

INTERVIEW: Anna Boghiguan and Karen Mackinnon @ Artes Mundi



The Verse's Jake Francis interviewed Anna Boghiguan and Karen Mackinnon from Artes Mundi. Here is their transcribed conversation.

Key:

JF – Jake Francis

KM – Karen Mackinnon – Artes Mundi director and curator

AB – Anna Boghiguan – Artes Mundi 8 shortlisted exhibitor

[**AB** and **JF** begin interview by talking for a moment about traffic from Brighton to London before **AB** continues conversation...]

AB – Anyway what were the questions you have to ask me?

JF – Well I was just going to ask some general questions about you and your career, and then ask from a student's point of view any advice you'd have for aspiring creatives – does that sound ok?

AB – Let's start with the other one first, the second one.

JF – Ok, So, of course, you've had quite a long career...

AB – Well I'm 72, 50 years

JF – Yes of course, and a lot of students too would aspire to follow a similar path to yourself – to find something that sustains their passion and to build a career upon. You have a very dense history with art, working with installations, in book works, drawing, the sculptural work. What keeps you motivated to pursue all of this – is it your travel, reading, research? Or...

AB – Life

JF – Life. So you just like to absorb as much as possible?

AB – I suppose it depends on the type of brain you have.

JF – I suppose so.

AB – And the brain is the way you permute from the day you were born – so it has to do with your destiny, or your karma, or the way your brain ticks.

JF – So you're quite philosophical in that way, you find that you have a path that you need to lead?

AB – Yes.

JF – Do you feel you've always had that inquisitive mind, like the artist is believed to hold- to problem solve or represent reactions to things, to make

a conclusion at certain times in one's life?

AB – I think you can never make conclusions because conclusions can always change – only a set of hypotheses are usually to be questioned and acted on.

JF – **So you feel it is a constant questioning that spurs you as an artist?**

AB – Yes. I think it is the very nature of the human being. I do not consider the artist to be a different animal than the human being. The word artist is like the word scientist, someone who explores and enquires. I think the term 'artist' is merely something that was created in a bourgeois revolution.

JF – Absolutely, I agree. Going with that, a lot of people liken artists to scientists as you said. If you look at artist research there is an increasing similarity.

AB – Yes, I was actually reading that sometimes things that artists have created and come to conclude are matched in what scientists are trying to find, and what religion has said is what scientists are trying to find, there is a lot of cross-platforming with science. It is pragmatic thinking.

JF – And that's the core of your practice do you think?

AB – No, not just that but for all of humanity.

JF – To never settle, to always strive for more and to prove everything?

AB – Yes, and this is the question you know? From Iron they made steel, from steel they made aluminium, now they are making another kind of metal – so everything goes on and on and everything is going beyond control.

JF – Yes, and of course that is the central motif in your exhibited installation for the show which we will come back to in a minute, if I may. Going back to students, what would be your advice for those who are also

pursuing a practice of enquiry?

AB – To live whatever they have to live in their minds and to not be affected by the environment. But I am not telling you to be an artist, I'm trying to tell them to live their own emotions and to develop their own person.

JF – I know that you're speaking in general, but going back to art education in this country, and I'm rather certain in thinking that it is the same in a lot of western systems, that the arts are quite underappreciated...

AB – **Well I think that's the case in most of the world. Culture became something that was repressed due to the industrial revolution and with that became the central notion of business and the aim of civilisation on how to earn money.**

JF – And with that, a lot of artists feel that they have become slaves to the art market themselves – do you feel that you've been able to avoid that, to keep yourself doing what you want to do without interference?

AB – Well yes, it depends on the situation – we have come to a point where you are unsure what you want to do and what the world wants you to do.

JF – it's funny you should say that as a lot of art students, from what I've heard – especially when going into the realm of postgraduate study, feel they have learned so much that they have lost their ability to play – just to have fun with the material. To be scared of having every element scrutinised or to have works that looks like 'that person' or 'this person' – do you think that we should be more child-like in the act of creating?

AB – Well I think that is what I said, to explore what you have to give. At some point however you will not know what is you and what is the link, you have to the world surrounding you. We do not live outside the universe.

JF – I think that's what is great about this show, in particular, it doesn't

keep art in a neat little box – it's all linked to wider questions and narratives.

AB – Yes, did you know that a friend of mine told me that on this occasion I did not have confusions? Like I have had in other exhibitions, there is no commotion of chaos.

KM – Really? That's interesting.

AB – **It's very clean.**

KM – It is very clean but I think that works, though – was she celebrating that or did she find it problematic?

AB – She liked it – but you may think it's very clean because the steel within it makes it neater.

KM – I think that having worked with Anna – what I think is wonderful, is that everything just comes out...

AB – But it is all focussed clearly

KM – **Exactly, and in the installation Anna is so clear and does so much reading and meeting people, forming layered conversations, that...**

JF – That she becomes like a sponge you just ring out within the gallery?

KM – Yes absolutely, she'll be so full up and then just release it all into the exhibition at that time. But what I meant was, with this installation, Anna has been very precise – and when the space was being prepared to her liking, I mean we knew some things but not everything, there was some playing but she knew exactly what went where and how things should be. In my experience, though, there are some artists, once they get into the gallery, that can go a bit crazy; and you sometimes have to say 'ah, what are you doing?'

JF – They lose their inhibitions or the ability to self-regulate?

KM – Yeah, or they lose their coherence – but Anna was very precise, she knew exactly her intentions.

JF – I think that too is also a common trait within students – especially in degree shows or assessed events because they may feel, through institutional pressure, that this will be the most important thing I’ll ever have to make or show – and I’ve certainly done it. To explode within a room and to express ‘too much’

KM – Yeah, especially during an MA where there is so much pressure to infer knowledge or progression. I remember when I started my MA that I thought I knew absolutely nothing. It was such a leap from degree to MA, I found anyway.

JF – I think so too, absolutely. So Anna, going back to your methods and concerns, what is the most important part of your practice? Is it the final product or the journey to the idea for example?

AB – Like I told you it doesn’t matter – it is what is in your mind.

JF – So it’s the whole package?

AB – Yes, I wish you and all other students good luck – nothing is sure in the world, but you should go with your emotions and do what you have to do.

Anna Boghiguan is currently exhibition work alongside four other artists in Artes Mundi 8, now on display at the National Museum Cardiff until 24th February 2019. Entry is free. For more information on Anna or the exhibition, please visit the following links:

<http://www.sfeir-semmler.com/gallery-artists/boghiguan/>

<https://museum.wales/cardiff/whatson/10264/Artes-Mundi-8/>