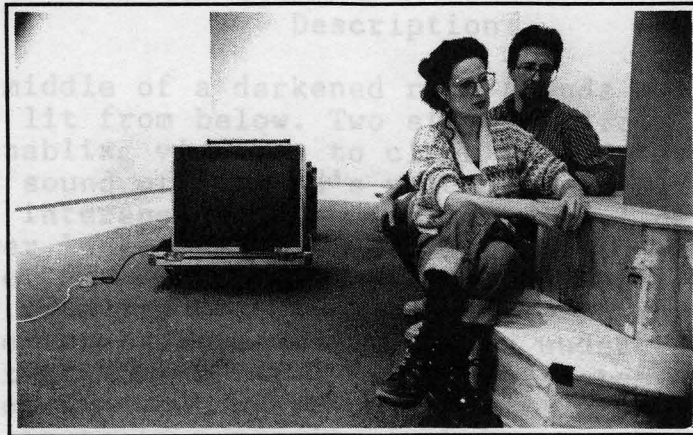


The Art Of Video

Kate Elwes broke off from putting the finishing touches to the wooden wishing well and posed this riddle:



A young boy has been badly injured in a road accident and needs operating on. There is a regulation though, which prevents a surgeon from operating on their child for ethical reasons. The child is still conscious when the surgeon appears by his bed-side: "You can't operate on me". The surgeon is not his father. Who then, is it? An odd riddle, yet it is one which still causes people to look blankly and ponder deeply. Who could the surgeon be?

The answer, quite simply, is the child's mother.

Bringing up a male child has made me see men less as the enemy and more as the victim

Kate, an artist who is exhibiting this week at the Posterngate Gallery in Hull, used this riddle to exemplify how those in positions of authority tend usually to be male and are always assumed to be.

"I'm a feminist, I'm not ashamed of stating that and I will always continue to investigate female experience despite it having become unfashionable".

Brave words indeed from a woman who saw the feminist movement rise encouragingly in the 1970s and then watched the unity of it disperse with the emergence of the eighties. Kate uses 'installations' as part of the media she works through to express her ideas and visitors to her show will be greeted by the sound of trickling water, emerging from a well or perhaps a baptismal font in the centre of the gallery. Those brave enough to climb up onto the well will look into it and see a child's face reflected back at them.

Kate broke off from building the exhibition to talk a little about the ideas which inspired this exhibition:

"I've used a combination of video and sculpture. The video is installed in the well, to reflect up the image of a child's face, because it is something which couldn't be expressed through fixed sculpture or a canvas. It is also important that the exhibition is something which visitors have to get physically involved with - unlike most exhibitions when people are told specifically not to touch objects".

The vision reflected in the well

is actually Kate's son, Bruno, and much of the inspiration for her recent work came from the experience of being pregnant and bringing up a child. "I used to hate men, yet having the experience of bringing up a male child has made me see men less as the enemy and more, with women, as the victim". "People will be surprised", she said, "when they look down into the well and it shows a reflection, not of themselves, but a child instead".

The video will perhaps evoke memories of a visitor's childhood. This, for Kate, is important because all parents have histories which have shaped them and this car is projected on to the child as it grows - parents are people, they have dilemmas, problems and insecurities which they themselves are still resolving. These shouldn't be projected on to the child.

Exemplifying this with her experience as a mother, Kate recalled the time when her son was potty training. She said, "I became unduly over-anxious about him shitting in a pot - this certainly wasn't his problem - it was mine. I was pressurised by what is considered to be the norm".

"I believe you have to acknowledge the child within yourself, be kind to it and allow that part of the child within you to breathe".

Much of the installation is concerned with the inability of the child to communicate. Young children can express only their basic necessities, such as food and sleep. The video shows a young boy speaking in French, which heightens the communication problem with the language barrier.

I'm a feminist and I'm not afraid of stating it, despite it having become unfashionable

As she was building the sculpture Kate was unsure whether to actually use the conversation or to increase the lack of communication even more by removing it altogether.

"The ideas in my work only come together fully as I build it and the work is as much a discovery for me as I hope it will be for the audience. I'm still learning".

Kate Elwes' video installation is exhibited at the Posterngate Gallery from 19th January to 2nd February. The gallery is open from Tuesday Saturday 10.00am to 5.00pm. Admission free.

Kate Elwes
was interviewed by
Claire Stanley
