

The Work of Maggie Jackson

A level of fearlessness in part, drives Maggie Jackson's work, or more specifically her approach to making it. In pursuit of making an idea manifest to an audience the technical details associated with making, or the logistical and material imperatives that for many artists form a constraint quite simply do not factor...

Maggie Jackson departs for Florence to make a work that only exists as an idea. At the point of departure the materials and their source, the timescale for activity and the implications for and of the site in question are merely abstract entities.

Maggie Jackson leaves for Russia to make a video work with knowledge of the technology involved that is, it has to be said, somewhat minimal. And on the return journey leaves the video camera at the airport.

Maggie Jackson strews flotsam and jetsam in her wake, breaks suitcases, leaves significant items in toilets and skips, misses flights and gets on trains by the skin of her teeth. And occasionally, not at all. However, irrespective of her somewhat loose management of the stuff and structures of the world, her ideas and a steadfast adherence to actually making them happen remains intact over and above the mere details of that stuff and those structures. Her ideas take form and are teased into existence without any baggage, either literal or metaphorical, getting in the way. That's by turns fearless and necessary given that we are all capable of being tripped up by our own assumed experience.

In the early morning prior to attending a recent meeting in Hull I walked through the marina onto the north bank of the River Humber. It's not uncommon for port cities like Hull to infill their docks or convert them into marinas and generally attempt to make a virtue out of that which has for economic reasons fallen out of use; this could have been Swansea or Liverpool as the fate of such cities and their response to it is similar. But it seems significant in the light of a discussion concerning the work of Maggie Jackson that between 1836 and 1914 2.2 million trans-migrants passed through Hull en route from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Russia and Sweden to Liverpool, Glasgow, London or Southampton and thence onwards to America, Australia, South Africa and Canada. Hull in effect was the hub of such migration and, according to the memorial sculpture at the head of the marina the Humber Dock and Railway Dock now occupied by that marina were the point of entry. The numbers of trans-migrants during this period had such an impact on infrastructure, that despite being in Hull for a relatively short period of time between arriving on a ship and departing on a train, new extended station platforms are built to accommodate trains for the purpose of transshipment, with waiting rooms and facilities for the sole use of trans-migrants. This was not of course a philanthropic gesture, rather a pseudo-segregation driven by financial gain on the part of shipping lines and railway companies and the general fears of contagious disease and civil unrest.

Trains to transport trans-migrants to their port of egress from Britain were commonly eleven carriages long, with sometimes four of those carriages given over to baggage. In light of such relentless numbers, the people, the baggage, and their stories, Maggie Jackson's work *On The Road Again*, by way of example, may at first seem an insignificant instance. But the work promotes a relevant point of reference that serves

as a reminder that such numbers, then as now, are a coalescence of individuals. And Jackson makes the point both in her writing and in her artistic responses that whilst here in the west we often have choices, others, then and now do not.

To extend the analogy, in the face of no choice, when set against circumstances that for whatever reason are dictated by particular events giving rise to situations over which the individual has no control and can only react and respond as best they can, then ritual, habit and things become important. Possessions, albeit scant are a necessity for survival in both a physical and mental sense. They serve as a locus, a continuum between chaotic states, as does the religious act, the telling of a familiar story or the maintenance of a set of ideals.

In that fearless commitment faced by many as they step onto a path the destination of which is partly or wholly unknown is the alignment not only with the work of Maggie Jackson and what it has to say, but also the means by which she makes it.

Not knowing, loosing or mislaying are not in themselves strategies knowingly employed, this is not affectation, rather an embedded means of operation inextricably linked to her subject and territory of operation.

This empathetic responsive mirror that is Jackson's work, held up to often overwhelming circumstances is as significant, relevant and vital today as it ever has been in the past.