

Overture

To learn how to die
watch cherry blossoms, observe
chrysanthemums¹

INTERVIEWER

Can you tell me about the earliest BANK shows, like *Zombie Golf*, *Cocaine Orgasm*, and *Charge of the Light Brigade* [all 1995]?

MILLY THOMPSON

Actually they aren't the earliest of the BANK shows. They go back. The first one was called BANK because it was in a disused bank. The first shows I was involved in were *Natural History*, 1993 and *Wish You Were Here*, 1994. That was where BANK really consolidated as a close-knit group of friends who felt something permanent in the situation. There were four blokes and me. They invited me along as they thought that the Arts Council and other funding groups might find it strange to be funding an all male group. Whether there was any truth in that or not I don't know, but we did get very good at getting funding and by the middle of '95 we were very good at doing shows too. We really cracked it. We were the beautiful people. It was great. We had a space then in Curtain Road in Hoxton. Hoxton was a dump back then, there was nothing ... a wasteland. It was kind of Dickensian. There were a few artists, but mostly empty buildings. It was surrounded by housing estates which are still a presence if you look. The streets were badly lit, warehouses stood around with their hoists

creaking in the wind. There were skips full of rubbish, and that's what we made our work with.

I Can you say something about this use of rubbish-as-material? It was very different from work that other British artists were making in the early '90s.

MT Yeah, we didn't have any money. All these early shows were group shows. They had up to twenty people at a time in them. We liked to give the artists some money to pay for their work, not much, a commissioning fee if you like. Fixtures and fittings. And elaborate invites and press releases and of course, always, adverts in *Frieze* though they never reviewed us once for all that cash we put their way. All this stuff added up. Also all our work was very physically BIG. We made kind of prop-works that other artists worked around. For instance, in *Charge of the Light Brigade* we made a charge of infantry soldiers riding from one corner of the ceiling to the far corner. The charge was life-size when you came through the entrance, but by the time it got to the other end soldiers, horses and all fitted into a matchbox. We made that work out of skip stuff, wood for frames, and millions of cardboard boxes and bits of old fabric. We bought paint though.

I That charge was upside down.

MT Yeah.

I Why?

MT It was imperfect. That charge was a disaster. Most of the infantry was killed by the Russians due to British bungling.

I How could that be a work that other artists had to interact with?

MT They didn't have to 'interact', they were asked to think about mistakes. That was what that show was about. All the work embodied failure in some way. It was lovely; all the work being filled with pathos or crapness somehow, but kind of cool at the same time.

I So all the BANK shows had an idea that BANK illustrated through their own work and then other artists worked in and around that?

MT Yes basically. Though it wasn't always that straightforward. For instance in *DOGUMENTAL VIII* [1997] we made a BANK 'documenta' based on all these big, brainy style, fancy international exhibitions with a curator and a big idea. Here we had eight different themed shows. Most of them we 'curated' and others were 'curated' by 'curators' that we invited.

I There's a lot of inverted commas there.

MT Yes. Mostly when you get a curator you've got someone who's going to go completely didactic, comply with funding considerations and introduce a scheme or narrative that is somehow theirs. This necessarily removes things from the artists. I don't find a lot of pleasure in these exhibitions – there's too much earnestness, and I wish that there could be more lightness on the stage, however dire things might be in the rest of the world.² There's obviously a place for them [curators], but I don't know, I still don't quite know what the point of them is, but I'd accept a show needs an administrator. Gallerists are different; at least

they're doing it for a legitimate reason which is to make themselves and the artists they work with a lot of money. BANK were often called 'curators' but we weren't. At least I didn't think we were; the others might. We were artists who messed about doing shows that evoked 'curation' through schematics and ideas as well as other stuff. Outsiderness, exhibition strategies, commercial galleries, public space stupidity, psychotherapeutics, obstinacy, advertising, media ... The shows weren't about curation *per se* and I didn't feel like we were a curator ...

I But you were artists using curation as your subject matter ...

MT Maybe. There was more than that though. That sounds boring. There was sex, drinking, drugs, theatricality and of course hoards of admiring acolytes. At 62 I can't afford to forget that we did all that stuff.

I In 2001 you co-authored the publication *BANK* [Black Dog Publishing] with Simon Bedwell who with you were the last remaining members. This book chronologically runs through your work and shows. In the 'epigraph' or conclusion you wrote 'May the day come ... when we'll bury ourselves in the woods of an ocean island to live on ecstasy, calmness and art, far from that European struggle for money.' Are you talking about taking drugs there?

MT Don't be silly [smirks]. Simon and I had just been on holiday to St. Barthes in the Caribbean. We were talking about having a studio there. To Simon it was a bit of a joke, but I've always really wanted a yacht. Apparently Jasper Johns has a studio on St. Martin which is the next island along. I've heard he gets paintings from his New York State studio onto a private jet and

flies down to studio St. Martin and works on it there and they're still wet.

I Does that appeal to you?

MT Are you kidding? Absolutely. Fun can only be had if you can move around as much as you want. Then you're free. Freedom is what we all want. Money is the root of freedom.

I There had been other members of BANK. What happened to them all? And why weren't they involved in writing the BANK monograph?

MT Those are both easy questions. Group dynamics are full of flux. They're not like a Bach violin concerto. They're more like an discordant Japanese reed flute thing. The first BANKer to go was the saddest. That was '95. The second BANKer to go was a relief. He used BANK as weekend entertainment which was fair enough I suppose, but it meant that he always shirked responsibility which pissed us all off – that was in '97. The third was the most destructive. He was an original BANKer. He left at a New Year's party at midnight of the new millennium. We couldn't work together after that at all. It was full of hate. Which in a way is also beautiful.

I I'd like to talk about authenticity...³

MT Don't ask about that. It's a boring thought. Who defines what constitutes authenticity? If it's the theorists, then I'm not really interested. They're the tarts of the industry. Artists can't afford to be concerned with words as definition. We thought there were

authentic elements in the shows; there were also elements where we ripped people off, or parodied them, which might have been an authentic gesture depending on who or what was being ripped or parodied. People are always saying, yeah, but BANK were only looking after themselves, getting famous off the back of other artists brought in to the shows. This is crap. They got famous. Some of them did really well. Others are still doing every show they can get. It's sad to be middle aged, still making the same work, have fifty group shows a year in no-brainer galleries whilst attempting to imply your own radicality. It's all of no importance now, authenticity, integrity, whatever. None of us are doing particularly well post BANK.

I How would you describe yourself now?

MT I am what is described as a 'highbrow'. That is the first thing about me; it underlies, and influences, all the other things that I am – all the things that it is not desirable to be... But this term – half abuse, half of derision – is not *me*, it is not an attribute of mine, or anything personal to me. It is just something that happens to any writer or other artist, to be described in this ridiculous fashion – one who is not a best-selling or pot-boiling hack.⁴

I Some people question your integrity?³

MT Yeah, it's like 'where's your integrity?' as if it's been shot to pieces.⁵

I In relation to what you were saying about this notion of 'highbrow' and I suppose elitism, I wanted to ask you about how you collaborated with the media? Are bad taste and cheap publicity stunts a good thing?³

MT If you're referring to *Press Release* [1999] then it certainly wasn't cheap or in bad taste but there were things that I supposed you could say we did in bad taste, like our movie *Fuck, Shit, Walk* [1996] although in a way that was beautiful too, and one of the things we always said to that is 'We're just artists, and we're only responding to a given situation' whether it's in bad taste or not.⁵ And as to the media, we've never collaborated with it. They were never interested in BANK.

I That's not quite true. There was a lot of reviewing of BANK shows and I believe also quite a bit of television too.

MT Well it's a shame that we've never been given a giant retrospective somewhere. Yeah, but the media is and always has been oblivious to us. You only get attention like that when either there's a lot of money at stake, or someone beats a traffic warden with a stick. Weirdly BANK was quieter than that ... mmm ...

A R I A

MT Head pillowed on arm,
 such affection for myself!
 and this smoky moon⁶

Atto Due

I When you finally left BANK in 2005 you'd been collaborating for nearly 15 years. That's a quarter of your life? It must have left an indelible mark on you.

MT Yes, I missed Simon like mad. We'd seen other every day really,

socialised, worked ... I felt very lonely and lost. Recently I re-watched the film that Juliet (Jordan) made about just before I left, and it's very sad. I look terrible ... I look totally defeated and I was. It's clear from just little snippets that we were thinking about things in a different way. I was his best man though, which gives you some idea of the nature of our long and very special friendship.

I You've talked about the social aspect, but what about the way in which you approach work and ideas now that you are working solo?

MT There are many things that I think repeat in the work I'm making now that I couldn't shift even if I wanted to. My dislike of PC-ness in terms of education through art, of flashness or anti-flashness for peripatetic style reasons as opposed to some kind of visible (or invisible) rationale within the work, and, a general dislike of carelessness or laziness. A sculpture or a video or painting, whatever, should start with an idea or some ideas, not with it's materiality unless it's about that. I try to relate some kind of an idea about something rather than something about nothing.

I So your work's traditional then?³

MT Yeah, very traditional. You know what I really hate? I hate the idea of 'the artist as outsider', the 'genius' outsider. The truth is that we're just the same as car enthusiasts, who think the whole world's got it wrong because they don't know about sports cars. Art is just another specialised interest.⁵

⁶ Basho

³ 'Katy' ⁵ Performance artist

I But you'd get theorists thinking that it's actually the key to the whole world, and that art is meant to show us a different reality, or future possibilities of how social and political change could happen.³

MT But I do think art's the key to everything – art's a big encompasser. I'm not interested in capitalism at all, I'm not interested in money. I'm interested in people – human desire and aspiration and having daily interconnection with the people I value. I believe in experience, and having transcendence in your life.⁷

I Would you describe yourself as a day-dreamer then? You're very slow to make work and that seems to be something you enjoy.

MT There's certainly a subversive pleasure in occupying yourself with something for an unreasonable length of time.⁸ But it's not something I necessarily enjoy. I think I have quite a masochistic attitude towards art making and the artworld in general. I make things more difficult for myself, in that I don't go to private views, I don't have a studio, I don't invite people to look at what I have made ... I think I might have something interesting to say, but that's where it ends. Who's going to read this? There's hundreds, billions of artists, all busy publishing, making, showing. There's only a few who maybe get to make a real living.

I In fact after you left BANK you had no shows to speak of. However you were awarded the Sargent Scholarship to the British School of Rome in 2005. Some shows followed after that and you started to make quite a lot of work for a while.

MT Yes, I got a lot of money for that scholarship. I was very lucky. It was another award for long standing service to the artworld.

[laughter]. They gave me £6500 for three months. I couldn't believe it!

I What did you do with your time?

MT It was important to me to wake up in a beautiful studio every day and think, you've got to take yourself seriously, you're on your own now, solo. I did start making work. It was centred around my own self-consciousness about being an artist. The thought of letting people see stuff that I was the author of was very difficult for me and remains so to this day. I yearn for collaboration where shared responsibility means invisibility, at least to a certain extent. I started thinking that all artists must find it hard to reveal themselves and that one has to have a persona for dealing with that and another for private views and so on. The best persona to adopt is the one for dealing with a supermarket cashier which I find easy; it's polite, brief, unimportant. A bit sad or easy; I'm not challenged by that human exchange and I keep thinking why is this artist-in-the-art-world thing so challenging. So I started thinking about this too, within the work.

I Yes. Could you say more about the relationship of artist to artworld?

MT Well, after Simon [Bedwell] sold a lot of work to Saatchi from the *Beck's Futures* show at the ICA in 2005, I discovered the Saatchi Gallery website and an interview where Simon is interviewed by 'Katy' (Katy is in fact a generic 'interviewer' that all interviews on the site are ascribed to). Which made me think about interviews and what they're for. Some time ago I received an interview through the post between Andy Hunt and the artist

Mark McGown. Catalogue? interview for a monograph? I couldn't work out who it was for or why it would be sent out to what I assume is quite a large mailing list (although now I realise it's something that the International Project Space [IPS] in Birmingham does for each show). I mean I knew who Andy Hunt is because he had invited me to take part in a project once [*Slimvolume Poster Publication* 2004], and I was only vaguely familiar with Mark McGowan's most famous performance, which is leaving a tap running. The interview seemed so presumptuous and bizarre or something. Whatever, it grabbed me – the intimacy that can be attained in an interview ... the life story, the openness (especially if the interviewer admires the subject), what they talk about. The possibilities for self-aggrandisement are endless and somehow, in an interview format, acceptable. That was late in 2006 and I was completely stuck; I couldn't make work and had no ideas. This *thingy* for a show at the IPS that I received in the post provided me with a way to think about what I could do. And in my 'interview' Hunt and McGowan merely *represent* curator and artist; I could've used any interview. So what I'm doing here, is using an interview, lifting parts (sentences, whole paragraphs etc.) to help me think about what an immobilised place I'm in. The Hunt/McGowan interview is now ascribed to either ³, ⁵ or 'I' for the sake of simplicity. And it pleased me to also use some quotes from a couple of my favourite artists, poets or whatever. All of this quoting means that I'm sharing responsibility again and that feels good. I'm collaborating ...

- I Collaborating is maybe the wrong word. There's an almost cynical aspect to it ...³ How much of this 'interview' is actually based on fact?

MT All of it. Even the homeless bit if I say it is. I've always feared homelessness; it's one of my three fears, being old, lonely and homeless.

- I Could you unpack that comment about homelessness – what's the context? It's not something we've mentioned. Do you think confusing people is interesting?³

MT I'm not trying to confuse people, I'm the one who's confused. We might end up talking about any number of things; that's our business. How much do we reveal in an interview? That's our choice. That supermarket cashier, how do I know that s/he's not going to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2050? I think that all humans are capable of great thoughts, the problem is fear of making a fool of yourself. So ...

ARIA

MT Nobly, the great priest
deposits his daily stool
in bleak winter fields⁹

...

That's what I'm thinking about.

- I Can you tell me about the Haiku poets you're using throughout?

MT Haiku is very oblique I suppose and yet there's a straightforwardness I find refreshing. I was reading about the eaves used on historic buildings in Japan. They're built very deep to ensure that a minimal amount of direct light reaches the interior. The

houses pull inwards. Sliding doors create extra layers of light and dark and interestingly, the traditional colour used on the wall is a sort of ochre not white. The ochre sucks up light. The shadows are to be observed. They represent light, time, life and death. I think there's something to be gained from raising these sort of gloomy issues to the surface. I think we in the West could do with thinking about death more; it would stop us from being so self-conscious. Haiku exists to remind us that when you die you can be remembered or thought of as a stream or a mountain or something.

I What's the main reason for drawing people towards these issues?³

MT It's not 'people' and it's not 'issues'. It's art-people and the cultured-classes. I'm not thinking about drawing the people towards anything. Whatever anybody's history is, it's perfect. It can't be any different. I would tie this to nature.⁷ Nature and advertising, perfect foils for each other and both perfect. I read somewhere that at a dinner party with friends in a beautiful house, Koons realized how happy he was; that everything was so perfect that it was like being in an advert. He was in a state of bliss. He believes in media and advertising completely. That's exhilarating. A thought like that is very inspiring when it's in the mind of another. Let's face it, nobodies interested in ordinary people until they do something extraordinary. Nobody can face the idea of ordinariness, it's like being reminded of their own mortality, death after the life of somebody ordinary is a cheerless thought. A painful thought. That's why all that stuff in the '60s seemed so amazing; things seemed like a possibility for the have-nots. Of course certain have-nots have things better these days. But there's still a lot of have-nots who live in poverty and who

have nothing to do with 'The Spectacle' or culture (at least in terms of how we're talking about it here).

I Do you think that, with, for instance your installation *My Kind of People* [2005], you intervene in the 'Spectacle' in a radical way?³

MT Of course I'm talking about the idea of 'The Spectacle' but I think it's unrealistic to suggest that you can intervene in it radically. It's become such a cliché. In fact even if I re-organised that piece of work so that the plywood silhouettes were actually real people who at a certain point started interacting with the rest of the private view, I don't know ... violently, sexually, abusively, smashing priceless vases over the curators' heads, whatever, it would be hard to say it was radical. I think the artworld is not a place where the radical has any possibility. It's anaesthetised, closed, formatted, commercialised, stumbling and appropriated. Maybe if a homeless gang came in and held everyone up ... but that's not radical, it's just scary and weird and dangerous.

I Weren't you also homeless for a while?³

MT Yeah, it's quite surprising. I'm glad that I got off the streets, because I was homeless for about four or five years.⁵

I It sounds like you've had a relatively extreme life.³

MT People get depressed and go down. I suppose life is like that. And lots of artists reflect this in their work, but I try not to, like you know, Tracey Emin does.⁵

I Your work's not autobiographical?³

MT No it's not, because I always struggle with that side of things. I can go around the fringes of it, and tap into the shame, but I find it too close to home.⁵

I I don't know if you agree with this, but despite the fact that you fabricate situations, there's still an honesty about what you're doing, and it's this that links to a certain morality or attempt at truth. Is this correct?³

MT Yeah, I've got a little problem with that though, because I've got what you might call a bit of Tourette's in me. You can't tell me anything, because I'll just tell everybody and it's a real problem.⁵

I Even so, do you think that there's a moral stance in your work?³

MT Yeah everyone's got their own ethical and moral limits, whatever you're doing.⁵ *Basking in the melodrama of my own self-consciousness* [2005] makes me feel very uncomfortable. The woman in it is uncomfortable *and* wealthy; I filmed her in a café in Barcelona. She was just sitting there waiting. I knew that I was making her into something she had no control over. There was a sadness about her that I found desperate; it was like, 'look at me, I've got everything, yet my friends are late, or standing me up and the man on the next table hasn't even noticed me, I'm over a certain age, I might as well be dead'.

I How did it make you feel?³

MT How did it make me *feel*? I *felt* happy to have had the opportunity to film this happening. I was envious of her, and I wasn't. It was a mean video and it's made me want to focus my work back on

me. Yet if I had another opportunity like that, I'd take it. Art is insular in that way. Nobody takes me very seriously. But I am serious – about everything. I made a follow-up work this year *Dumb, hard* (2007); it's just pages from *W* magazine pasted to sheets of mirrored perspex. The paper *W*'s printed on is gorgeous, it's like full colour newsprint. It makes a painting, in my head. But it's just dumb, it's all jewellery and fashion and beautiful people and yachts. Stuff that I don't have any access to but that I fantasize about. It's hard because it's mean. Of course the viewer can see him/herself reflected a bit next to Naomi Campbell or Kate Moss or some Bulgari gemstones and that could be horrible I think, or you could just put your mascara on right there which gives the work a *use value* which I find interesting. A collector might like to even choose a combination of exotic locations with beautiful women, or cars with artists or whatever or a colour theme. It's all about choice; dumb choice, but it's choice.

I Do you think people think *Dumb, hard* is really just dumb?

MT It is just dumb. It's dumbness includes me. *Dumb, hard* is a non-starter. You won't commission a work from an artist unless some how the work is celebrating you as an intelligent person. But this work doesn't let you do that, it has no distancing possibilities. So it's stupid of me.

I Do you think you leave yourself open to misreading or misinterpretation?

MT You're talking about getting it. But the question 'do people get it or not' is wrong. I'm not trying to say that there's a true way of

looking at the work. All I'm doing is just delivering a message. And if anyone ever questions me about any of this, I won't respond. I just like the idea that I'm being consistent with the delivery of my messages.⁵ For instance, I think that my *Energy Block* series [2006 ongoing and also subtitled *A Curator's Friend*] delivers a message which is consistent with that of other works, it is about energy in a space, a gallery, reception area, whatever. It does the same thing as *My Kind of People*, *La Danse de l'Amour et de la Haine de Soi* or *Feelings*.

I Can you unpack that a bit?

MT Well, what I mean is that somehow all these works are about self revelation, self consciousness, desire, masking. Simon [Bedwell] said that a better name for *Energy Block* could be 'Arrogance Block'. He saw it as having an essentially arrogant slant. There may be arrogance in my work. If it's there it's sort of accidental; Maybe ALL art is arrogant. Maybe the true collector is an artist multiplied by himself.¹¹ I heard a fantastic anecdote about Martha Rosler who had been invited to take part in a panel discussion. She was the only woman on it, and once they'd begun she took some an embroidery frame from her bag and started some needlework. This action suppressed the discussion. It was a massive action that was supremely effective. Not only was the conversation scuppered but she succeeded in diverting everybody's attention to her. I liked that such a simple proverbial gesture brought a new energy into a conference environment.

I She's sort of domesticising the event.

MT She did another great thing with a loaf of bread. At a dinner in an

upmarket restaurant Martha took her own brown, wholemeal, homemade bread out of her bag and put it on the table. I imagine her asking the astonished waiter for a bread knife. I've been thinking a lot about that kind of energy. *Basking in the melodrama of my own self-consciousness*, *For Us Expression is at the Heart of Our Creativity* [2007], the *Energy Block* series, *My Kind of People*, *La Danse de l'Amour et de la Haine de Soi* and *Voglio soldi di più solo quando c'è gente ricca intorno* [2005], they're all about energy – so that it's not about sculpture or whatever; I want my work to be a sort of static performance.

I What would be your ultimate dream achievement for your artwork?³

MT A bit pretentious, but ... a weird beauty; and disruption, of any sort.¹⁰

I But you're obviously uncomfortable with gallery 'events'.³ Last year you worked with the curator Nicholas Cullinan on your first solo show outside of BANK. I wanted to ask you about that with reference to the exhibition space, as this show was in a disused chapel in Rome.

MT Yes, Nick asked me to do this show at the Capella Angelo, an old Baroque chapel, very pretty but dilapidated. It had the remains of cupids and stuff, bits of plasterwork and it reminded me of the Romans themselves. Romans love 'outfits' and the jewellery to go with them and when you're there you can see this pride in their impressive heritage with little stopping off points going back all the way to the Etruscans: kitsch-ness, painted glazed stoneware and the like, vile figurines, is obvious in the horrible late Renaissance paintings of kitchens and general Disneyesque scene-setting of Italian Rococo. *Voglio soldi di più solo quando c'è*

gente ricca intorno was made with this in mind. Contemporary Romans are wealthy and vulgar. But amongst it all there's real style, especially with the older women. I loved them. I desired all this stuff. I'm weak for it. I liked this chapel and made a huge diamond necklace out of card and showed videos of glass chandelier drops, supposedly representing diamonds. Though they were scratched and clearly not diamond at all. They were filmed revolving and sparkling and these were projected over the necklace. The projectors were the light source. And I played heavy metal really loud. I just wanted the audience not to be able to chat to each other, or to be able to see much else except the diamonds in the chapel. Actually I wanted them to know how much I wanted all this. I wanted to drown them in my desire. It wouldn't have worked in the UK. No posh people would have come to a show in a disused church. As it was there was a good bit of fur around and Gucci and Prada etc. I felt happy, at home in the pathos and crumbling of the chapel with all these posh people. I fucked up, said stupid stuff, but it was a very natural fucking up. I felt like me. All the problems were there for me. I'm glad to be doing another show in Italy [Galerie del'Oro, Venice, 2010].

I You made *La Danse de l'Amour et de la Haine de Soi* whilst you were in your studio in Rome immediately after your arrival in Italy. Was this the first of what I might call 'soul searching' works?

MT Soul searching. That's great. In fact I was really happy when I made that work. I'd not been so happy for a long time. I met someone there on the day I arrived in fact and was happy and found I could make a lot of work. It [the relationship] gave me a

lot. *La Danse de l'Amour et de la Haine de Soi* was a joke in fact, as I suppose *In Us, Expression is at the Heart of Our Creativity* was too, on the way that the media still affectionately and ridiculously desires artists to be tortured souls.

I I'm not certain but I think that most of this work has yet to made, or at least it exists only in 'maquette' form for the most part.

MT Maquettes are my strength, in life as well as in the studio. Hedging bets. I always think 'Oh I can't make that it's too expensive,' or, 'where am I going to store that?' or 'no-one gives a shit anyway.' So they're all ideas which run fluidly back and forwards between my head and the table. Sometimes they get finished but it's the hardest thing in the world and everyone who does anything creative knows this: This IS FINISHED [bangs table with fist] is the hardest thing to say apart from 'I love you' which I've never said, not even to myself [laughs]. Maybe it's part of my 'oeuvre' [laughs again]. I don't know ...

A R I A

MT/I The ferry departs
as the tardy man stands in
the first winter rain⁹

Atto Tre (Quasi l'estremità)

I So your point about these 'unrealised' ideas is that...³

MT Yes, it's not that they are unrealised. Simply by saying the ideas they are realised. It's like when you put out a press release, and it says, for instance,⁵ 'Milly Thompson's film *Mia Roma tutti amici* is showing at Galleria del Oro in April 2008.' Theoretically the tap's on, you've started it and it already exists.⁵

I So you do see your work as performative? Earlier you talked about seeing your sculpture as 'static performances', but it sounds like 'performative' can mean structural.

MT Well I suppose this relationship to performance could be interesting. I see myself as a failure. But maybe that's just an act. Though I think BANK was successful. Human frailty as a foil interests me, or pathos. I don't know if it's true that Rothko killed himself after he stood on the edge of a cliff and saw how small he was. But I like that myth. It makes me shiver with gladness and mawkishness at the same time. Woody Allen is another favourite of mine. He's in his work and he isn't. The film *Interiors* [1978] he made early on is a cruel yet succinct critique of the cultured middle class's predicament of fulfilment and control. Three daughters, envious of each other; their mother a control freak interior designer driving herself into demented loneliness through her quest for the perfect taupe; the father sorts himself out through therapy, and eventually introduces into the midst of the family soup someone 'uncultured', so notionally 'happy' – a new partner. She breaks a valuable vase whilst dancing around in the living room of the family holiday home in the Hamptons. All hell breaks loose, at least in a quietly measured cultured middle class sort of a way. The vase was only there as a representation of cultural and social standing; the vases in *Interiors* never held flowers. It's a cliché but it's perfect in its way. That's where

Basking in the melodrama of my own self-consciousness comes from. We all know about codes of behaviour. I've watched it for a long time and it drags me down. That kind of performance interests me.

I It's a shame that we're not seeing more of this stuff, it sounds interesting and awkward.

MT I'm the awkward one. When I actually finish a bit of work I don't think it is awkward. I try to think of it in a domestic way, the size and colour will fit, and sell. You'll have to wait but then you might not even see it – I sabotage everything I make. Everything falls off the wall, or gets bent or dirty or damaged which is strange because I'm a practical person. And then having a show scares the shit out of me, especially in England. I'd like to have a career in Italy. I don't speak Italian apart from to ask for beer, pizza or directions. And I love the calm of sitting on a bus letting conversation flow through your ears that you don't understand. India, America, Dubai. I mean they're obviously talking about the same shit as you get on a British bus. But I can't understand it. I love that. Silence ... I suppose if you're not showing your work very much, you're bound to become less self-assured ... And then, when someone dies, you become immobilised.

I How do you mean?

MT My boyfriend that I met in Rome died on September 3rd in 2006.

I Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know ...

...

ARIA

MT/I

This world of dew
is only a world of dew –
and yet ⁹

Fine