

unlike, in many ways, how some of my clients have described they are only existing in this world and not truly living. One can only wonder how C feels as he stand there listening to a man, who is attending a party in the house in another time (before or after his death? who knows?), providing an admonishment on the futility of achieving things in life in order to be remembered, how meaningless in the end it is to want to be remembered, be that by friends, family or the whole world, because at some point even Earth and the galaxy itself will cease to exist. As the man looks up at a flickering light bulb (perhaps caused by C's response to his lacerating monologue?), the following shot shows the same light fitting in a cobwebbed and deserted, decaying house. Humans have ceased to exist there, forgotten by time. The monologue itself has been forgotten too.

Anyone expecting a traditional horror story is bound to be disappointed. These are not ghosts that cause much concern to the living. However, *A Ghost Story* is a brilliant and creative examination of perhaps the most horrific realities that all of us face, that of our non-being and the fact that, when our time is up and the living stop grieving for us, our lives might just mean very little in the grand scheme of things. Strangely, as the film ended, the quote attributed to Joseph Stalin came to my mind: "A single death is a tragedy. A million deaths is a statistic." I wonder why?

Dean Andrews

David Cotterrell, installation artist

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On 16 June 2019, the SEA organized as part of the national Creativity and Wellbeing Week a visit to the London studio of installation artist David Cotterrell. Ten psychotherapists and psychologists joined the artist to discuss some of his work, which addresses our experience of being human in a world that is at once communal and divided.

I am walking down a quiet, cobbled street. A slight breeze in my hair, the birds are singing, a park on my left. Finally, a glass door on my right and inside a circle of people, it must be here. Walking in, I sense a slight relief, a few familiar faces. Soon, Cotterrell starts to speak, first about becoming an artist and then about his decision not to produce art destined for musea or those who can afford to pay for his work, but rather for all of us. I am rapt.

Cotterrell expresses a fundamental concern with a prescriptive, narrow definition of art. Nowadays we tend to assume that art always had the limited conception we associate with it. We have forgotten that only during

the nineteenth century art became a specific and separate activity, segregated from daily life into the sanitized ghettos of musea and theatres. Cotterrell's focus is on reintegrating creativity with life and on returning art to the world where it belongs, reconnecting it to its original meaning as the ability to bring forth, along with what is essentially brought forth.

With his tablet, Cotterrell puts one of his projects onto a white screen known as Mirror IV (v). We are told that six Rwandan actors took part. They take turns as the listener and the speaker, who each voice the same lines for a few minutes. Two black women. One speaks. The listener grabs my attention with a slight roll of her eyes, the mouth faintly open. So much is said in these tiniest twitches and tics. Each time, another actor, the same words and yet, I imagine different realities. I sense my tendency to come up with the answer, that I know who acts the child of the perpetrator, of the victim. Except that I do not, cannot. How often have I sat with clients, where I expected a certain reaction or answer only to be confounded? I am fascinated to observe this tendency that thinks it understands but also knows that it does not.

Phenomenology can assist us in revealing and shedding light on neglected connections, to save them from indifference and invisibility. Ultimately, at the heart of both art and existential phenomenology is encounter, which presupposes ecstatic temporality and transcendence, an opening that goes beyond the blinkered confines of the self towards something wider, something other. This is the meaning of existence as being-in-the-world and Care, the original process of relating and the activity of concern that bind us intimately to the world. The Rwanda project shows how easily Care breaks down and we objectify, how quickly we move from I-Thou to I-Them/It. When we can no longer maintain complexity of the other, we categorize, simplify, and stereotype. We do not have to look far to see this happening today in a Britain divided along remainer and Brexiteer lines.

Both art and phenomenology strive to help us to inhabit things in a direct, embodied manner that involves our whole being. They assist us in opening up to and getting close to the world in all its eminent and smallest details, not only those that are easy to meet but also those most difficult to entertain, the horror and war-stricken ones, the complex, smallest, senseless, most superfluous and ignored – both inside and outside of ourselves. They summon us to a relation of interest, to be touched, fascinated, intrigued, overwhelmed, beguiled by the world so can we reap the fruits of the emotions that it gifts us.

Cotterrell's work interrogates our tendency to respond to ambiguity, plurality and instability by erecting barriers around us, by denying, distancing and separating. He identifies indifference and a devaluing as incremental

processes of detachment that are preconditions or precursors for local, regional, and global inequality and conflict.

We move to another project, created when Cotterrell spent time as a war artist in Afghanistan. Does that even exist, I wonder? He talks about his role as a historical witness, especially to the suffering of British soldiers whose plight could not be reported in the press (he was embedded in a medical regiment). The photographs, known as gateway II, can be seen in the Imperial War Museum. They are still, formal, horrifying too. There is no beauty but no real trauma either. I feel removed, something is lost between what I see and what I imagine was the chaos, the blood, the shouting surgeons, their hands motivated by adrenaline, an unconscious body breathing, just. Cotterrell contacted the seventy-seven injured he photographed to talk through the pictures and ask them if they wanted them destroyed, anonymized or left as they were. Most chose the latter. The process provided a catharsis, redemption even, for both the artist (who while hidden behind the camera had shared the horror nevertheless) and the wounded, usually drugged up for days and left without memories of the events. As is often the case with our clients, reconstructing their stories (with the help of the photos in this case) and adding to their personal landscapes, proved therapeutic.

Encounter begins with acceptance. Cotterrell's approach emphasizes the most underplayed dimensions of existential commitment and choice. These have not so much to do with the breaking open of things, unbridled relativism or unlimited freedom to choose that both art (Owton, 2010) and the human science paradigm (Spinelli, 2001) are often associated with, but rather with questions of acceptance. How do I relate to my experience? Do I relate to it from the position of a prisoner, or as a free being? This does not give me control over all or much of my experience but a much greater control around how I am with it, and how I am with the way that I am with it, and what I do with it. Can I accept that some things in the world are deeply rooted, both intra- and inter-personally? And if so, what can I do with them? Only on the basis of acceptance can other opportunities begin to emerge.

This is especially pertinent when we think of how often people come to therapy because they hold within themselves conflicting but simultaneously valid and important positions, values, truths, knowledge and information. This tension is often painful and disturbing but it cannot be overruled. How do we work with that duality, rather than trying to convince ourselves that there is only one? Can we and our clients consider a life with two messages that are completely opposite and at odds with each other, yet both completely necessary? What good can there be in holding that dividedness

and contradiction? Maybe we need to return to the phenomenological priority of beauty (as the embodiment of what is actually present as it is present) over truth (some abstract idea or expectation)?

An interruption. Coffee I hope, but no, time's up. I feel slightly bewildered, how can two hours have passed already? My mind has been opened in wonderment, stretched in new directions, and my-self challenged. It takes a bit of time to resurface. Therein lies one of the gifts of Cotterrell's work.

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