

# Facing legacies: what traces might an artworks representation expose?

Jo Melvin

I'd like to begin by referring to some of our exchanges over the last year or so, as these underlying threads continue to recur. It is the convergence of our similarities and differences that bring us together. One of the event's titles was 'Don't Stare it's Rude'. I have been wondering where this expression actually comes from. Who said it? Our mothers, our fathers... or is it our culture? And is it a peculiarly Anglo Saxon Culture... I am saying this because I think it is necessary to be careful about our specificity in relation to representation and re-presentation. This means who says what and where and how and when in the context of this convergence of difference and similarity. I am reminded of Art & Language's *Index 0001* at *Documenta 5* in 1972 when they attempted to map the connections of exchange and difference between each other. These were through the writing, text, artwork as text – that they had made collectively and individually, and to find a way to situate which pieces spoke directly to each other, which did not and those which had partial convergences. This summary feels like that structural process of finding ways to present a metastructure for the points of convergence, where we are similar, where different and also what actually slips away.

This brings up the notation of the tangential, which also comes from the averted gaze don't stare its rude. The tangential is a useful guiding principle bringing the ideas of glimpses, being off-kilter, the notion of the fragment, the elliptical or the partial. It also gives a licence not to attempt a grand totality. I would like to consider think where the voice is located, the voice in portraiture, the voice in representation. This means where is the voice located and whose voice is it. It is an intertwining. And immediately when we start thinking about this and the idea of possession, ownership, legacy and responsibility, comes the question; do these voices chime in accord? I am reminded of Plato's story of consuming passion told in the book

*The Phaedrus*, when young Phaedrus is subsumed by the power of a speech he has heard in the morning. He and Socrates walk together outside the city. It is necessary that they are outside the city because they are away from the conventions governed by how we behave and perform with each other. This young man re-presents the speech verbatim as if he himself has created what he has merely heard. He becomes like the primary articulator of it. He is obsessed and inhabited by the voice of another represented as his own. What is interesting here is whose voice is it and where is it located? We come back again and again to this displacement. And in my retelling of it, whose story has it become? And furthermore for what purpose is it being refashioned?

The other thing that I would like to mention, as an overshadowing or an underlying metastructure, is the notion of the eye of the soul. This comes into all our portraiture, all our sense of representation, if we are governed by a notion of figuration. The eye of the soul underlies Western metastructure. Western metaphysics and its ocular structure, has such an impact on how we think as a visual paradigm. I see, I know. I know what I see. I understand because I see – comes so much together that we almost take for granted that seeing and knowing are somehow one, in how we think about language and how we think about communication. So with these few thoughts I would like to go into a discussion about re-presentation in some works by the sculptor Barry Flanagan and by the American conceptual artist Christine Kozlov.

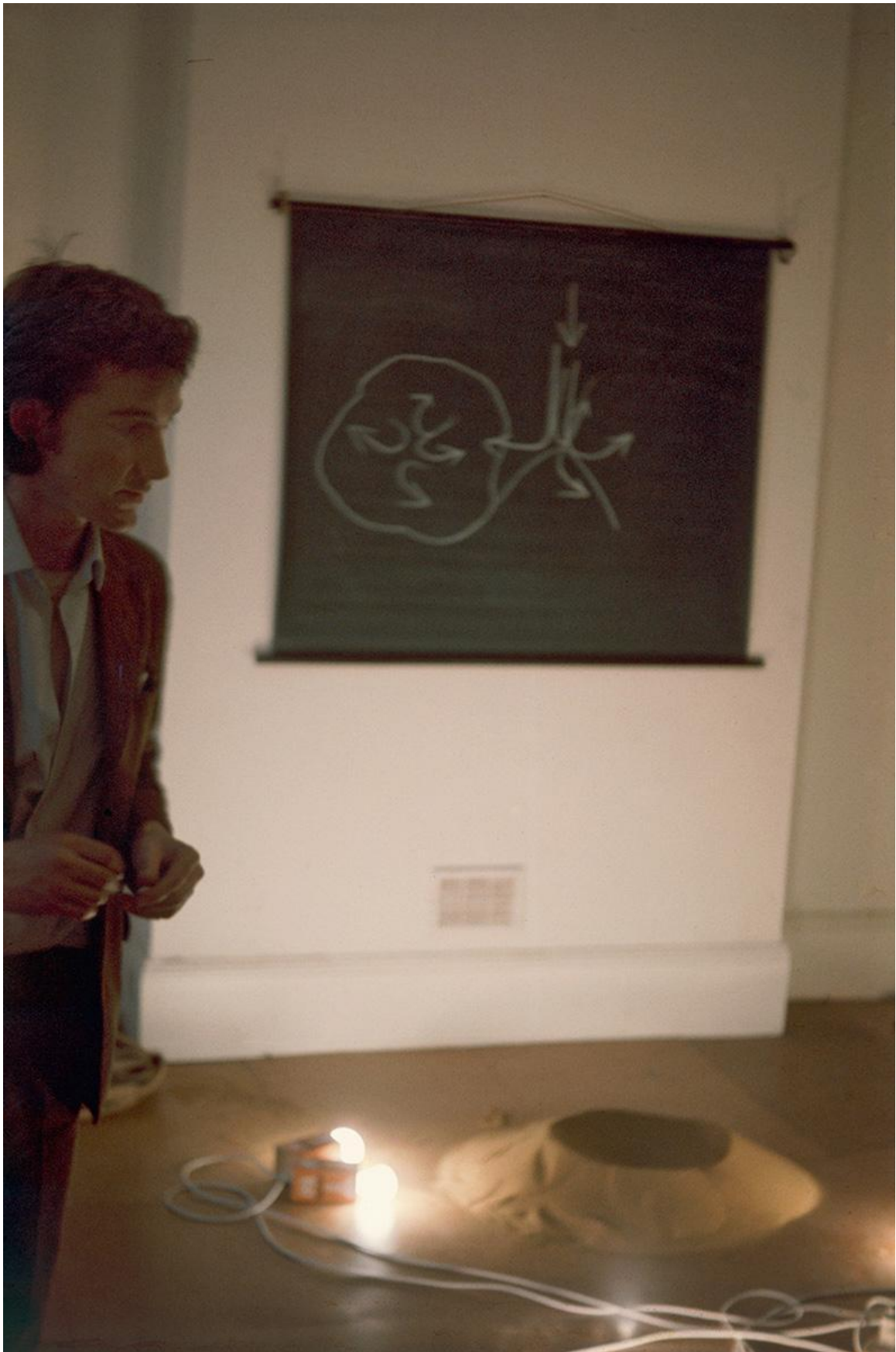
When I look at this image from an exhibition of Flanagan in 1969 in Germany you see a representation, a double exposure. You see Flanagan himself in the image and Flanagan's inhabitation of this space through his work. He spent three weeks in the gallery making work for the space, for the location, and photographed the works himself. The photographs we have the exhibition are all taken by him and here we have him playing with the notion of projection with the sense of presence in this sort of absent space – this empty space which is

filled as well with the work. We see here *three space rope sculpture* (1969) which draws together the viewer's movement between three spaces of the gallery.

These photographs record the process of the work *ringn '66*, (1966) a small pile of sand, as the vehicle to make another artwork, *The Lesson* (1971) a film.



Barry Flanagan three space rope sculpture 69, 1969 installed in 'Object sculptures', Museum Haus Lang, Krefeld, 1969.



Barry Flanagan ringn '66, 1966 whilst making The Lesson 1971, photograph Charles Harrison.



Barry Flanagan ringn '66, 1966 whilst making *The Lesson* 1971, photograph Charles Harrison.

The act of re-performing the installation is another iteration of its being reinhabited by the body of the artist whose presence is no longer material. *ringn '66* is the first sand sculpture Flanagan made. It was included in an exhibition curated by Charles Harrison called the *British Avant-Garde* at the New York Cultural Center, New York in 1971. Flanagan couldn't go to New York at that time and because Harrison would need to install it, Flanagan decided to use the processes of instruction to make a new artwork which simultaneously demonstrated how to make the work. A blackboard on the wall shows the diagram when he showed how the sand should be poured into a heap and how the hands should make four scoops from the centre, directionally north, south, east and west to make a crater. This instruction process becomes the film. Unfortunately it has disappeared, but we have these two slides that were taken by Harrison who always had his camera with him. He documented many exhibitions and that tells another story of inhabitation, or the representation of oneself within the space of moving around exhibitions.

I am going to consider another Flanagan sand work called *Sand girl* 1970. The project films sand pouring onto the body of a woman, the model who is lying on the floor of his studio. The sand falls from a bag. The bag is suspended from the structure of the roof and it swings slightly and Flanagan moves around the space filming this process of sculpturing in action. So the action of sculpting again becomes transformed into something newly materialised. These are stills from the film.



Barry Flanagan *Sand girl*, 1970



Barry Flanagan Sand girl, 1970



Barry Flanagan Sand girl, 1970



Barry Flanagan Sand girl, 1970

The last one on the bottom right is where the model has moved away and you see the trace of her presence. The movement of her passing is recorded – she has gone but the sense of that habitation remains.

I am going to turn to another contemporary of Flanagan and Harrison, Lucy Lippard whose book, *Six Years the Dematerialisation of Art, 1966 to 1972* was published in 1973. The advertisement for it in *Studio International* describes its construction as follows:

*The unusual form of this provocative book intentionally reflects the chaotic network of ideas connected with so called Conceptual Art or Information Art or Idea Art in many parts of the world from 1966 to 72. Arranged as a continuous biographical chronology into which is woven a rich collection of original documents including texts by and taped conversations with and amongst the artists involved and annotations by Lucy Lippard, the book has the quality of an informal lively forum. Six years is a fully documented work of historical reference. The*



*editor's close involvements with the artists working in these areas give her unique access to an extraordinary range of unpublished material.*

I thought it was interesting the term used for the process Lippard adopted was editor. She compiled the material she had received in tandem with the exhibitions, the publications, magazines, the artists books, the announcements and so on occurring at the time. She also includes transcripts she'd made from artists' talks and panels in different galleries and universities. Lippard cross references the material chronologically – there is a page here from inside the book. When I was doing some research last year in the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian I was looking through Lippard's extensive folders on this project. I was particularly interested in the work of Christine Kozlov whom I first encountered in Lucy Lippard's book through the work called *Following Piece, Rejected*. It was listed as 'January 1969, Christine Kozlov made *Following Piece, Rejected*'. I was immediately made curious by Kozlov's denotation of something that is abandoned. One of those wonderful things which so often doesn't happen when you are looking in archives is that you find something that you are really looking for. This was one of these occasions. I found the postcard that Lippard must have used to cross reference that work which was the rejected following piece – was in her papers and the other piece represents a blank slide. The idea of showing blankness or nothingness is a determination to account for something normally ignored or forgotten and it is a strong form of action.

I curated an exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute of Christine Kozlov, which finished in February this year and included this work, *271 Sheets of Paper to Represent 271 Days of Concepts Rejected* (1968). It demonstrates the methodology she employed as an artist, being recorded, being remembered and having some other presence, and by being reconfigured in a way which enables what is rejected to have a material body. This next work is *Eating Piece, (2/20/69 – 6/12/69) Figurative 1* (1969). Kozlov's exploration of representation and self-representation is particularly resonant. This work lists the food she ate and what she drank on each day for these months. She represents herself through her consumption. It is a

specificity that raises all kinds of questions about her, the way she is living, what she is eating, what sort of balance of food she has. It also raises questions about the economies she adopts, personally and more broadly. I find it a powerful evocation of self-portraiture. There is another conundrum, which is what is the original, whether it is a photocopy, or another copy of a photocopy and Kozlov's work plays with the difficulty of addressing curatorial integrity, what should be used and how it should be used and even whether it is possible ethically to make a remake.

Now we return to Flanagan, *one ton corner piece* (1967).



Barry Flanagan *one ton corner piece 67, 1967* installed at the Rowan Gallery, London in 1968

This work is interesting for a number of reasons. It was first made when Flanagan was included in the Biennale called *Biennale des Jeunes* in Paris, in 1967. He was one of seven artists selected by the British Council to represent Britain. When he got to Paris with Alex Gregory-Hood, from the Rowan Gallery, Flanagan found the sand that had been delivered was

the correct volume but not the right type to make the work that he had intended to make. So he reconfigured a completely different piece, directly referencing its weight in the title. A year later Gregory-Hood wanted him to include the work in his solo exhibition. So he performed the act of making that work again. When I started working with Flanagan I asked him about this particular piece and whether it would be possible to reperform the installation and make it in a new context and we discussed it as a viable situation. This next image was the first time the work had been remade since it was shown at that Rowan show in 1968.



One ton of builders' sand delivered to Vyner Street London

Now one ton of sand – I don't know if any of you have envisioned one ton of sand – this is a ton of sand and it was necessary to source it from where Flanagan got sand near Leighton Buzzard. The operational tactics of making it require certain logistics which are akin to a dance routine. It is a peculiar process because one feels – I feel – as if I am imbedded in the decision making processes of how to construct, how to perform this work that operates between sculpture and painting, that the sand sand itself becomes almost like paint – the materiality of paint that is being thrown. It has to be positioned in a way that requires quite tight stepping. The other work, I wanted to include is *Heap 3 67/68* (1967/8). Now *Heap* is filled with a very different type of sand. Again the installation of a piece like this requires a kind of tracing the artist's bodily decision making process. And actually taking them on for oneself and so to become an author within that situation, and has a very particularly viscous quality in this particular work which is a quite different process from following the instructions to make work given by an artist like, Sol LeWitt for example. This image shows the install in Vyner Street.



Jo Melvin installing Barry Flanagan heap 3 67/68, 1967-68, at Vyner street, London, 2015.



Barry Flanagan one ton corner piece 67, 1967 and heap 3 67/68, 1967-68, at Vyner street, London, 2015.

I thought it would be interesting to see another incarnation of *one ton corner piece*, in a very different space and how the impact of space affects the way we look at the work.

This is in Waddington Custot Gallery, so in a 'blue chip' gallery it has a very different resonance from how it is experienced or encountered in an alternative space such as Vyner Street, Cullinan Richards.



Barry Flanagan one ton corner piece 67, 1967 installed at Waddington Custot Gallery, London 2016.

Then we end with this photograph of Flanagan which is in the National Portrait Gallery collection. It is a commissioned photograph taken by Lord Snowdon when Flanagan was the representative for Britain in the Venice Biennale in 1982. The exhibition went from Venice to Paris to the Pompidou Centre and in that reconfigured version of the exhibition there was a repackaging of the catalogue. This photograph was situated in *Vogue Magazine* and it was also included in the Pompidou Centre's version of the exhibition catalogue. So on that note coming back to the artist himself and his ambiguous presence within the National Portrait

Gallery because here there are only photographs of Flanagan the artist, there is no work by him in the collection. And I thought that that was an interesting point at which to end.