

Notes for Discourse meeting, Learning Studio, RA, 29 November 2017

Affect and Exhibition

I thought about the two words, *effect* and *affect*, and the ways I use them myself.

Effect seems more passive, usually a noun, and I think of *affect* as a verb, but not necessarily strident or forceful in its action.

I used to talk with students about 'effects' in paintings – how I (personally) thought they were something to run a mile from. Cezanne in a letter to Zola describes how Zola the writer can helpfully use the descriptive '*crowning*' when writing about a white napkin sitting on a white plate, but that he - Cezanne the painter - could not do this, he must concentrate on depicting that relationship of napkin to plate, within the terms of his painting, without resorting to effects.

At the close of a show recently, I ruminated once again on the whole experience of exhibiting, and thought about this in relation to the phrase Vanessa had sent me, the topic for discussion this evening. I happened to be reading an interview with the poet Jorie Graham, and copied out this paragraph of hers, as it seemed so apposite to my understanding of *Affect and Exhibition*, as applied to painting, and my own hopes - not for saving the world perhaps, but for all these other possibilities:

"I'd say poetry wants to be contagious, to be a contagion... Its syntax wants to pass something on to another in the way that you can, for example, pass laughter on. It's different from being persuasive and making an argument. That's why great poems have so few arguments in them. They don't want to make the reader 'agree.' They don't want to move through the head that way. They want to go from body to body. Built in is the belief that such community—could one even say ceremony—might 'save' the world."

Mali Morris

29.11.17

Exhibition at FOLD Gallery London, Oct - Nov 2017