. Um, other people might not need to operate like that, but

I When we were talking earlier you were talking about taking [name of piece two] to the Fuel Festival, and you didn't have a lot of time to prepare for that and the work, and your body definitely suffered a little because of that [[name] missed a catch and she landed on her head during a performance]. How do you feel about that sort of outcome of sort of doing too many different things?

R It's hard to figure out whether that mistake happened because of lack of focus or it's just a consequence of the world of that piece, because that piece is made with a lot of risk in it, and it factors in the fact that some things can go wrong and even when we're really focussed and up to scratch with it, things can still um, get muddled. Um, but definitely when there's too many things on, things can totally suffer, so it's trying to find the balance between, like with that piece it's a repertoire piece now, and it's been done so many times that actually when we whipped it together the day before, the piece, the show that we opened with was great, because it's so ingrained in your body that sometimes that sort of [real movement memory] that movement memory and the understanding of the work is so in there, but, you can only rely on that to a certain point, and then, after that, that kind of fluke thing, you actually have to back that up with practice. And saying practice, not just physically but also so that you're aware, and so that you can listen to other things happening at once, so um, the point at which someone drops you, there's two things going on there. It's not just their responsibility to catch you but it's your responsibility to know that they're there to catch you. So, yeah. Um, Yeah, so with that piece in particular there are some things that can go wrong and they do, on a number of levels, all the time, and that's part of the world, that's what makes it quite exciting. Lots of people afterwards were like 'was that supposed to happen?' it's like [sarcastically] 'yeah yeah, I do that every night'. [laughs] But it's sort of, like with the [fashion show] this year I've been very unprepared for it, um, but then, my loyalties at the moment are to my own work. So that will suffer, I will arrive there and I won't be as organised as I could have been, but we'll cope. Definitely things give when you're trying to navigate those things, mmmm.

I How do you find that balance between 'okay, I'm not going to be concerned about the fact that I'm not as prepared as (ideal world) I would like to be'; how do you balance that with needing to concentrate on something or having a contractual obligation to do something...

R Yeah, it's interesting. I think with the contractual obligations, I used to think I had to be perfect in my approach to that work in a way that would be like 'oh I have to do this and I have to be like this' to be able to do that work as opposed to thinking it, and not applying those same rules to my own work, because I'm signed in with somebody else. So now I'm like, actually for myself with my work, I have to be like that, and actually I have to be here right now, and that actually is becoming more and more, it's not becoming the top of the list but it's becoming really important. I mean, I wouldn't say, like working for the [fashion show] is bread, it's an important job because it's my bread and butter, you know I can't, I can't not put that as something that has quality in my practice, because, but I guess now that I've done it for a few more years, it's sort of knowing that that's ok, that in actual fact that contract that I have with them is based on the fact that I practice my work, and if I can't practice my work then I wouldn't have got that job. The fact is that those jobs don't run full time, so there's a negotiation or a kind of understanding now that I feel that they have to understand that that's the reality of employing somebody to choreograph, that they need to practice their choreography in their own work in order for that to benefit them so

I You don't want that to get stale, so you need to

R Yeah, totally and then if they understand that then, those kind of problems of being unprepared at the beginning kind of don't matter as much. [laughs] Yeah, in an ideal world it would be wonderful to turn up prepared and on to it and yeah, all the time, but

I What do you think are some of the pressures on dancers or choreographers to move away from that sense of integrity?

R Money. Um, [in what sort of way?] I guess, I guess in an ideal world contemporary dancers would be able to do contemporary work all the time, so they don't sometimes because they can't. What do you mean? What are the pressures that would move them towards not being integral? [yup] I don't know if there are any, in the world of making stuff, but I guess it would be to do with the amount of support they could find if, yeah, like I guess the way that the business would work would be sort of like the hard sell, what we can do for you and what we're doing and I guess if people get caught up in that then that would probably be the main one. Yeah, all the marketing and the business side of stuff, I guess, will send people possibly down that track, but [pause] given that the practice of making contemporary dance from the outset is about creating I don't, it's not like there's the pressure to be pulled away from that. Like it's not, it happens but I don't think it's that ... Yeah, I don't know, it's a difficult question to answer.

I You have your sense of how you view integrity and you look to that when you're um, (this is what I'm getting from what you're saying) that you look to that when you're employing dancers or looking to work with other people. Do you see that as something that everyone else works to as well or do you think that it's just personal to you?

R I think it's personal to me. My sense of integrity is personal to me, but it is something that is sort of discussed between, like I think that the people you end up working with or collaborating with have a similar sense of integrity. So you agree on your integrity. Um, like the people that I'm working with at the moment I think artistic, you know, a musician and a director/scriptwriter and we're pretty much along the same level of integrity in terms of what we're thinking of and how we work. That's not necessarily the same as 'a people' but it's just the same artistically. Yep.

I So when you're sort of working with other people, or seeing other people working independently of you, are there points where you go 'okay, I wouldn't have done that'?

R Definitely, yup.

I Does it matter that they have?

R It does. Yup, sometimes, it depends on what they've done, like um, if it's, I find, um, the point at which people cannot read or be objective about what they've made and see, like there's definitely a sense of copying or there's sort of that uncharted sort of very hard to negotiated territory where, where it came from, where that idea came from, where did that movement signature come from. Um, you can't own movement. Even if you copy it or it belongs to somebody else, you can't charge someone for it, it's not an offence. It's an artistic offence though, and it's definitely a very dodgy area. Um, but artists that will acknowledge where that movement comes from, it's like an essay, you reference it, and you understand that you're doing that for the purpose of your work, then that seems to be okay. Although, there are a lot of people who also understand that they're referencing and think that that's just, because they're saying that they're referencing it, that that's enough. But it's also then taking that reference and commenting on it individually in relationship with what you want to say, and using that material in a way that has integrity in terms of the work, as opposed to just blatantly using it because you like it or you thought you always wanted to do those movements. Um, yeah, so it's a very fine line, but people that can be really objective about why and how tend to have, from my sense, tend to have and retain their integrity. That doesn't necessarily make other people more unintegral but yeah, it's just that fine thing of um, and then there's the other thing of that that is more of a passive manipulation of stuff than the actual manipulation of people or kind of, the relationship between choreographer and dancer is being exploited and I don't think, and they might make amazing work, but, and the artistic product might be there but the integrity in terms of the inside of the project and how that came about has been exploited and I also have an issue with that, so

I The ends don't necessarily justify the means

R No. Sometimes for me because I'm more of a socialist and I, like, great that works amazing but I don't want to see it because I know that the conditions under which dancers had gone through aren't really good so I'm not going to support that piece, even if it's amazing, so yeah. So, those two things for me.

I Is there anything else around this issue that you've been thinking about or that has flashed up in your mind while you've been talking about something else that I've asked a question around?

R I guess, I guess it's sort of interesting in terms of the work at the moment um, that I'm doing. Artistic integrity doesn't necessarily mean that you're breaking ground. Um, so the stigma, the positive stigma associated with people that break ground, it's like 'wow, you're so kind of cutting edge' so it's sort of like, in an ideal world artists would always like to feel that they're with that. Most artists that I know, well some people, want to have that feeling that they're work is unique, but it's not. There's been, like things circle round, and people in the 1920's were probably doing some of the same stuff that we've never actually seen, or we might see but, yeah. So I think that doesn't necessarily mean that you're breaking ground but that you're, often its breaking ground for where you're at. So that's really, I think to me anyway, keeping that sense that, that you're always trying to think that artistic integrity is from an outsiders perspective or what people are going to see your work and you can kind of chop yourself off at the knees, um, yeah, yup. I think it's important for most artists that you have that sense that they are integral to what they're doing and it's always debated quite a lot, in dance anyway, so...

I Do you find those sort of conversations are useful or helpful? [sometimes] Can they be destructive as well?

R They can be very destructive, yeah. I had one comment once that was said to me after my opening night of [name of piece three] in Auckland that was 'oh, that's totally the type of work that I would have made if I'd stayed here in New Zealand' [laughs]

I Backhanded complement sort of thing?

R Well, I didn't think it was a compliment at all, yeah. So you sort of do get, I was very defensive about that, because it was like, 'well I do live here actually, so... and really would you

have made that work if you'd lived here?' I don't know if that's something that one would, I don't see how you can even say that. But then it turns itself over. It would be like, if I wasn't living here I wouldn't make that work, I'd make something else. So they were saying that the integrity of the work, they were kind of commenting on the integrity of the work saying that it wasn't, yeah, that being made in New Zealand meant that it lacked something, quite a lot of stuff that, that other places have. Um, and I guess on some levels that's true. If you look at time, money, and all of the things that go into all of the stuff that we've talked about, that we're lacking yup. Like, after a while I was thinking 'oh no, my work isn't good enough' you know, but at the point when I made that work that was where I was at, and I was being integral to where I was at and what came out of that, and now I wouldn't make that work any more. You know, it's sort of like, it's kind of, you move on and grow away from what you used to be integral about and leave that behind and now you have a new kind of thing that you want to explore. Yeah, so... I always find naïve work the best actually, because it's always integral to something that they're not aware of, you know, to see naïveté coming out, the lack of understanding of what is being made, without having those influences sometimes is really great for the vision.

I Offered transcript – agreed.

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Interview seven

Conducted at artist's home and in artist's car

08.07.06

Coded to preserve artist's anonymity

RESEARCHER To start with, can you tell me a bit about yourself and the creative stuff that you do.

TOM Okay, well I started out doing theatre, and came off the back of a BA at Vic Uni, and I had a double major in theatre and film, and then I, so there was a lot of practical work involved in that, and I kind of started out sort of wanting to be an actor, sort of wanting to be a writer, so you know, I kind of just fell into playwriting really, obviously, and it's easier to produce, and it's like it's easier to do, as well. I made some short films as well, but with theatre you can get it to a more professional level technically, you know, more than you can with film. Um, and, so then I put on a couple of plays, kind of things that I produced myself in Fringe, and stuff like that, and that was around 2000 I think, the first play that I did outside of the University, and then I did, was part, I was one of the writers, a group of three writers on a programme called 'Young and Hungry' in Wellington, I don't know if you know about that? [no] Well basically it's just a series of plays, that young people, 18-25 can act in, and then they put them on as a festival over two weeks at BATTTS theatre. Um, and so anyway, I did one of those in 2002, and I also did my MA in 2002 ah, at Vic, in scriptwriting, its called a Masters in Creative Writing I think, and so anyway, those were sort of the two things that I did in 2002 that sort of stood out, I guess, because the Young and Hungry play that I did called [name of play], and I got an award for that for the best new playwright at the Chapman Tripps, and for my MA, I did, ah, as part of my portfolio I guess, was [television programme one], [aside] it was originally called [television programme one – alternative title] but you know, that was a little bit... But um, ah yeah, but basically that got picked up by [production company] and I've pretty much been doing television since then, although I have a play that I've been working on for a bit. And last, the second half of last year I did an artists residency, a writers residency called [name] and I spent six months there and I sort of um, mucked around a bit actually, which was good because I needed it, and, ah, I worked on a play, which I'm still doing, slowly, and did a little bit of television too actually. I did another series, probably the other series that I've worked on the most, which has actually been on TV, other than [television programme one], which is called [television programme two], which is a documentary about, it was on like 10 on a Sunday. Did you see it?

R I didn't see it but I heard a lot about it because it was talked about quite a bit in the department.

T Oh was it? Oh that's good. Somebody saw it! That's good. Oh I was talking to someone actually who was at Hamilton university. Do you know [name]? [no] He was talking about working with someone in Hamilton who was doing a thesis on Mocumentories or something? [yup, that's through Screen and Media]. Oh right, cool, ok, it all connects, but um, yeah, I did that, and we're kind of developing a second series at the moment but they want it in an eight o'clock slot, so it's like, they kind of want another series, and they kind of don't. So we kind of have to figure out what we're going to do with that at the moment, and that's, that's kind of what I'm working on at the moment.

R In your opinion, what sort of creative history is there with your family?

T Oh, my family, oh yeah it's a weird one, the only real, professionally at least, the only one is my aunt on my mums side. Her name is [name], she had a few, she worked as like the political, like what [name] does right now, in the Listener, for a wee while, as like the political analyst, but she didn't do it for very long, and she also wrote some short stories and stuff that were published in the Listener, and um, she was kind of doing quite well for a while, but then she kind of had kids, and then I think she found it a bit stressful, and she just sort of stopped doing it really, quite young. So she did for like, well a few years I think and she was kind of professionally doing it, and then I just think she just stopped enjoying it really. So she just basically stopped. But that's the only person in the family that I know of that has professionally done, like your classic art, like that kind of stuff. But it's interesting like my dad's a mathematician, and it's interesting like seventy percent of my masters course for writing had parents who were mathematicians. [really?] Mathematicians, doctors, two classics. Like [name] who I worked with quite a lot in television, her father's like a doctor, and her partner's a mathematician, so I don't know, its mathematicians and writers that for some reason, I think, yeah, [pause] yeah, I think it's some like structural thing, but the thing is I'm really crap at maths, I'm *really* bad, you know? I can, yeah. Like I went through and did, I mean, I wouldn't say I was crap, but like I didn't find it easy, like I went

through and did stats till seventh form, but it wasn't, like I had to work quite hard to attain like an average mark, so I was just ... I never really enjoyed it that much, like some people do. So yeah, there are some connections there. But, aside from that, yeah, nothing really that people did really professionally, like there were things that people did as hobbies, but nothing really serious, I guess,

R When you were a child were you encouraged to pursue creative pursuits? Not necessarily as a career or whatever, but

T Yeah I think so, like I mean, my mother was pretty good with things like that, um, I wasn't really discouraged, but I found, I mean to be honest I don't really like any sort of organised kind of thing, I can lose interest really quite quickly, like I kind of, I really liked painting, and I took art in fourth form, I mean, not fourth form, standard four, and um, I was pretty good at it I thought, and then, then I started going to these classes I had to go to after school, and I don't know whether it was because like it cut into my television watching time or what, but I just didn't enjoy it like I just didn't really want to do it. But I think it was actually just a really crappy class, but like literally in the first class, we literally spent an hour and a half tracing something, and then cutting it out, and so it was really not what I was about as a person. I think if they'd just given me some paints and stuff, then I would have been ok, but I think it was just a crappy class. But um, but then I never did any kind of painting at all, or any kind of art, at all. Like apart from my English, like writing short stories and stuff, like all through high school I never did a single art class and I used to really enjoy it, even up into intermediate school, so I don't really, I think I got this weird idea at school that I should be like doing something that I could get a job from, you know, so I did really stupid things, like, oh, like I did typing, in third and fourth form, if you can imagine that, what a waste of time. Although I am quite a good typist now though

R Surely it must come in handy..

T yeah, I must admit, it is kind of handy, but I really wish I'd done something else. And I did French and Japanese and languages and stuff and like sciences and things. I mean it is quite helpful I guess because I could do, if you just did like arts stuff all the time, then all you end up writing about or talking about is art, and nobody's really interested in that, apart from other artists, which is quite a small minority of the population you know? So you know in a way doing stuff like that is quite interesting, like science is always really interesting for writing, you can throw in lots of metaphors and you know, like all sorts of stuff, you know like, interesting facts about animals and you know, chemical reactions as metaphors and stuff you know. There's lots of quite interesting physics writers and you know, like Bill Bryson and stuff like that, and they're pretty big selling authors, so

R Geek lit. [yeah, pretty much, pretty much] My dad has this series of books, novels and they're about computers and stuff like that, and they're novels, but I found them really engaging and I really still don't quite know why I enjoyed them because they're nothing that I would normally read

T Are they like useful at all, like I think people get enjoyment of knowledge, you know? Like I think that's part of the thing, like I think that's why you can tell a lot of television is really shit, because you go, I mean, 'I'm not getting anything out of this in any way shape or form' you know? And good television you go 'oh yeah, that's an experience I had' and then you can kind of, in an evolutionary kind of sense, it's useful to you because then you can go, 'oh maybe I shouldn't be such a jerk like that with my partner and that's why we have arguments and stuff' just as an example, you know what I mean, you know? So...

R I think that's why I like the CSI kind of drama's because I learn stuff from it you know?

T Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah, And then it works on a level more than your basic, your really superficial story-telling level where you're trying to fool people into wondering what's going to happen next by going, you know 'who is the murderer? These are the clues, this is the end' you know what I mean? And ah, and then it gets revealed, you know, so there's some satisfaction in finding out what the mystery is, but, and it's not the same as being actually meaningful, on some level you know? Although you do need the murder mystery element so you can understand the story and so on. That keeps people, I mean, just fools people into watching it really.

R Can you tell me a bit about a project that you're particularly fond of?

T Um...oh I don't know, I kind of feel like after enough time has past that I kind of feel kind of neutral about everything. There's nothing that I'm really that fond of or not fond of, you know what I mean? I mean, I guess it's probably [television programme one], but I'm probably to a large extent saying that because it's probably the stuff that's got the most kind of, you know, the largest proportion of the population liked it the most, you know what I mean, because more people saw it I mean, and so forth. Ah, but

R It has that element of success associated with it?

T yeah, I'm pretty neutral about it all really, yeah, um, Yeah I guess [television programme one], I mean, [television programme one] is one of the things I could probably, putting something forward is something that I think about the most. I can kind of go, 'oh yeah, it's about this and this and this, and this character connects to this character and this is what thing is, and this is why this story happens this way, in order to show this 'x' thing', you know, and it's kind of got this nice organic unity, to some extent to it, I mean obviously this organic unity goes out the window real fast and you've suddenly got all the shit that you get with television, but, um, it's got like a year of me being able to work on it, so there's kind of like a quite nice organic unity that I kind of like about it, even though, sometimes I think it's only me that sees it, because television is all about you know, like compromises, and even, and not even sensible compromises a lot of the time, just stupid compromises because somebody hasn't listened to something that you've said in a meeting, and then goes off and does it wrong, and then you run out of time. But then there's other compromises where the network is going, well, it's a 9.30 slot and we want a youth audience so this character needs to be 25 instead of 73, because we want to have more young, you know, so it's stuff like that, so that sort of bullshit compromises as well, but at least they are compromises that you know what they are and you deal with them, you know what I mean, and you re-think it a little bit rather than yeah, like bullshit compromises like you don't have enough money, or you've run out of time, or someone's a dick. Um, so what was my point? Where was I going with all that? [laughs] So probably the [television programme one].

R Okay. Is there anything that sticks out as things that you're not pleased with?

T Oh, [television programme one] again, like there's so many things about it that just piss me off because they should have been so much better, but they just weren't. You know what I mean? It's like, there's so many half realised ideas in there that are kind of almost there, but they're not really. And um, it's kind of my fault, in a lot of ways, but um, kind of not really as well, because I didn't really have the power to say 'no, you have to do it this way'. But also kind of my fault because I needed to convince people that it's better my way. It's hard to tell. Um, yeah, so that's both.

R chat chat

IN car

R Current environment for screenwriters in NZ

T Um, pretty shitty, pretty shitty. Um, I just think it's pretty typical low population, mass media kind of thing. You know, you're beaming out to three million, four million people as opposed to like a hundred and twenty or whatever the hell it is in the States, and so you just get about that percentage of earnings. I mean, it's propped up a little bit by the government and so forth, and the Film Commission sort of giving people money and trying to develop scripts and so forth, ah, but it's really pretty difficult to kind of make a, you know there's literally in television about half a dozen to maybe a dozen of outside people who can actually live full time, off of being a screenwriter. I mean, even probably television and film put together, because most, although I'm not, they're pretty much the same people, and yeah, yeah, so there's not a lot of people that can really actually do it. I mean, I'm really on and off, um, yeah, so it's pretty tough. It's pretty tough. But you kind of just have to keep doing stuff and, ah, and that's it really.

R Many people trying to do it?

T Oh, yeah, I mean, not a lot. I don't really know how many people are trying to get into it. I mean, like a lot of people are just really bad, and I suspect that they probably realise it fairly fast. I mean you've got to be bad for a while, and that's fine, but I mean, start off in theatre and do some little theatre things, and kind of have fun with being bad, you know, don't kind of immediately, you know, do it with your friends and do something that you're enjoying doing, rather than trying to go, 'oh shit, I'm supposed to be doing three act structure so I should learn how to do three act structure so the first thing I'm going to write will be a three act play of the Hollywood variety' or whatever. It's just always crap, so... And I think that people are always really interested in or from what I ascertain from what they tell me is that they want individual voices from people, you know? I mean, they don't want a re-hash of something somebody else has done except on a lower budget and just generally not as good. And I think they want people who will stand out and I mean that's pretty much how it works when you're working with low budget stuff, it's got to be kind of unique that you haven't seen before and I don't think as an artist that you arrive at a unique thing by going 'I'm going to do something that no-ones done before' you know? And focus on doing that. I think you just do your thing that you enjoy doing, and then you get really good at it,

and then people go ‘oh shit, look at that’ and that’s it, you know? And suddenly you’re doing your thing and people are kind of interested in it and it’s seen as new and unique and because it’s you, it’s just generally a kind of natural progression out of things that you’ve seen and things that you’re interested in, but it just happens to be that, like you know, for whatever reason, what you’re interested in hasn’t been what everyone else is interested in. But um, I don’t think that you can kind of deliberately try to do that stuff, kind of try to come up with ‘the’ original idea, I think it’s just natural progression or what you do.

R How accessible is the funding?

T It’s pretty tough I think, um, yeah, I mean, I think if you have a good idea, it will take you a long way, and you know, the good stuff is the good idea combined with some craft, and so even if you’re the best writer in the world if you don’t have a good idea you’re not going to get funding, and even if you’re the crappiest writer in the world if you have a great idea, then you will get funding. Um, but the thing is for a screenwriter that you want to attract a producer. The way that the Film Commission and so forth pretty much seems to work, is they um, they fund like projects, and the project is put together by producers, and so if I go to the Film Commission and go ‘I want some money’ they’ll go ‘nah, we want to talk to a producer’, so you have to go to a producer, and sign a contract with a producer, where the producer will say ‘I’m going to option your idea, or your script, for ‘x’ very small amount of money, like a grand or something, and we’ll go to the Film Commission and we’ll get a few thousand dollars for you to do a new draft’ and that sort of the way that it works. So it’s all really done through producers. As a writer you’re pretty much useless by yourself, and so that’s a big part of the industry is just finding people that you can work with well, because you’re just so dependant on each other, because it’s just such a machine I think. And that’s kind of what the Film Commission is about, and as a writer yeah, by yourself it’s just impossible, you just have to find someone to work with.

R Formal training – common?

T There’s so few people, that there’s really no typical way of doing it. You know, like people come from all over the place. Some people come from film, like I can literally think of a dozen or so people, so there’s a few playwrights, definitely, there’s um, people that have come from advertising, there’s people that have written novels and gotten into it, there’s people that have done a little bit of a little comedy show and then gotten into doing something completely different like drama and so forth, so you can just come from anywhere, you know. Because there are people who are like accountants and their mate who was working in television goes ‘hey, you’re a funny guy, I want you to try writing a script’ and then they did, and it was great, and they pretty much just haven’t looked back from there. So there’s definitely no typical way to do it. I mean, the real advantage of doing a Masters is that you can actually really concentrate on it. You know, if you’re an accountant or what ever, then it’s quite hard to um, to justify being able to work on something full time, to think about it full time. Because a lot of the working isn’t working at all, you know, you’re kind of mucking about and people who’re working can’t justify just mucking about, you know? You just kind of go ‘well...’

R There’s nothing else I need to do right now

T Yeah, you know, I can write for three or four hours a day and that’s fine, there’s nothing else in my schedule, and it’s not like I’m having to pack it all in at the end of the day, and feel like everything that I write I have to get some sort of um, goal out of, you know what I mean? It all has to be gold, or else I’m wasting my time. And that’s one of the really hard things about writing is that it’s one of the only jobs where you can spend all day working your arse off and have absolutely nothing to show for it at the end, or you’ve even gone backwards. So it’s interesting in that way. What was my point? [laughs] Typical I just ramble on without really knowing what I’m saying. Yeah, yeah, so it’s just all over the place. It people from all different backgrounds.

R What do you think are the most positive things at the moment?

T That’s a tough one. Ah, there are no benefits! [laughs] Basically, there are virtually none. Um, yeah, you get hardly any money... The only thing, the only advantage that I’ve got going for me is that I’m quite young, and I can, I have just enough power to threaten people a little bit, and threaten the sense of ‘oh, I’ll just go oh, well I won’t work with you again’ and they’ll go ‘oh okay’ and then they’ll be nice to me. And like I’ve just signed a contract right now where I’m, I’ve hardly directed anything but I’ve said, ‘well, unless I get to direct this you won’t get my script’, even though I haven’t written it yet [laughs] or know what it’s going to be about. I mean, this is the time when all these decisions get made, and I’ve got a little bit of leverage now, and so it makes it all easier. Like I think I kind of start to build a little bit more on just being a writer, and actually have a little bit of control over what you’re doing, because I mean, that’s the thing. The only real reason that you’re going to do it when you’re not going to earn much money, is that you

can do something that you're actually proud of... For a couple of reasons: 1. You do something that's actually good, and then it will get noticed somewhere and then you'll be able to earn more money, and actually make a living off of it, and if people just keep fucking up your stuff all the time, you'd just totally go insane and 2. Just the general pleasure of doing something that's actually worth putting all your effort into, which is really great. Yeah, so those are really the only two benefits really at the moment for me, is being able to do something that's good, and I don't really care if I earn any money, because I figure at the end doing something that's good is going to be much better than doing something that's alright but um, but that you get paid more for.

R downsides other than the lack of money.

T Oh, just that it's very very hard. Oh, I don't know, just like real basic, real real basic stuff like having to deal with doubt all the time, you know what I mean, getting stressed out because what you're doing is just so subjective that you can't really tell all the time if it's crap or not. That's really basic kind of stuff and I think that's one of the first things that you learn is that you just have to get rid of doubt, you can't have doubt. And even though in a sort of sense it's really useful because it makes you worry so much that you work twice as hard as if you didn't worry that much, you know, and you really care a lot, but in television in particular it will just go nuts, because you won't get any sleep at night and you'll just worry and worry and worry about things that you can't do anything about. So you kind of just have to do it, and... I mean, doubt is useful until it gets to the point where it stops you working, because you're not happy with what you're doing, and you can't tell whether it's any good anymore or whatever. Other negative things, um, a lack of fresh air, um, if you have good people to work with it's fine, and if you have bad people to work with then it's the worst thing in the world, because it amplifies all those other shitty things that all artistic people have to deal with because they're doing something so subjective, that it just amplifies all that about a thousand times over if you're working with people that you feel like they're trying to take your credit for ideas or they're trying to blame you for things that aren't working or they're dicking you over in some way, or you'll get into meetings and they'll just kind of like try to steamroll over the top of you and won't listen to you and you know, idiot producers who have that whole old-school mentality of having to yell at people to get anything done, and all that kind of bullshit. It just makes it so much worse. And all that stuff is so much easier to deal with if you've got people who are nice and they'll listen to you and they'll commiserate with you and all that kind of stuff and they can have respect for each other and all that kind of stuff, and yeah, I mean, that's half the battle there. All the hard things are so much harder or easier just depending on who you are working with. [pause] Yeah, that's about it really, those are the main kind of negative things.

R Prestige?

T Oh, I don't know, I guess some people, like you know, you meet people in a bar or whatever and they're like 'hey, cool, you're a screen-writer' you know, or whatever, or 'I saw dot dot dot and it was great', so you know, there's that, but at the end of the day you get over that quite quickly aye. Um, it's kind of like, cool. It'd be cool if you were single, [laughs], I think maybe, if you thought you could pick up women with it, as like a starting line or something. It depend on what you've worked on as well, like there was a Seinfeld episode where George got a, have you seen that one? [no] oh well this was one of the episodes where they were starting their own show about nothing, and they'd just got it accepted by the network and were writing it and so they thought, George obviously thought the first thing to do was pick up women at a bar with it, and so then he was 'oh, I'm a writer' and they're like 'oh wow, I'm so impressed' and then they find out he's a television sitcom writer and then they're like 'ooh' and then they hate him. It depends on whether people actually value what you're doing whether you could use it as a pick up line. Because I don't.

R when you tell people, do you get a positive reaction?

T Yeah generally, I mean, when you're a writer, especially television, people are always like 'oh what have you done {disparaging tone}' because they think you do some bollocks because New Zealand television is bollocks of course, or you're working in theatre and people are like 'oh right, maybe I heard of that play, I didn't see it'. Ninety percent of the time. Film would be different, but I haven't done, I'm only just starting to get into film now. But it's a fine line, people can be quite positive about it. I mean I really hate having that whole fucking conversation frankly, so I've become quite hesitant about telling people what I do, just because um, I dislike the idea of being the kind of person who would tell people what they do and then expect them to be impressed, you know? So I kind of just go out of my way not to, you know, I'll usually just go, yeah... It's weird saying that you're a writer as well. Not that I've noticed people doing it to me, but just, and now that I am a writer I know that writers are just as bullshit as anyone else, I'm not really worried

about it, but I definitely used to feel before I was a writer I used to meet another writer and almost immediately be a little in awe of, be a little bit in awe of them, you know what I mean? Maybe it's just because I wanted to be a writer, but um, you definitely feel like you are being analysed, that you're thinking on some deep level, and immediately examining all the things that you're paranoid about, you know what I mean? Does this deep writer know that I'm full of shit? But once you're a writer you realise that writers are thinking that they're full of shit as well, and they don't realise, so it's all good. [chat chat] Oh yeah, here's another negative thing I just realised today, is that when you're working from home, like I was supposed to do a whole days work today and I was maybe supposed to pick you up and do this thing for a couple hours, and that was fine, and then my car fucks out and that it, my whole day is gone, and I've got like maybe four hours of work that I can do today and so now I'm behind. It's a real pain in the arse working from home because you just get distracted by just life stuff, you know, and when you go into the office its like, you're there and you're at the office, and you're working, and that's it, you know, there's no distractions or anything, so, yeah, that's a pain in the arse.

R chat chat

T It's kind of true in a way. If I feel that I'm kind of on top of things, like if I have bills that I owe or some money, or I haven't done my tax return, or some shit, it will just grate away at me, and I won't be able to focus properly so I have to get my life in order.

R Intro to artistic integrity bit. Is this a concept that you adhere to or that you think about?

T A little bit, I mean, you kind of, if you think about artistic integrity then I could so see that turning into self indulgence, you know what I mean? There's like a fine line between going 'I'm maintaining my artistic integrity' and yeah, just simply being self indulgent. I mean I do think about it, I mean, like I think about it in the sense that if I have an idea, and I think this could be a great idea, and if it doesn't come out properly I'm fucked off about it. I think that artistic integrity exists in the sense that you have to work really hard to achieve something that's any good. And you can't bullshit it. You know, you can't kind of be half-arsed about it and you can't go 'oh, yeah, but the practical reality is that we only have this much money and we can only do this that and the other thing'. I mean, artistic integrity really only kicks in when you're going 'oh fuck it' you know? 'Lets work a 16 hour day instead of going oh fuck it, it's been 8 hours and I'm tired' or whatever. And then everyone really works really hard. And that's really the only extent of artistic integrity. If you get to the point where you start thinking that artistic integrity is something to do with what the product is, then I think that's where you start fucking up and getting into self-indulgence. Artistic integrity to me is like a work ethic, and a work ethic that you really care about the idea, and you like the idea, and you don't want to get watered down with bullshit, right. And um, I think the mistake that you can make is thinking that artistic integrity is something where you're thinking about the product and the product has to be... oh but it's just such a fine line. The product has to be... when you have this personal reason why you think that it has to be a certain way, and you won't be objective about it at all, you know what I mean? You don't want to cross into that, that line where you're just being a cock, and you're just being self indulgent and the audience doesn't get anything out of it, but you're just going 'no, I'm not going to cut that bit' that needs to be cut in order for the thing to flow along and be a better piece of work, you know? Like throwing craft out the window, or whatever, and not thinking about the audience, and that's no good as well. But when it's such a fine line, because just before I said that, you know, artistic integrity is about working really hard and not accepting any bullshit that's going to water it down, what is something that's watering it down? Is it making better or is it watering down? It's really impossible to tell. But, I mean I think basically, a lot of it's to do over and over and over again with the work I do anyway, I don't know whether it's the same with painters or whatever; you have the idea and the idea gets you excited and is about something, and it's got like a little 'it' factor, where you can think this story with this character and what happens in their lives is a microcosm for the world in some way, and it just means something to you and you can kind of describe what the story is in one sentence, and people will go 'that's interesting' and you can kind of immediately think about all the repercussions. And if that starts getting watered down, and the idea starts to loose its shape or loose its way, that's when the integrity of the work to me starts getting hurt a bit, but I mean, it's just such a line because at the same time ideas often need to develop and as you work on it sometimes you find new things, and you need to be open to finding new things as you go along and this and that and the other thing. So, yeah, it's a tough one, it's a real tough one. So that's probably a typically wishy washy answer I suppose. It's like a continuum really, it's pretty hard to place the line for yourself when you're going, how much you believe in something you're doing, how much you're working on it or whether you're just being self indulgent.

R demonstrating integrity? Possible?

T I think you can definitely see when something doesn't. Let me give you an example. I've worked in situations where I've come in, and I'm working with somebody and I've just started, and they're someone who's been in that position for a while and they've staked out their little area, and if I start to get kudos then it's possible that they may lose their job on the next project right? Because they'll go 'Peter's right for this project, sorry, but xxx is just not as right for it'. So I have meetings with this person and I tell them about ideas and things that I'm working on, because I'm like, 'fuck it, ideas are free', and they're working on something and I've had an idea for it and I just tell them about it. So then the next meeting the person gets asked what they've come up with and they've got a bunch of ideas and they obviously haven't put much effort into it and they're just bullshit, or maybe they have put effort into them, I don't know, but what they obviously aren't about whether the story works, you know, it doesn't fit. It's no good, basically, and so then they come to this idea that I've come up with, and then this person goes 'oh yeah, great idea, fantastic'. And so then this person kind of, kind of takes the credit for it, which I'm cool with it, I'm not going to sit there and go 'fuck it, that was my idea, I demand the credit for it', but then 5 minutes later, this person blames me for one of the ideas that they came up with that I had nothing to do with, and then lets the producer tell me that I should be quiet and listen to this other person because they come up with ideas like dot dot dot that I'd come up with. And so you know what I mean? There's just no integrity there, they're just happy to take credit for other people's idea. They don't give a shit about the story, it's all about them just trying to get the next project going. You know, it's not like they even care about the project that's on at the moment, they just want to keep their job the next time around, and to maintain their illusion of having an integrity, their illusion of being good. And it's just such fucking bullshit, and it's just the worst crap ever. And sometimes the people that do that are actually really good and really talented but they've just got this one fucked up, you know, they've just got this jealousy or they've got this paranoia that makes them act you know, like a cock, basically. And take people's credit, and be a jerk, and ...

I think there's actually quite a bit of that that goes around with people taking people's credit and there's a saying that a friend of mine [name] has and that basically is 'nothing attracts people taking credit like success' you know? People will crawl over the woodwork for you that you've never heard of if you put on a show that's successful, people will suddenly crawl out of the woodwork and start taking credit for it. And if you do something that's shit, and if something comes up that's shit, then people will go out of their way to pretend that it's you, not them. Suddenly that kind of opposite happens. I mean, I guess maybe that's artistic integrity, you go 'this is my work, and I stand behind it 100%' you know? Like I will stand or fall on the basis of this work, and I'm not going to, if something is bad about it then I'll take blame for it, if something's good about it, I'll take the credit for it. You know, and I'll work really hard and I'll do the best I can. And that's it, you know? Yeah, I think that's the most integrity I think that you can have. There's plenty of people around who won't do that. And also I think that if somebody else comes up with a good idea you will go out of your way to say 'well that was actually dot dot dot's idea', and I really do that, especially after that experience, I really go out of my way to credit who comes up with a good idea. Because it looks like so many, because it's so easy for me to take credit for it if I'm the writer, and we're at a story-lining session, I get the sole writing credit, and dot dot dot came up with the idea, then I will always say, if somebody complements that particular aspect, say 'well, that was kind of, thanks but, that was actually [name]'s idea' you know, or whatever. And then people do it back to you and it just, it's all part of that whole thing of working with people that you can get along with well, who you have respect for, and it's all just a part of that.

R losing integrity

T I don't know. I think to a large extent they never had it in the first place, and they approach the whole process with a sense of wanting to stake out a little bit of status for themselves. I mean, all writers have that I think to a large extent, but with some people that's all there is. Television is really hard as well because you make so little money that it's almost like you can't afford to go 'I'm good at this but not good at that'. Like, I'm basically pretty good at off-kilter comedies. I can't really write a mainstream comedy, I don't really know how. I'm trying at the moment, and me and my mate [name], who also is like, we both got our Masters degrees and we're like, nerds, and we write kind of intellectual kind of comedy and intellectual programmes, and we get along, like we have a great time, but we're kind of working on a [television show two] for the mainstream like I said and it's sort of a different kettle of fish. But um... I don't actually think that I'm answering the way that I wanted to. Hang on, I need to think about this. Forget all that, maybe I'll come back to it.

Why do people lose their integrity? Um. I think they just get scared that what they're doing is shit, and that they're not any good, and then they just end up getting into this situation where they have to cover it up, and so they um, take other people's credit for stuff, and they just bullshit it all, they just start becoming a bit bullshit really because I think that the doubt has got the better of them.

END OF TAPE

Cont. So yeah, the money making thing is a part of it I suppose, and the short term contracts and all that kind of thing. I think that's why, and the general liquidity I guess, I don't know, of credit, because it's weird, you almost go through, especially in television, a negotiation process of who gets what credit for what. Because you've all kind of worked on it, but like someone might have really improved your episode, and not get credit on it, but you've done a chunk of their episode and you don't get credit on theirs and so forth, and so there's this whole kind of weird negotiation project that goes on. You know, Hollywood has this whole massive strict rules on it, but um, with the writers in television in New Zealand especially because I think people get a bit scared about standing up to producers, that whoever's kissed the most arse will ultimately end up getting the best credit, because the producers are going, 'I don't want to lose dot dot dot' because as far as they're aware through all the bullshit, they came up with most of the ideas, right, even though they didn't. Partly they've been convinced to give them the credit because they think it's fair, but also, they're just less willing to listen to arguments from the other writers, or less willing to be fair to other writers that they're not wanting to work with again, because fuck it, what are they going to do? You know, tough shit, they won't have a job anymore if they bitch about it. And so all that kind of stuff creates that whole kind of atmosphere, but I think that only really happens in bad management situations. People just aren't honest and often it will make it in a hierarchy, because you will have one person making all these decisions. If everyone is just on the level and communicating with each other and has respect for each other, it would never happen, because there's no point in kissing someone else's arse, you know, and if you did they'd just think it was weird. Um, so yeah again it's just the whole old-school hierarchical producer mentality that fucks everything up. It creates that whole mentality of people being full of shit and so forth. Again and again it just comes back to who you're working with aye.

R tactics to keep integrity?

T I don't know, um, for me it's just a matter of sitting down and thinking about what is interesting about the project, you know, it's all about finding that idea. Artistic integrity is so dependant on you finding an idea that means something to you that you really care about that you think is worthwhile doing. Once you find that then you've got something to have integrity about, you know what I mean, and if you never find that then it's just all about making the money really. And so that's really how I get around is I just sit down and I just figure out why it's worthwhile doing it regardless of what the money is or what time it's on, what demographic it's supposed to be for or whatever. That's generally what the primary thing I sit down and do is that I try to think about what the essence of each of the characters are, what the story is, why it's interesting, and unless I do that I can't write anyway. Unless I'm excited about the idea everything I write is bullshit anyhow. And it's just a struggle to do, because you don't, it's no fun... When you're actually working you don't think about the money, I don't anyway, I just care about whether it's any good or not. I can only do that, get around the subjectivity of it by going 'that's an idea that I care about' so yeah.. I'm just talking myself around in circles now, but basically it comes down to finding what the essence of it is, whether it's worthwhile in the story. After that pretty much everything comes together. By 'everything comes together' you still sit down and worry your arse off about whether it's all crap or not, but at least you kind of feel that there's oil under the ground somewhere and you're not just digging holes into nothing, like a moron, you know.

PARKING CAR

R pressures to change

T I have someone that I work with quite well, and we get along, and I like the way that she edits my work and changes it. I don't initially, but after a while I see why and I appreciate it, so um, and I don't feel that much pressure to change what I do, at least lately, because I've been working with some decent people who can explain it to me so I understand, but um, I mean mostly yeah. We're pretty good at just figuring out what we need to do ourselves for the network. Like the latest thing

we've kind of realised 'you know what? This show that we're writing isn't really a prime time, 8 o'clock show'. It's like a 9.30/10 o'clock show, and that's the way the humour is and that just the way that it is. And so we went to the director ourselves and went 'we're just going to start again' you know, and we're going to try and do something a bit more broad, because we just know there's no point, you know? So I guess in some sense there's a pressure to change, but you know what the boundaries are, you know, and so you know that you could write it but no-ones ever going to watch it, and they're never going to put it on at eight o'clock at night, I mean, too bad, I mean. I mean, it just all depends, I mean again you meet people and you get along with them, and they explain it to you in a language that you understand, and you get people who are arseholes and can't even be bothered, and don't really care and just want to give you the orders and you can just go off and deal with it, and tough shit, and that sucks. But if you've got people who are nice, you don't even feel like you're being pressured that much, because they explain it and say 'well, the problem with this is this' and you go 'yeah, there is, isn't there?' And you can all try and figure out what the answer is and so you don't really have the same pressure as having someone going, what's some fucking bullshit that I've heard... Oh man, and this wasn't even about a scene that I wrote, this producer goes to me 'oh there's something about this scene that's just a bit too "university" to me' and I'm like 'what?' 'Change it so it's not so university'. And I'm like, 'what the fuck does that even mean? A. I haven't written, and B. I know you're saying it's too university because I've just come from university, and it's like, what the fuck' you know? That's just the worst kind of bullshit criticism that you can get, and that is really stressful. Or somebody will just say, you've written a monologue that you're really happy with and they'll say, 'I think it should be about something else, not this' for no reason except personal taste or whatever. It's just like, oh well, fuck you. And maybe they do have a reason, and they've talked to the network and the network said dot dot dot to them, and so then they don't want to give you the power of what they know that the network is asking for, so then they say something else to you, but never give you the reason, you know what I mean, and so then you kind of end up being manipulated and there is a whole kind of pressure because you don't know why you're doing what you're doing, it's just because you've been told to. Because I'm happy to do just about anything, as long as I can see it from somebody else's point of view, and because they say, 'this needs to happen because of this' and I'm not going to be a dick about it. If it doesn't make sense then fine, but they just {fade out}

R Biggest pressures to give up what you want to do... including example

T What would make me change it? Honestly, enough money. But it would have to be, depending on how much I loved the idea it would have to be like, a lot. I could almost go, 'okay, fuck it. This idea that I love and that I've worked on for a year and that I think is great, but if I can get enough money that I can now write five more without having to worry about money then fuck it, I'll take the money. I'd be mad not to. So enough money would definitely make me do it. I wouldn't do it if it was going to be a big budget film but I wouldn't make much money out of it. Like, I would never do it, because again it comes down to what you're going to get out of it logically. Like if they're going to make something that you think is shit, but has your name on it, right, you've kind of got to weigh up the whole time 'is it still good enough that I can still get enough out of having my name on it, so that I can get a little more power later to do what I really want to do, or, should I just go, oh, fuck you and go, nah you're not having that then'. So it's all pretty kind of logical really. I mean, the way I feel about it is that you have one good idea, and then another kind of good idea is going to come along at some point you know, and I've got like kind of five things that I'm wanting to work on, so if one of them someone goes, 'here's a huge amount of money and now we're going to change it to something really crap and Hollywood', I'm fine, you know, I'm fine. But if they're just going to be some moron who's still not going to give me the money for doing it because they're an idiot and they're going to make more money out of it even though they know they're not because what they're doing is stupid, then I'll fight tooth and nail.

R Activity one. First question.

T Ah, I would say the band and the contemporary dancer, are the ones that are more similar. Do you want to know why? [yes!] Well I just think that these two, the first two are changing depending on what the audience is, whereas the last one is to me is just being outrightly bought, by someone somewhere. Whereas these two is more going, you know, the contemporary dancer is changing for the audience, which could be a really interesting choice, and have quite a lot of integrity really, and the band one is more just like, obviously they're going 'well, the audience is these people, and we're going to have parents and 5 year olds and you know, you can't really swear'. Whereas this is just outright buying.

R how comfortable

T Well I think this could be actually really good, it depends, the contemporary dancer one, because it could be all part of the work, and you get different audiences and you might just want to think, well it might be different if it had this effect on them. The band one, or the visual artist one? I mean both of those, it's kind of really hard to tell, because it depends on the situation. You know, I mean if the bands lyrics, it's vital for them to have swear words in there then it's obvious that it's a problem if they get taken out. And the visual artist, again, I would probably tend to suggest that the one that I'd be least happy with would be the visual artist one, simply because it's an alcohol brand, and you know, I don't really think that's swearing is the worst thing in the world to be in or not be in, I'm not really phased about that either way, but alcohol is kind of an interesting one, you know, because it's a drug, and it causes a whole lot of social problems, and yeah. Those are the two that I would pick.

R equivalent situations, would you do it?

T Yeah, see the advertising one, I mean, to be honest, if I got paid a *lot*, like a lot, I would do it, but it would have to be so much that it wouldn't even be worth it to them. Like I really don't think that they would value it in the same way that I would. They'd just go, oh, like if Quentin Tarantino dialogued a whiskey ad, for example, I don't know, maybe he wouldn't be that bothered about that, um, yeah, it's an interesting one. Um. I guess the alcohol one I'd have the biggest problem with. But I mean, it depends on how you think of it, because there was the, there was a French director, I can't remember his name, who did *City of Lost Children*, and so forth, and he does the Stella Artois ads, I think, I'm pretty sure it's the same guy. He uses a lot of the same actors anyway, and it's very similar visual style, so it's either someone blatantly ripping off or it's him. I'm not so bothered about that, like I'm not really thinking, 'oh, that guys sold out' or anything.

R explain sold out.

T Right. Well, um, sold out to me is not necessarily, is that they stood for something in the past, and then they went fuck it, I'll just take the money. If you make tons of films about how alcohol is really bad for you, particularly beer, and then you turned around and made the Stella Artois ad, then I'd be like, that's selling out. Or if there was a guy who was anti-capitalism all the time and then just turns around and becomes a stockbroker, then I'd go, 'well, those ideals weren't real, that's selling out'. You know, funnily enough, somebody who's a stockbroker the whole time and insists on capitalism and then turns around and becomes a hippy, you don't really think that they're selling out. So it's got to do with money being involved, rather than they're just changing their ideas part way through life. So I mean like, you know, I mean if an artist is writing about how alcohol is a good thing the whole time, and then an alcohol company pays them to do an alcohol ad, then it's like, well, so what? It's what they're doing, but they just get to have it on 30 seconds of television times and then goes 'oh yeah, and Stella Artois' at the end of it. So it's just the story or what they end up doing. And I don't really have a problem with that particularly. But like personally I'm just a little bit, I see negative effects of things like, like I mean there're certain things that I wouldn't like... Like I'd never do an ad about rugby being good, for example, you know, just because I personally have this thing about, you know the whole rugby mentality isn't necessarily the best mentality in the world. Although to be honest, I would do a rugby ad, if I got to write it the way that I wanted to write it about rugby...

R But then would it necessarily be advertising...

T What they want them to advertise. See, this is the thing about this question with the established artist, is that the established artist has a style that they're using, and that's the thing that they kind of stand for, what the styles all about, and then that's being kind of co-opted by the alcohol company. {distracted momentarily} Would it be okay if the artist was able to maintain their integrity that they cared about? So like, I wouldn't mind doing a rugby ad or an alcohol ad or whatever, as long as I was able to do whatever I wanted, and if they didn't like it, they wouldn't put the ad on, basically, and that's it. I could definitely live with that, but they probably wouldn't like the ad. I think I could make a pretty good rugby ad, really, I think it would get lots of people like me to see why, I mean I would definitely sit down and think what are the good things about rugby and I would do it about those positive things, but I slightly suspect that a lot of these advertising companies, from the people that I have talked to, directors who have done advertising work, they're very like 'it has to have this and it has to have that, and it has to have four mates and be about mate-ship' and stuff like that. And so I think that even though it wouldn't be ironic, I think that to some people would come across as being ironic, because I would kind of want to play around with it and, you know, I never want to do something that I didn't believe in, because I just

think, not because I think that I'm some moral superior person or something, but I think that if you're doing something that you don't believe in then it's shit, and I just don't want to do shit.

R Second set of situation

T Ah, the film-maker is different, because they're actually going, 'no, I'm not going to work with these people' whereas the website designer is the opposite of where they're going, because, oh, well, I guess it is kind of similar, they're all kind of similar, hmm. Well, to be honest, there's not really a great deal of difference between them, just on a really basic emotional level, like, these two are being negative, whereas the last one is being kind of more positive, to me in a way, you know? And that's about it really. The singer seems to be a more positive response, but then, the other two just feel like, it's just a negative reaction against something, yeah, definitely, yup. Technically there's not really any difference between the website designer and the singer, because the website designer is staying with their old company that they like, I assume, or doing what they like doing, instead of taking the higher salary, and it's pretty much the same deal as the singer. Maybe I could change those around. I've made my decision now.

R Two in terms of how you feel about them?

T Um, well I definitely will accept the film-maker, yup, for sure. Um, it depends on the situation actually, to be honest, because, I think that I'm saying film-maker because that's the kind of area that I'm working in. It depends on the situation, it depends on whether the person is being a dick about the changes or the changes are actually like decent changes that the production company's requiring. To be honest, just on a simple enough level, I kind of feel that yeah, if somebody did that, if the website designer if I knew them, the website designer and the singer, if I knew them, I'd go 'oh, good for you', but with the film-maker I'd be like, 'were you being a dick or not?' and then they'd explain the situation, and I'd go 'oh, okay, yeah, you were right to do that' or 'no you were wrong to do that'. There's more doubt with that, whereas with these other ones I kind of feel like there's less chance that they were just being a cock about it.

R Can you imagine yourself in equivalent situations?

T The upcoming singer one is interesting. I think that I would, I don't know what I would do in that situation. It would depend on how the indie company would think I was going with them. If I was making enough money to do fine, and I wasn't worrying about money, then fine, I'd stick with those guys and that would be great, and I'm just carrying on with what I've been doing. But if the indie label was shit, and I was making no money and I was actually poor, then I would go with the major label. I would try. With a lot of these situations you just have to try and be honest with people, then you can kind of make people happy to a large extent. So yeah, but assuming there was only that choice and someone came to me and said 'we're a major label and you're joining now, and we're not having negotiations or whatever' then that would just depend on how the situation with the indie company was really.

The website designer one, yeah, I have kind of been in a similar situation, and I actually did it, but it was the first time, and it wasn't so much the business, that I disagreed with the business, but I just thought that they just were a little crappy, and the way that they were approaching stuff was a little, would just make it a bit shitty, and so I went and worked on some development stuff with them and yeah, it did turn out to be shitty, so... It all comes down to if I've got my name on it or not, I'm happy to go off and work with them and get paid to work on their crap that they want to make, if they want to make it, I mean, it's not my loss. You know, I'll try to make it good, no doubt about that, I'll have arguments with them because it's for their own fucking good as far as I'm concerned. I'll tell them 'no, you can't do that, because it's dumb for this reason', but I'm not going to kill myself over them if they're not going to listen to me. And I'm not going to put my name on it unless I know that I'm happy with it. Because the one time that I have done that, my name did get put on something where I worked really hard on something and thought it was really good, and they changed it to utter crap, and it still had my name on it because it was a name that they could use to hopefully get some funding, and I was just like 'fuck that'. I mean, it's all just really selfish stuff really, I'm just trying to protect my reputation a bit, so that I can do what I want to do and when I do come up with a good idea I can actually get money for it, rather than them going, 'oh well, isn't this the same guy who worked on dot, dot, dot, and dot, and they were all shit' you know?

Film-maker decides to abandon a film. Yeah, no I, I mean I was actually tempted on [television programme one] the first time we worked around, but that wasn't because of changes required by the production company as much as I was working with pricks, and I was really fucked off. I don't think I would ever do that now. It would have to be really bad. Like it would have to be quite extreme for me to abandon it. Like I think they would pretty much have to kick me off. I don't think I'd ever voluntarily go, I think I'd just go 'nah, nah, nah, nah, nah', and they'd have to

just do it without me, basically. Because then when it is shit, I can go 'I fought tooth and nail for it not to be that way' and um. If somebody just goes 'nah fuck it, I've had enough' and just leaves, it's just, I mean it can always feel like somebody could, if they're really like 'fuck, I've had these kinds of fights before and I've lost them five times in a row, and I'm not doing it for this one again' then just to leave, but hmm. It's a good threat though, as well, pretend that you're going to leave unless they do what you say, and then their fucked and they know it, and they have to come back and kiss your arse. It just depends on the changes really, aye. It just depends on the changes. If they're terrible, and they're really awful, and they kill what you want to make and make it crappy, and you kind of tend to think that because you tend to think that the production company is caring about commercial things, but that's often not the case, often the director's just being a cock, and has just got this idea that something works when it just doesn't, and somebody's got to tell them, 'nah'. So, it just depends on the situation.

R Anything else...

T No, not really. So often it all just comes down to who you're working with, you know, when you're, because ultimately you're on your own, and you've got this stress that everyone in television has compared to writing a novel by yourself, you still have all the same stresses except that you've got interference from people. And if the people that you're working with you have respect for and they have enough respect for you to explain all that stuff, it's fine. It's so much easier. But if you're working with bad people then it's just a nightmare. And that's just what it comes down to.

Etc.

I mean, to be honest, I could happily make something that's a bit shit, with people that I like and get along with really well, than just making something that's great where I just hated everyone on it, and was just awful the entire time. On a very like short-term level. I mean, once you get to long term, you kind of want to get something that you can say 'I think this is good, and even though I want to kill all these people I can get to the end of it, then it will be good and it will be in the can and I can just fuck off and never see these people again, but still get the kudos of doing something decent.

more of the same above.

Offered transcript – wasn't phased either way.

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Interview eight

Conducted in artist's recording studio

18.07.06

Coded to preserve artist's anonymity

RESEARCHER To start with, can you just tell me a little bit about yourself and your creative practice – your music

CHRIS Sure, my name is [Chris]. I'm a musician/producer and have been, well, I think really professionally for about 5 years, but before that as a novice. Um, I write and play with [name of band], which is my first band, ah priority band for me, um, and I created [name of collective project], which is more of a collaboration, and I've got a solo thing called [name of solo project], and that's, I've got an album out on that, and yeah, made some albums, and um, make music, and um, for a living, and um, have been full time music for about two years, and ah, based in Wellington, and um, born in Wellington. And that's a very quick background, yeah.

R Do you have any training? Did you go through music training at school or further on or...

C Um, at primary school I took some guitar lessons and took some piano lessons as a kid, but um, not formal musical training no. But um, just didn't want to go down that road, and got kind of distracted into arts and drama and painting and all that sort of stuff and then later on decided that music was for me. Ah I had some training in radio, making radio ads and making radio shows with Radio Active, which is a Bnet station in Wellington, and um, so that was sort of musical sort of training in some ways, yeah.

R Is there a family history of music especially or other creative pursuits? Is there something that

C Yeah, my father [name] was a um radio producer for a long time, so there is, yeah, so there is a bit of background there in terms of studio work, yeah, and um voice jobs and he did lots of radio productions, so he's really creative, yeah. My mother played music but not professionally, and she's a pretty creative person too.

R Did your father's career help you to decide that music was something that you wanted to pursue as a career, or was that just sort of incidental in your life?

C Um, no, it definitely made a link to me and he didn't make music, he's not a musician, but yeah, he made radio and I enjoyed hanging out in the studio when I was a kid, so um yeah, definitely influenced me, yeah, got to record my first band there and stuff like that.

R Did he help you make links with other people in the industry?

C No, not at all.

R Can you tell me a little bit about a project that you're particularly proud of or fond of or whatever?

C Oh yup. [name of band] yesterday released their third album, [name of album], and yeah, just really happy with the, with how it turned out, the music, how it sounds.

R Is there anything particularly in the process or something like that that led you to feeling particularly proud of it? Is it just because it's the most recent thing?

C It is the most recent thing but it's also the best album that we've done, just because it's, you know, it's experience, and gaining experience and learning and um putting a lot of time into music development so yeah, proud of that one.

R Is there anything on the flipside of that where you were not particularly pleased with the end result or something that you were involved in that you're not happy with or you weren't happy with at the time?

C I think everything that an artist does is really self-critical. You know you don't just go 'yeah, I'm the man, I've just made a wicked piece of art'. Um, you go 'yeah, that was cool, and I like this part of that but I didn't quite nail it or I didn't succeed in nailing the concept, or the idea'. And if you can get, if you, if you can nail that idea, then you're doing well, but always, I'm always really critical about my stuff, yeah. You have to be or otherwise you don't get better, you know?

R Yeah, yeah. Activity. Which two of those are most similar in contrast to the third one?

C Being asked to change lyrics for a gig, and that's, yeah I don't see any connection actually, between those three really. The visual artist doing something for a major alcohol brand is a job, not a creative, it's slightly creative but it's a job, for money, so that's sweet. The dancer that chooses to wear different costumes depending on the audience, is just, I suppose is um, that's a wee bit silly, but you know why would you do that if the show is the same. I don't understand why someone would do that. But I guess if they were wearing really skimpy things for a young audience and they were playing to an older audience they'd wanna wear something a bit more, less edgy, then that does, the artistic integrity is changed for the audience, because they're changing

their art work for their audience, which is pretty silly because you should just make art because you like it and the audience can deal with it.

R And then the band?

C Band has to change lyrics for a gig is, is, is a real big call. Wouldn't do it myself. ... But I can understand how people could, I mean if you've got songs that with fucking this, fucking that, and you're asked to play at a kids thing then you shouldn't choose that band.

R Yeah yeah, ok so it's not necessarily a band issue it's a management or whoever's signing...

C Oh it's more of who's organising the gig, yeah. You know, would you get ACDC to play at a Christian concert? No, probably not.

R Could you see yourself in equivalent situations as the other two? Like perhaps, um, supporting a product, not necessarily changing your musical style or anything like that but being

C Branded with the product. Yeah I've done that before. Generally for money.

R Was that the primary goal of the arrangement? Did you see it as a job?

C No, usually it's to do with the sponsor. If the sponsor has paid for your tour or something then at some point along the way they have to get value out of what they are paying for. So you thank them or you put them on your poster. But generally you don't let them change your art work.

R And you're happy with that sort of situation?

C Yeah, depending on what it is, yeah.

R Do you shy away from sponsors that perhaps you know that you wouldn't be happy with?

C Definitely!

R Do people approach you or do you approach them?

C A bit of both. Yeah, it depends, if it's a tour we would go to someone for funding and sponsorship and try and choose a few brands that we're into and yeah.

R And do you recognise that there is some sort of reciprocity that goes along with that? [Oh definitely.] It has to be something that they're into and...

C Yeah, you have to play that game, yeah, if you want the money from them, yeah. For sure. But you know, not to change what you do though. Like, they have to be happy with what you do. And you to be happy to take money from them, for them to support it.

R and I realise that the third situation of a dancer who changes costume, it would be equivalent to changing the way a show is put together for different audiences.

C Yeah, which, which is, which does cross the line for me. I mean, artistic integrity, you've got a show, you should just be able to do your show. If there is something that you've got to change because the audience might not accept it, then that's a boundary that I wouldn't want to cross.

R Is that quite clear in your head as to where those boundaries sit?

C Um, yeah, it depends on the situation. Every situation I think is different. But like, if a sponsor asked us that we had to drop, either drop a song or take lyrics out of a song or whatever, we definitely wouldn't want to do it.

R Is that something that you have to deal with, because I mean, your music isn't particularly, from the stuff that I listen to, it's not necessarily stuff that people would complain about.

C No. Yeah we don't have situations like that, I think when you have situations like that generally it's more about branding than anything. So if a company gives us money um, to sponsor the gig, and we want to take it of course, then they always want something back, so it's usually branding, so it depends what the brand is, and you don't want to be associated with McDonalds or Coke. I wouldn't, yeah, I'm not into that. But some brands, you know, like New Zealand Post, they're sponsoring the [name of collective project] tour, but you know, it's sweet. They're a post company, it's a service.

R It's not um, going to destroy someone's lives or anything like that.

Second activity.

Same first question, which two are most similar in contrast to the third?

C I think the film-maker and the website designer are the similar ones. [why?] Because the film-maker decides to abandon the film half finished rather than make any changes required to the production company is similar to the website designer refuses to take on the client who's business she disagrees with despite being offered more money, um, I think they're more similar than a singer deciding to stay with an indie label because of loyalty. Yeah, they're just more similar.

R How do you feel about each of those?

C Well the film-maker that, a film-maker is an artist and if they go with a production company that funds their film and then it gets to a point where they have to change their film so much that their artistic vision is lost then I'd pull out too, probably. Um, the website designer that doesn't want to work with the business that she doesn't agree with is just a moral decision and um, that's fine too, even if they're offered heaps of money you know, it's not worth it if you don't like the

business and that's, that's um, integrity, full integrity. And so is the film-maker one, deciding to not finish the film um, because of that they'd have to change it under the production company, so that shows good artistic integrity, from my point of view. Um, the singer deciding to stay with the small company because they feel indebted to that company for helping them out, is more of a loyalty thing as opposed to artistic integrity, I feel, because the major label might be way better for their career. They might be able to get their artwork to more people. So that's a loyalty thing.

R Do you think of that as a positive or a negative?

C Oh, I think it's just a decision. Um, and there would be positives in both moves. I don't know I guess that person would just, just wants to stay loyal to the person that gave them the initial support which is totally fair enough.

R Can you see yourself or [name of band] or [name of collective project] or [name of solo project] or whatever in any of those situations?

C Um, yup, I mean, [name of band] were with a smaller indie label and we decided to move to a bigger one because they could do more for us, and that's a business decision. Um, Coke asked us to do something for them and we decided not to because we didn't, don't like the business. Um, but we've never, no-one has ever asked us to change anything creatively because of the business side of it and the most thing that we do would be to shorten a song for radio edit so that it can be played on radio but even then we're reluctant to do that.

R Cool, ok. Just to sort of move away from that sort of stuff, how do you feel about the current environment in New Zealand for musicians, New Zealand music?

C Well, there's some good support that has developed over the last five years, more support than usual, than previous. Um, and that's a lot of different government support networks there as well, and funding, that's part of that. And also the music is getting better I think, and high quality people are doing it, so I think we are in a pretty good, good stead, but it's not a massive industry. There's a small amount of albums that you sell in New Zealand so it's a niche market.

R Is it something that you see continuing to, like has it got to the point where it is able to feed on itself, and just get bigger and bigger, or is it still needing that level of support?

C I don't think it will get bigger and bigger, like um, we've had lots of good number one albums, kiwi albums over the last five years, and that's a sign of the times. But um, um, we're only as good as our music, so yeah, I don't know if it's necessarily going to grow any bigger. It's at a peak now, in a sense of national pride and everything that we do.

R So it's sort of starting to level...

C I don't know, it's hard to know. I'm not sure how you'd measure that, yeah. Nah, it's not starting to level, it's peaking now, but for it to get any more amazing, the next album would be a number one album and you'd get heaps more, but we're a small country and there's only a certain number of bands and certain amount of Kiwi music coming out.

R Is there, from your point of view, a certain amount of... Is it competitive, or supportive, or um, both in terms of between different groups and that sort of thing?

C Yeah, I think that it's a bit competitive, but it's supportive as well. As you say, um, yeah, you have to be good, you know, there's no prize just for making music in New Zealand. You have to make good music, so um, in that way it's competitive because you're always trying to outdo other bands, or not outdo, but just to be on par with them in terms of production level or music level. So it is slightly competitive. Um, but it's more supportive than competitive, I think, because there's lot's of good support out there and people are listening and stuff.

R You didn't go through formal training, but is there much access to, or easy access to formal training, not just in terms of musical skill training, that sort of thing, but in terms of access to business skills and, is that there, or is it still like

C Oh, yeah, it's there, if you search it out it's there, but generally people in the usual Kiwi way is that you do it yourself, you learn as you go.

R Is there a certain amount of failure before you get there or is there

C Sure, yeah, I mean you've got to learn and you're always going to make, the first album is not going to be amazing. There is a slight lack of experience in lots of different parts of the music industry in New Zealand because of the nature of how big the country is and how big the business is. Um, and going overseas you see that. You can see the level of musicianship and the business side is at a higher level, because of the length of time the country has been doing it, yeah. You know, America has a really rich history with the music industry in terms of experience, yeah, compared to the New Zealand industry.

R Do you think the people that are coming back, you know, going and touring and coming back, especially in your genre of music, and in rock as well there's a lot of people who go and tour and

do extensive tours and come back, are they bringing all those skills back with them, or is it still a little...

C Yeah I think there's a certain amount of skills that you bring back, yeah. For sure. But you bring them back but you don't necessarily pass them on to anyone, I mean, not that you wouldn't want to but you know it's not that easy to just pass that on, but I think that everyone does their own thing differently. But you learn skills and you bring them back and you apply them here, but um, business here is different to overseas, it's a lot bigger, bigger business, so it's hard to apply those skills sometimes.

R What do you think are the most positive things about being a musician currently?

C I don't know if you could say that generally. Um, for me it's being able to make a living from music is great, and that's a real honour, to make, you know to make a living from your art. And to be able to do it full time, that's what I see as the best, most positive thing, um, about being a musician, meeting people and making art together and um, you know, making art together and putting it out and having an audience that wants to listen to it, that's really positive.

R Is there any negatives to that, like for you?

C Oh there are plenty of negatives. Sometimes the business is negative because you just can't be bothered doing the numbers and doing the production and the backing and things, you just want to be making, making the art, and um, and so that can be a negative. That can take up your time and energy. But you've got to do a bit of that as well, you've just got to. There's not the big businesses to do all that for you, you've got to do it, yeah.

R You've used the term artistic integrity quite a few times, especially at the beginning. What do you think that means?

C Okay. To me artistic integrity is about sticking to your guns, you make something that is an original piece of art, and you display it or you present it to people and that, that should be it. You don't need to change it to fit or to follow a fad or to change it for your audience or change it for a company or you know? Um, and generally those companies and those audiences don't want you to change it either, but they want to see something original and energy and provoking, thought provoking, or a vibe that they're into, you know? Um, so artistic integrity for me is not changing stuff for money, or for an audience, or for a company. And not changing what you put out under your name and pretending that you're really happy with it when really you're just doing it for the money. So yeah, knowing where that line is for yourself.

R How important do you think it is for musicians especially but artists more generally as well to show an audience that they have integrity?

C I think it's really important, yeah. Nah, it's important to show that you've got artistic integrity. Or that you've got integrity in anything that you do, because you don't, I'm not in music to be cool, I'm not in music to be on TV, I'm not in music to be on the radio, I'm in music to make music. And people can see through any other, you know, if you don't have integrity people can see it so you're not doing yourself any favours.

R So it's kind of a motivation thing as well?

C Yeah, Um, is what a motivation thing? [I don't know, I'm lost as well] Um, no, it's just important. It's important for every artist to show their audience that they do have integrity because as an artist you want to be trying to communicate some sort of idea and no-one is going to take you seriously if you don't have integrity. If you're doing it for the wrong reasons it's totally transparent, you know?

R How do you think it's possible to show that to an audience, that you can make sure your audience gets that you're on the vibe that you want to be on, that that's what you want to do?

C It's in your art work, I think, yeah, it's obvious in your art work. You can't do a sincere thing if you're not sincere, you know, you can't do a sincere love song if you don't feel it. So I think it's in the art work, and it's up to the audience to catch on as to whether they think it has integrity.

R Do you think it's possible to lose artistic integrity?

C Yup, it happens all the time, end up doing things for the wrong reasons. But you can gain it back I guess to a degree but if you lose it in a bad way then it's gone, I don't think you can get it back depending on what you do or have done.

R How do you think that happens?

C Wrong decisions I think. Making decisions that are um, for business as opposed to for the music, um, and sometimes you might make a bad decision and it might not be a big deal but you might act on that decision and it might be a real big deal in terms of what your audience sees. So your integrity like, like I said for a band like [name of band] to do a Coke ad and go to an island and have fun, you know on the beach supporting Coke is against our vibe and what we would like people to see us standing for.

R So the bands that did do that, that's something that...

C That's up to them, I'm not, I'm not, I'm against it for my band and for what I do, and when I see a band like [New Zealand pop band] do that I think 'oh guys, why'd you do that? That's a bit sell-out' but good on them, they do it for the money I guess, and they would've got quite a lot of money for that and a few trips to Fiji, so you know, from their point of view it's like, 'oh well, it's promotion and we get a lot of money and we get to go to Fiji', that's fine for them. They're a poppy band, but for us it would be a mistake, I think, we'd lose a lot of respect from people, yeah. You know, someone like [New Zealand hip-hop band] you expect them to do that, I mean, you expect [New Zealand pop band] to do that actually, so it's not really a big let down.

R Is it something, like is it the fact that they're more of a pop band or because they perhaps appeal to a younger audience?

C Yeah, and it's an Auckland kind of, you know, major label thing to do you know? Making money in your music, and that's one way of doing it. Yeah, but when I see that I do lose respect for the artist when they buy into that. But it's not, like I don't want to say that they are a sell-out. It's fine to be really successful at what you do, that's great, that's a success, but to um, yeah, that success is not based on, on whether you're on TV or whether you're making heaps of money, you know? Like, I think it is about integrity and it is about what you've made, and what it sounds like, what it looks like, what it means, what you're communicating to the public. So for a band to do that, they're communicating 'hey, hey, we're okay with this, this is cool, and um, we're selling.. Coke with our music', and so it takes away from, for me it takes away from any message that's in their songs.

R The words 'sell out' is something that I've seen the media impose on artists. How do you feel about that?

C Well it's annoying because, um, like I find those words, the words sell out, even though I just used them, I find them, that's not accurate, it depends on what you're talking about, like to me, it's 'sell out' to totally change what you do for money, when what you did before that was really good, and a lot of people have respect for you, and then to just do something way off and for a company, is really shallow, that's 'sell out'. But to be successful at what you do is not 'sell out', and sometimes Kiwi's get that totally wrong, like to get your music video that does have integrity and a song that does have integrity on TV and for it to be number one and for people to buy your album, that's not 'sell out', that's success. For you to get into bed with different major labels or different major brands to help you get there, um, takes away from the music, and I think that could be called 'sell out'. But, I don't like that term so I shouldn't use it.

R Is there much, like I heard a story about when Bic Runga first broke through and basically won most of the Tui's, and when she was walking up on stage someone yelled 'sell out' at her.

C Oh that's terrible, I don't agree with that call. That's success in my eyes. Um, she hasn't sold out, as far as I can, you know, tell.

R That was what was going on in my mind as well, you know, she was making the same music, she just sold more of it. Is that something that happens within musicians?

C ah, What do you mean? Like getting accused of being a sell out? Like, I know for me what artistic integrity is, so I don't care if someone thinks I'm a sell out, because I don't do anything that sells out from my point of view. Success, like I say, some people get confused between success and sell out, and they're really different. Yeah, um, losing your artistic integrity, changing what you do, putting on a McDonalds hat, driving a car with Coke all over it, um, and then trying to speak as a serious musician about poverty around the world, that's sell out, you know? Because that's bullshit, you know, no integrity there doing that I would say.

R so then is it a link between what you've always done, what you're doing now, and how you've got there, or um, is it a continual ongoing thing?

C It's ongoing, yup, you always have to watch yourself and what you're doing. Yeah it's ongoing. With every piece of art that you do, you have to watch where your integrity's at. But, but having said that you know it's okay to do like a poppy thing that doesn't really mean anything as long as you know that that's what it is and don't pretend that it's something more important.

R What do you do personally to make sure that you stay centred on your integrity, to make sure that you don't sort of sway?

C Um, I think, I think keeping your ego in check and you know keeping good friends and people who know you and understand you around you and stuff like that, is really good. Not get to carried away and certainly not listen to the hype that other people talk about you or write about you, or, you know, rumours about you or whatever? Like, no-one knows. Only you know and your mates know and that's what counts, you know? That's like, with our latest album, um, there will be people that are really into it which is great, but there will be people that aren't into it and I

just, it doesn't matter to me that people aren't into it, you know, of course not everyone's going to like it, that's fine, but um, just not giving in to that, and trying to please everyone, cos you'll never do it, you know? Um, so yeah, it's really important to keep that in check, um, why you're doing what you're doing, and make sure that the reasons, and if you are an artist then it should be for all about the art.

R Is this something that you...

C I mean you've got to make a living too, but your art should be about making art, not about making money, or making you famous or

R Is it something that you are thinking about, constantly, or that is something that is subconscious?

C oh, no, different situations come up when someone offers you something to do this or that and you say 'no, we're not into that because it makes us look like dicks', or um, so I'm not always thinking about it because I feel that I've got integrity so I'm not questioning it, um, in anything that I do, but you have to question it sometimes when you're looking for money and you have to play that game, so is it, is there a ...

R Are there different situations, because you know you have a solo project, you have [name of band] as a fairly fixed band, and then you have [name of collective project], so you've got quite a wide range from a solo project to incredibly collaborative work. Does the influence of working with different people affect the way you make decisions or do you find that you can be fairly consistent in what you do?

C Ah, it definitely affects, yeah, like the collaborative projects and the bands, like, it's a democracy so you ask everyone's opinion and you go with the opinion of everyone, the most popular opinion, and sometimes you have to raise your hand to say 'hey I believe this, and I'm putting one vote towards that we do do it' and someone else says 'nah, I'm not into it, I think it's dumb' so, and you go with the majority. So they're different, different ways of working. Solo, I just do what I want.

R Is there a point either in the band or with [name of collective project], that you find that everyone else wants to make a decision that you weren't happy with or is it something that you just talk through.

C No, it's something you talk through, and you have respect for people and if someone says that their not happy doing something then it's like 'okay, why is that?' and if their reasons are valid then it's like, 'actually, maybe you're right, we shouldn't do that'. Um, I would always, if a group's involved, try to obviously include the group in the decision, not make decisions for other people.

R Other than perhaps the ways that the audience sees you, what do you think are the biggest pressures on musicians to retain that sense of artistic integrity? Is there something other than audience and self, or?

C Oh, I think they're the most important. Self-respect and having integrity for yourself is the main one, because, it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks as long as you know that you're doing it for the right reasons and why you're doing it for the right reasons. Um, and some people will always say that 'that's sell-out' or that's whatever and who cares, you know? Who cares what the audience thinks at the end of the day, as long as you know that you're doing it for the right reasons or what you're making is clever and original and has integrity. I don't think there are any other um, thing that, I mean things like street cred, when people talk about street cred, it's because a. they're cool, but it's not just about being cool. You're cool because you've got integrity or because you're perceived as being original, and having cool idea's on life, and on your art work, and you express that to people and they agree with you and therefore people believe that you have integrity, and some people's idea of integrity is different, you know, like, um, just trying to think of an example. Black Eyed Pea's, they were a great hip hop band and now they've chased the dollar and they've made an album that shows that, and so for someone like me who used to be a fan, I see it and go 'oh, I'm really disappointed in them' and I've lost total respect for them. And to see them doing 'my humps my humps my humps' and to see a ten year old girls doing that in the supermarket, and that's their audience, they've lost their integrity and now they're after the cash. And that's okay, I'm not against it, I just don't like it, and I think it's a bad move.

R described Green Day example.

C yeah, I think they're just making more poppy music, but it's a really edgy album, and it's actually a big finger to the US you know, and I think that's ballsy, in a pop framework, um they got older and they're not as angry maybe as they used to be but that album, is, like I don't like it necessarily, but, yeah, it's got some good messages and they're really, you know, they're really pop punks, so

CHRIS CHECKING PHONE FOR TEXT MESSAGES

R On the flipside of that, what do you think the pressures are, especially in New Zealand, to give up your artistic integrity? Is it a monetary thing?

C Yeah, it usually comes down to money, yeah.

R Because you're in quite a, well, from somebody who's not involved in the industry, you seem to be in quite a good position here, you know, you're self-employed, you're full time as a musician,

C Yeah, I'm very lucky, yeah. It's possible to do it without selling out. I think some artists get to the point where they go 'I don't care if people think I'm selling out, I'm going to do this fucking Coke ad and get 50 grand and, that's a bit disappointing for the audiences that have respect. I mean, it's okay if they're doing that and they make it really fucking cool, you know, if they make an ad that's, I don't know if you could make it work, but as long as they're making work that's really good, and that has integrity then it will, some people will forgive. But you know, the music industry, especially in America, is all about your phone and the shit you're wearing and all that kind of stuff, and putting product placement in video's and that's boring, you know, it's like 'nice phone' you know? And, you know, surely it's about more than a phone...

R How do you find the industry is comparable, I mean, we've talked a little bit about America, but how do you find the industry comparing to Europe the New Zealand, obviously they have a much huger audience

C Yeah, there's just more at stake, here there's not like the big things like, Telecom might ask a hip hop band to do a song for them and might pay them heaps of cash, and um, if they can do it their way, then that's not such a bad thing. But it's still, for someone like me, who can see that it's for the product, it's not about the music. But some companies support the music too, you know? Like the [South America] trip that I was just on, [alcohol brand] paid for that trip,

K but not many people

C Not many people will, well people will know, they will get a lot of street cred for supporting, because we, the music we're making doesn't say [alcohol brand] in it. We don't have to make anything that says that in there. They're paying for the trip, we went, had a great time, met some amazing people and made some cool music. Same thing with the Red Bull Academy, they've got a lot of integrity with their, sure they're getting branding out of it, but the Red Bull Academy is fucking awesome you know? It's a great idea, it's like, up-skills people from around the world, gets people together, creates networks, that's really positive, so there are ways of doing it that are really positive, as opposed to just a straight out ad, like 'Drink Coke, here I am drinking it', you know? So I think that there are some companies that do it really well, where they are a big brand, you know, a bit scary to get involved with, but if they're, if you can do what you do and they're just paying for it, I'll thank them for sure, you know, I'll do it. As long as I can do anything that I want to do, definitely, you know? Without having to hold up a bottle of whatever it is and say 'hey kids, drink this'. Yeah, I'd never do that, but I'd certainly let them pay for a trip so I can make some music, you know?

R End of my questions. Anything that you want to add?

C Nah, I think you've covered it pretty well. Yeah, I think everyone's different, and um, some bands are set up, or some artists are set up to make money, and that's okay. It's not great, because it means that the art's not going to be that good, and people do it all the time, you know, and ah, commercial acts, a lot of these bands are just set up to make cash, you know and that's an interesting way to go. I'm not, I hope I never get there. Hopefully I can make money just from doing what I want to do. You know, and not having to be supported by anyone or say a catch phrase or you know? But most people come to a point in whatever career they are doing that they are sick of being on the bones of their arse, and they want to make some money and they're happy to, to step over the line of artistic integrity, whatever that means to them, and 'sell out' as you would say.

R DO you think that necessarily setting up purely as a commercial interest, using whatever musical talent that you have to make money, is that necessarily selling out? I guess that's where the motivation thing comes in.

C I don't think that it's selling out because you didn't start with anything good. It's just making money. It's just commercial.

R It's just like working in a bank or whatever else. If you're a musician purely as a job.

C What's wrong is trying to come across as if you do have integrity when you don't, you know? But like, *Spice Girls*, everyone knew what was going on. They're a set up band, you know? Um, and I'm not saying that that's wrong. That's fine, you can do that if you want to, but it's not for me, and um, at the end of the day, the product has to be good, the music has to be good. Whatever

you're making, whatever you're painting, whatever you know? That should be good, it should have a good , it should have some good communication happening there with your audience, should have a good message, somewhere along the way. Doesn't always have to be a heavy message, but it should have something, some good ideas, fun ideas, whatever you know? I think that if you consider yourself an artist with artistic integrity then you're making it all about the work that you're making, and you want people to see it and you want people to hear it, and it should have some kind of message, some kind of idea, some kind of vibe that transmits, and without talking about a brand, without being sponsored by anything. First and foremost, whatever you're making as an artist should have integrity, you know, it should be art. And you can tell. An audience can tell. If you're vaguely intelligent you can tell the difference, you know? And it doesn't need to be a shocking piece of art, but I just think that, we can tell the difference, um, I enjoy watching Hollywood blockbusters some times, on a Sunday or whatever, just because I don't want to think, and I know that there are all these things thrown at me like ads and bling for that, and he's wearing this watch and they're all ads, but if you're aware of it then that's sweet, and they are part of the business. They're not selling out because they've got nothing to sell out. But they're just movie stars, big movie stars, doing the business, and people are making money off them, their look, and they're making money off it too. And um, as long as their acting is good, I'm happy you know, but sometimes it's not and you can tell, and it's like, it's just disappointing when you're a fan of someone who does something, you know? Usually it happens at the end of people's careers and they've got nothing to loose, so they don't care about whether they've sold out or not, they just want to make some money.

R Do you think that's what's happening, I don't know if you've been um, even exposed to it because I think you left before it started, but the new *Rock Star* series,

C Oh no, that's just a commercial, using...

R And they're saying, 'we're playing real rock and roll'

C Oh, yeah, yeah, it's a shame for the people that would have been big fans of them to see that
R like Guns 'n Roses...

C Like INXS, you know, INXS, who cares about INXS, you know? Like, but it's just a clever way to make heaps of money, you know? That's all that is, you know, and using their reputation which people did have respect for, and using that as a platform to do something really commercial and gross, with a new singer. I mean, what if they'd just started up their band again with a new singer. Well, no-one would really care. So they had to go that way, just to make money.

R Cool. Transcript – said no. But does want some results.

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