

a mid-air tunnel. Its strength and simplicity evoked the miner's sense of solidarity, a bond forged through work and hardship. The form was perfect. I had found my sculpture; it was a gift. I was elated.

Gifts in the studio, things that come effortlessly, make me nervous and I am not without self-doubt, but I did not second-guess this one. I knew it was right. The form was strong, bold enough to remain clear under any amount of graffiti, and almost impossible to damage by climbing or playing on it.

At this time, I was teaching at the St. Martin's School of Art in London and, since 1969, had been involved in formulating and presenting what was an extraordinarily radical and innovative teaching program, the "A Course." At the school it was customary, whenever a member of the teaching staff had an exhibition, for the students to gather in the gallery with the teacher to discuss the work. I had recently had an exhibition at my London gallery, but it would not have been consistent with the "A Course" for me to meet there and talk about the work with the students. I had therefore invited the students to the gallery at a particular time on a certain date but had not been present myself when they assembled. Instead, I had the gallery staff hand out a brief statement that invited the students to look at the work, then return to the school and reassemble there to discuss it.

Back at the school, in the room where they were to gather, the students found a slide projector containing images of the works in the exhibition, along with a tape recorder for them to record their discussion. In written instructions, I promised to listen

to their discussion and to respond to each of them in writing. When listening to that tape recording, I was amazed to find that removing myself from the students' deliberations of my work had resulted in their being more concerned about being unable to address me directly than with commenting on the work they had seen in the gallery.

It was this experience that led me to wonder what the response would be to my sculpture in Cardiff from people in the street, especially if they were not first told it was a work of art. I made a plan to take a tape recorder with me and make a recording on the day after the work was to be installed.

I made a larger model of the sculpture out of balsa wood, incorporating a few minor changes. A friend and structural engineer made working drawings. I located a fabricator in Birmingham able to undertake the work for the available funds. The sculpture was completed. I went to see it, then it was put on a large truck and taken to Cardiff. The traffic was stopped; I watched while a big crane came to lift it off the truck and, with guidance from me, it was lowered onto the place I had chosen.

The next morning, using the tape recorder I had borrowed, along with a professional looking microphone, I recorded the comments of those passersby who were willing to speak to me. I tried to speak as little as possible, did not refer to the object as a sculpture, or say that I was responsible for it; to exclude myself further, I turned off the recorder whenever I spoke.

## THE CARDIFF TAPES (1972)

1ST MAN: There's not much beauty in it. I can't see no beauty at all in that. If it was painted, which, you said just now, you would, you would sooner see that than trees. I would sooner see trees, because there's some life in it, there's nothing in that. This is the artist, I shouldn't say nothing—uh—to me there's nothing in it. I think there's a lot more people will [feel] the same. This gentleman says it's going to be here for six months and [they'll] try to get it to sell to the Council—which is supposed to be my money in time to come. Because my rates pay for the Council. I don't want to waste my money buying that. And neither would you.

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2ND MAN: Well, all that I can say about this, it's meant to

break up the landscape for a start—eh—I'd prefer to look at this than something which is commonplace. It will raise a certain amount of—eh—controversy in the manner in which people look at it. People don't look at—objects with the same eye. People can look at it with prejudice; they can look at it from a point of view of alliance to other things; or, they can look at it from an arty crafty point of view. It's left to individual tastes, and personally I—don't care whether it's going to remain here or not.

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3RD MAN: Not much myself, not much myself. It's not ornamental at all. I don't see much in it anyhow.

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4TH MAN: Well, I don't know what to say, really. I don't think it's of much purpose to anyone. I don't, eh, know really what it is. It's something, some gimmick or other, is it? I don't know whether it's brought here for a specific purpose or not. There's quite a bit of fuss being made of it. It doesn't seem to fit into the surroundings, whatever it is. It's not very artistic. It seems to be a bit of a sore thumb sticking out, you know like? I think you should have proper surroundings for it. Oh, in a park, you know. Well, not really a park. In some—you know, a big park,

some woods or something like that, well out of the way, so the people who have vague ideas about art might have a look at it and enjoy the surroundings more than anything. Pardon? You know, there's nothing in its perspective.

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5TH MAN: I'm absolutely flabbergasted. I don't know what it is (small laugh). What is it? It's what I think it is. Looks like a vast piece of metal. Geometrical design, is it? It's meant to mystify us, is it? (laughter)

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1ST CHILD: I just, just wanted to see, that's all, what it was. I don't know.

2ND CHILD: Yeah, it's nice. It looks like a slide to me. What is it, anyway? I don't know.

1ST CHILD: It looks like a lamp post, standing up the wrong way (laughter from second child). I don't know what it is.

3RD CHILD: It don't look like nothing I know.

4TH CHILD: I don't know what it looks like, anyway.

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1ST WOMAN: I don't know what it is. Do you know what it is?

2ND WOMAN: I've no idea. I assumed it was some peculiar monument to somebody. You don't know?

3RD WOMAN: Well, quite frankly, I don't understand it. If it's a new venture or something to—it's a talking point I suppose, but—I came down especially to look at it. I saw it on TV last night, and came down especially to look at it. I'd like to know what it's all about—is it made of steel? It must have been difficult to work, with the size of it—it's different anyhow, isn't it?

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6TH MAN: I haven't got a clue. I don't know what it's for, sir, not anything. I haven't got the faintest idea. Well, I'd like to know, like, what it's like, really for, uh, you know what I mean? But I haven't got the faintest idea. Well, I don't know, I can't explain it can I, if I don't know what it's for, sir? I'm gonna say it must be—they took it off a wagon yesterday. I saw 'em taking it off a big, uh, lorry, and I asked a few [people] what it was, but, nobody seemed to know what it's for. So, it's not put there for nothing, sir, is it? It must be something for the public, I suppose? Have you any idea, sir, what it's for?

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7TH MAN: Huh? Nothing (laughs). I haven't got a clue—what is it? Well, it's something to do with art, isn't it? I think it's, um—they just knocked over the electricity place and I think it's a stanchion out of there, [an] upright stanchion.

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8TH MAN: Well, I don't know. I suppose—it's—modern. It's modern, isn't it? Goes with the times. I don't know what the bloke in the bookie thinks. It's covering his [indecipherable] up, isn't it? (group laughter)

9TH MAN: Do you like it?

8TH MAN: Yeah. It's better than looking at that—eh—what do you call it?

10TH MAN: Well, I tell you what, they couldn't have put it in a better position because those coming out of there—out of the Scrumphole, all steamed up, will fall over that and break their neck.

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11TH MAN: Very plain, that, isn't it? Very plain. But it doesn't turn me on.

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12TH MAN: I don't know what it is to be honest with you. We was just talkin' about it now, and, uh, I can't make out what it is. It's hopeless just stuck there, isn't it? I mean, there's no signs up for what it is or anything. Big ashbin, ain't it? (laughter) Well, what do you think it is, Bill? (more laughter) Well—what is it? Can you tell us?

BILL: It's yours, isn't it?

12TH MAN: What's it supposed to mean or represent?

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1ST STUDENT: I don't know what it is. Um—some sort of geometric shape, is it? I, um, don't like it all that much. It's, uh, it's a bit big, I think. Some sort of bridge or something. Can't really decide what it is. I don't understand it—and, uh, some sort of modern art. Perhaps I can't appreciate it right, you know? How much does it cost? Is it fifteen thousand or something like that? They say last night that the Cardiff Corporation got the option of buying this. No, I wouldn't want one, anyhow.

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4TH WOMAN: Um, well, it looks like something that has dropped off the Queen Elizabeth (continuing laughter). It looks as though it has come out of the engine room.