

## **EMAILS, BLOG ENTRIES, SCRAWLED NOTES AND SKYPE DATES: TRANSPARENCY COLLECTIVE APPROACH *CRITICAL BOUNDARY***

*...this idea has met with a bit of debate within the group (and opened up a whole other discussion).*

Most of our work is about humans touching each other, in a way. It makes sense, really. Working together for two years now, everything we do as a collective is affected by the vagaries of how close we are – mentally and physically. Furrowing brows at each other across the meeting table; crammed into small beds on cold residencies; talking over each other on webcam, continents apart.

*...trains get so packed we are often pressed up against another person, male and female. sometimes, someone's hand on the railing is at a height that my bum is up against. or another person's breath is right down my neck behind my ear...it's not the most comfortable of situations, but we are not bothered enough to feel like our personal space has been trespassed against. and yet, reaching out to physically touch – in comfort, not pervy ways, or just plain touch – is not 'right' behaviour.*

We are by necessity in constant investigation of how to be in relation to another person; it's the framework that surrounds everything we do together. As Transparency Collective, we certainly have never tried to keep our work and our lives too separate. On the contrary, we rely upon our relationships to fuel our research, and so it is with Critical Boundary.

*...if what we do is eat together and devise work together... maybe something that extends from that?*

Edward T. Hall spent 95 years in non—stop research. The pinnacle of his anthropological career was the development of 'proxemics'; a quantification of behaviours and reactions in different types or volumes of space, the delineations of that space into different 'zones', and a study of how we react when those zones clash with another person's, or a different type of space, or evolve over time.

This three week laboratory process is a microcosmic look at all that. In an examination of the twin continuums of intimacy and distance, it feels wrong to make it heavy; to turn it into a finished work and put it into a gallery and say, "here it is, guys; here is our study on intimacy, our fight or flight instinct turned solid". Rather, we seek to enable our and your experience of those, provide the tools and the language to briefly be cognisant of the moments that make up ninety—five percent of our ninety-five years.

*I want to explore what it means, this proximity, and what it is like for you. I do not believe in this distance although we, I, fight for it so ferociously. I am interested in the moment you decide to let it all fall away and be with me.*

Over this laboratory, we are undertaking constant experimentation to generate and test data and opinions about our collective experience of human encounter. We ask what it takes to provoke a fight or flight instinct, or has that fallen by the evolutionary wayside as we've escaped all our natural predators? As a people we throw ourselves constantly, recklessly, into dangerous situations. What a strange thing, to purposefully construct a situation to provoke what used to be natural instincts. Think of people playing chicken, or even just staring down a stranger. We engineer these encounters to provoke a brief adrenaline; to feel the tiger's breath on our neck.

*...past the point of comfort, past the usual point of breaking and divergence.*

As much as we need that feeling of brief panic, we also need its opposite; we need our most intimate circle engaged – and the lengths we go to, to ensure that, are perhaps even more odd. What are the stories and justifications we tell ourselves to allow a stranger into our personal space? To calm ourselves through, on the knife— edge of discomfort, letting a stranger into your house, or hold your child, or sleep the night in your bed? What allows us to welcome another's presence, and does that coupling then change how we engage with the rest of the world, even temporarily? What a strange thing, to throw yourself into the presence of strangers and join them in their research.

*...yes, definitely wishing to be home so badly. miss you all.*

This exhibition is a provocation to do just that. Our initial experiments form the core of that provocation; their activation relies upon our mutual involvement, and the exchange that follows their undertaking will be documented online and in person in the gallery space, through a series of lunches and exchanges that reflect the relational concern of Critical Boundary. Our research and experimentation are ongoing, and yours will affect ours.

So much of our work is concerned with these ideas of mutuality, communion, transference, complicity. It could be argued that we're just looking for new collaborators, with every project.

*..hello my other long distance lovers.*

**// KIERAN SWANN**