

Lemon Text

Working Notes May to October 2009

See also: <http://www.redteapot.co.uk/Red-Teapot-Day/>

'WE ARE ALL LEMONS'

This is really about protection: what do you want to protect; what do you want protecting from; and who or what will offer you that protection?

I have a theory. It's not a very robust theory, but hopefully it's sufficient to start a conversation. My theory states that, as artists, 'WE ARE ALL LEMONS'.

For the last 6 months or so, I've been testing this theory with artists in the UK and USA via a series of e-mails called 'Lemon Texts'. In summary, the theory defines artists as lemons in three ways:

1. as a metaphor for 'faithfulness' (as in Zurbaran's 'Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose');
2. as a corrective for the degradation of connective tissue (as in protection against the ravages of scurvy during a long voyage); and
3. as an inadequate person, or something defective or imperfect (as in the economist George Akerlof's 1970 theory 'The Market for Lemons: Quality Uncertainty and the Market Mechanism').

The theory, 'WE ARE ALL LEMONS', came together very quickly in response to a press release from Arts Council England in April 2009, in which Dame Liz Forgan (newly appointed Chair of ACE) said:

"We cannot protect artists from the realities of recession..."

It seemed to me that I was being played as a lemon (third definition). Now let's be clear from the start, I'm not taking a pop at the Arts Council, but every time I read this statement my brain overloads with obvious questions:

- do I need protection?
- am I disappointed that the Arts Council can't protect me?
- what is the relationship between artists, protection, and the Arts Council?
- if the Arts Council can't protect me from the realities of recession, might it step in at some later point to protect me from the realities of Swine Flu? Or the forthcoming Perfect Storm?
- if there was an organisation that protected artists, would it look like the Arts Council?
- and soon.

Malatesta's Table

Here's why Malatesta makes me happy: homemade pastas. Meatballs like my mom makes. A chicken cutlet like my grandmother made. Piadina (thin pizza bread) stuffed with melted mozzarella and prosciutto. The specials are scrawled in marker on brown butcher paper. The service is adorably scruffy. [Kathleen Squires]

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