

Eva Merz in conversation with DAVID BLYTH, sculptor

Kincorth, Aberdeen, 30/12 2003, 12 – 2 pm

I have seen a few of his animal sculptures, artist books and installations. They are spiritual, beautiful works, a little bit weird and quite funny. He makes his living as a part time postman and stays with his partner, Sara, in a little house in Kincorth. On a sunny, ice-cold day I take my bike out there, conquering half of an extremely steep hill, which nearly kills me. I have to stop and walk.

Kincorth is not exactly the West End, but the view from that hill is astonishing. You've got the whole of Aberdeen City under your feet. At David's I hide my bike at the back of the house, away from potential, local bike thieves. He makes coffee and we sit down in the living room, which also serves as his studio. Before I know it he's already started talking about some of his sound-works:

...They do lend themselves towards installation works. I think before, a lot of my works were sort of self-contained and object based. Maybe I felt a bit restricted with that. And I think introducing sound into some of the work has helped to make things bigger, broader or something.

So that's new?

Yeah. The piece for the Venice Biennale, The Deer Antler thing, that used a mini disc to record sounds through the antler.

I've seen your catalogue, but I haven't seen the work.

It's up in my loft actually.

(David gets the catalogue. There's a photograph of the work, a fibreglass amber antler and a military field box).

Here we go. It came with a little CD. I recorded extracts of sounds through this hollow antler and merged them together on the computer. The sound vibrations are almost antler shaped. My focus was for meditative purposes - it's quite ambient - perhaps it's used to connect me to some natural world, some super natural realm.

Where did you take the antler to do the recordings?

We had it down the river; we had it up in trees, and we had it up the hill; then we buried it in the ground, and we put it underneath our bed one night as well... When deer rub their antlers against trees or when they fight, it makes a sound. And I learned once that people, who want to attract deer, often get two antlers and go around the woods, rattling them together. Deer rattling it's called. I don't know if it's to attract females or just to attract attention. I was quite conscious of the

antler being connected to the head, to the cranium, the skull. And the ears being so close. I felt that the vibrations were like an extra sense the deer had, some sixth sense that this deer was able to use to gain awareness of its surroundings, yeah? Of course, antlers are magic things. They are fully charged.

Did you mix these sounds?

That was my decision. I mixed it; I used the sounds and mixed longer edits. I would record for about 10 minutes at a time. The recordings in the river are constant sound all the time. But when it was strung up in trees you would only get an occasional whipping of branches, and then periods of silence. I would use the points in these extracts of sound, and make compositions, which have been inspired by the places, obviously.

Hmmm... meditative, going back to visit the sites without going there with my body, that sort of thing, you know.

Can you recognise the sounds for instance if you bury it in the ground?

That's the thing. You start guessing. Well, you don't start guessing what it is, that's not right. You listen to it and you start to interpret sounds out of what you're hearing. There's one track on the CD, where you almost start to hear a heart beat. Now, I haven't really done that intentionally. And there's another one where you hear this voice, woh-woh-woh, (making weird sounds). It's very, very deep and it's slow. But it's present there. I think, in another state of mind, that's going to work wonders.

This piece was presented at the Venice Biennale?

It hasn't really been exhibited; it's just been on a web site. It was a commissioned piece of work. It's a Zenomap project, a presentation of art from Scotland for the Venice Biennale, initiated and promoted by the Scottish Arts Council. I believe the web site is still up and running. Basically this booklet plus the sounds were featured. Initially, the booklet was a fold out leaflet on thin paper. It's basically an instruction guide like you would get with your Sony disc man, you know. Have you seen this?

(We look in the catalogue, "Sonic Deer Antler – Recordings from Super Nature")

It totally looks like an instruction guide!

Yeah, it's quite nice. You get all these technical instructions, and then you start getting to the more super natural usage. And it's suggesting a performance that you can do. You know, when you operate something, it's a performance in a sense, anyway. But this turns the whole thing into more of a ritual. You're being taught and guided into a system of magic. If you follow the procedures you will get the results, yeah?

It's a do-it-yourself guide to perform a ceremony?

Exactly! But also it's a document, an account of what I did when I recorded my sounds.

In this way you share it with people and maybe make them do it themselves.

Yes, and that's crucial in a lot of my work. Everyone can do it; it's just how it's interpreted. Yeah, it's needless to say that Beuys is one of my favourites!

I would like to talk about your artistic career. Was your residency in Huntly the start - after you left art school?

Right, yes, sort of...

Well, you could start from the beginning.

I was born in England. We moved to Brazil for 4 – 5 years and then we moved to Perth where I had most of my upbringing. Then we moved down to a small English suburban village near Stanstead Airport when I was 15. I spend a lot of my time going into London and going to the galleries.

I don't know what it was, but I felt I wanted to come back up this way. I felt that I had seen a lot of things in London. The speed of life is busy there. One thing I like about Aberdeen is that it allows you time to think and dwell over things. There's not too many distractions. So I chose to come up here and study at Gray's School of Art. I did my BA Honours Degree and that's when I met Claudia (Zeiske). She had just started up Deveron Arts and a residency programme. This was summer 1998. 12 students from Gray's went out to Huntly in a mini bus with our tutor. And we had a look around Huntly. I was totally keen, you know. Some of the other lads were saying, "What would you want to do, spending the whole summer out in Huntly, for crying out loud"! But I thought it was super, a great opportunity. So I went for this residency and I got it and I was really pleased. Then our degree shows came up, and my partner, Sara, who's primarily a landscape painter, did ever so well in her show and was given these tickets to go to Bali, Indonesia to study...

Did you meet at art school?

Yeah! Oh, we had a good studio up there. It's fantastic when you're in a group of likeminded individuals, working really motivated, same sort of music, you know, the collective energy.

So you finished art school and went straight to a residency and a grant...

Well, there wasn't much money there. It's not like today. I think I was the first artist that Deveron Arts got a bit of funding for. Yeah, it was a great thing. I know some people that have followed on from me, and it has just become better and better, with different opportunities. It's excellent, like a blank canvas to work on. I think Huntly is quite receptive as well. I was there over the summer for 3 – 4 months. Where other people had to get a job to sustain themselves, I was able to just work in this residency. And when I went back to university and did an MA the following year, I felt all the more that it was right. It put me in a good situation. At the residency I did an exhibition at the end. I was very naive back then; I didn't really have a grand plan. These days I can structure a project a whole lot better. Back then I was just working in my studio and experimenting, and I just

had an exhibition with things that I made. And I did a little community work, and a workshop or two.

And you left the brilliant bronze "Road Kill", which is still the pride of Deveron Arts' collection!

Is it? Hahaha! So they are happy with that? You know the original road kill was burned out of the mould; I had to cook him in the kiln for 24 hours! Totally incinerated. He he!

Ha ha! It was a rabbit, yeah?

Yeah. I did it at the Scottish Sculpture Workshop in Lumsden. They are ever so good out there, very up for experimenting. They're a good team, you know. Eden is great, such a character. He's fantastic and totally focused himself.

He lives in Huntly, I think. He took me to the workshop once. Yeah, he's great.

He's excellent and if your work ever needs cast metal or cast anything really, you can always go out there and get advise.

You told me on the phone that you have decided to leave the postman job, so now you have come to a new stage.

A new stage? Yeah, well. The thing is that I live in the real world as well. You know, you can be an artist, head in the clouds. But I think it's good to interact with reality and what's happening in contemporary society. My partner and her son and me, we're a team. We work together.

When Sara and I left university and graduated with a Master's, we went unemployed for about 2 years, basically living cheap. I was quite happy living that way. Hahaha! It was great. It's not to say that I don't like eating well and being warm. I'm not so much for fine clothes and that, but the pleasures and the comforts of life are good. But also I'm one who can do without. And being on the dole was a good opportunity to scum it as we had done as students and just make work. And that's when we got hooked up with Limousine Bull, (Aberdeen arts collective). Myself and my friend Janice got involved in a very early stage. Ann Moore, June White and George Brown had got together to set this thing up and they held this meeting in a local pub. I went along with Janice and we helped starting it up, got a project space, set up a couple of exhibitions.

That was kind of a platform to get out with your work and sharing with other artists?

Yes, and also to create some sort of community within Aberdeen. Even now there's not much of an arts community here. I wonder whether that's a geographic thing - I'm not too sure - or a social thing. It seems to happen better elsewhere. In Huntly for example! There seems to be quite a good artist community in Huntly.

Yeah. When the Halloween Festival opened – you where there with your installation – I found myself surrounded by artists from everywhere; there was Umesh from India; the Dudendancers from Germany and England; Fabiana, who's from Argentina and the whole band from London, who live out in Forgue; Rebecca from the US and the fiddler, Paul Anderson... it all happens out there!

Yeah. Claudia said that Deveron Arts had more than 500 people coming for the Halloween performance and they had to turn a lot of people away at the door. You would never get that in Aberdeen. What's happening out there is good and it's very alluring. Now, I've got this warm feeling about Huntly and this area and for Claudia and her family and what she's doing. You know, she's done this and I've done what I've done in the same period of time. She's outstanding. Good on her. And with the community's responsiveness, I think they are up for it. Especially with you getting about and your interviews. Anyway...

Claudia told me that you're keen to move out to that area?

Yes, I think we would. Well, a lot of our closer friends and people we bounced ideas off, have moved away. They're gone. It's always a question of whether to follow them. They have all gone to London or to other bigger cities, better places. I think that we're going to get more from going the opposite way. You know, living in Aberdeen hasn't actually done me any harm as an artist. Perhaps it has done me a lot of good. If I had been down in Edinburgh for instance, there would have been a lot of competition. Because you're out in the sticks, there's already something interesting going on there because it's not quite the norm. The funniest things can happen out in unknown places and in small areas of locality. There's an appeal in that, which you cannot get in the city. I haven't been restricted or excluded in that way. I got into this Absolute Vodka exhibition at Inverleith House in the Royal Botanic Gardens; I was thrilled to bits to get into that. And of course there was Venice as well, and there's the Glenfiddich residency coming up, and I'm working on a project for Drum Castle now. So, some quite nice things have come in my way.

Yeah, I think that you maybe get another kind of freedom here, where there's not really any art scene. Maybe there's a danger of getting stuck in a certain... kind of way in the city...

Yes, yes. But then again, conversely there's that same fear of getting stuck in some kind of isolation, being away from what's happening in the central belt. I think it's very important to keep in touch with what's happening. I read this interesting article in the Artist Newsletter about professionalism and development and what artists have to do to sustain their practice. Whether they get arts administrative jobs or whether they scum it or sell out, you know. It was saying that the Scottish arts world is actually quite well respected internationally. Some times when you're working on your own, you do forget where you fit into the bigger picture. And when times are troubled, when you're restricted in your practice and the time you're allowed to spend on your work, one of the first things that suffers is research. You focus more on making and on sustaining work to prove to yourself that you are doing something, yeah? So you keep that production up. But what happens is that you don't find out about new art and artists as much.

We have been aware of that and we have just recently joined the art library at Gray's and got some books out. We only had to pay about £ 10 to join. They have got quite a good collection of books there. It's a new lifeline for us. Perhaps, that's why I came up to Peacock in January 2003 and started teaching there. I was feeling quite isolated and out of the picture, working at the post

office and working at home by myself. You go onto the Internet and see things there and dwell about your own practice. But you're not seeing people, not talking and getting your ideas out, seeing how they are received. So at Peacock I met Fiona and Susan and had chats with them, looked in books and spoke about magazines and stuff. Working with the kids as well was another benefit.

How did you find the teaching?

I like teaching. I don't know if I can do it for long periods of time. I can't do it year in and year out. No. But I really get on with them, whatever age. And it's quite good to pitch a subject or a topic for them to respond to. I was working after school workshops with 12 to 14 year olds from Kincorth and Torry. What I liked about them is that they had a bit of punk energy and a sort of hatred for convention in them. I liked that and I got on with them. I will do more. I think education is total central to the arts. You have to have some sort of informative programme.

It's good to be free and open with what inspires you to work. I don't like this presenting of work with no explanation of why it's been made, what the purpose is and how you're supposed to relate to it. I think that's why I got into bookmaking and these guide things. It was a way to get my ideas across and to communicate what was driving the work, perhaps so that people weren't mystified by what they were seeing. You know, it's "Everyone is an artist". I don't want to be this total ego, I'm-so-great person. I believe that you want to show the public that they can do it as well. Creativity is an all-inclusive thing – a part of living.

But the problem is that the public want to be amazed, they want to see the masterpiece that they could never produce. Perhaps that's why contemporary art is so bombed out... ha ha! I don't know.

Now you said that you wanted to stop being a postman and work fulltime as an artist. When do you stop?

I think at the end of April. I would like to stop a lot earlier actually!

Like right now?

Right now, yeah! But financially I can't do that. I have to live in reality. It's partly to do with my overdraft and my relationship as well. I've got to provide for my family until the Glenfiddich residency begins. That's part of the package.

The situation I am in at the moment is, "How long is the post office going to go on"? Is it going to go on indefinitely; do I turn out to be a postman, yeah? My partner and I had a discussion about these issues. I'm quite keen to get back into a cheaper living, just to have the time to work. The reason I quit the whole Limousine Bull thing, was that I didn't allow any time for my work. We weren't getting paid so there was no materials for work either. I felt I was putting all my time into setting up exhibitions for other people and getting involved in running the project space. I had no time and money for my own practise. So that's why I joined the post office, knowing that it was going to be regular money.

I have spent 3 years at the post office now, and I've spent 2 of those years working for a show at Peacock, mummifying all my animals. So I have maintained my practice, keeping busy, producing work. And how much job security does one have anymore? I'm not gonna give up my art. If anything, the post office is hindering any further development. It's flipped over now.

So do you look at residencies, fellowships and bursaries?

I'm not so sure about the whole funding web. You know, when you get mixed up in funding you start having to answer to a lot of people and to compromise your work. I've spoken to a few artists about this. And I've always been in the view that I'm in the better position because I just have to work between 4 and 9 o'clock in the morning. I get my money and then I'm free. But now this is about to change. At the moment I have this commissioned work for Drum Castle, which is good.

What's that about?

It's called "Oak Tress and Fountains". It's curated by Iain Irving of Gray's School of Art and Lorraine Grant of Aberdeenshire Council.

Iain is doing a research project, which lets the audience see the working process and the developing stages of a particular work, to see if the audience engage with it more fully and appreciate the decision making of the artist, and then are able to criticise it better! He he! So Iain has commissioned 4 artists to work in and around Drum Castle and respond to it. Each artist is going to do one stage of the year. I'm responding to the woods, the old oak woods. And I'm representing the season of Spring. Our work will be installed there. There's also some sort of outhouse that Iain intends to use for a research room. In there he will chart the project from the Spring through to Winter. So by the end of the year he will have 4 pieces of work with 4 development stages. A lot of people go to Drum Castle, 60,000 plus people, I think. Mainly tourists. The good thing about my spot is that it's a favourite dog-walking spot, so a lot of local people use it.

It's been a tough piece of work, mind you.

Is it done?

No no. It will go up in April. I have got a piece of sound work planned. But there's a whole lot of problems. Obviously, you're in the woods and electricity is a problem. And I've been looking into using FM transmitters, but it's completely illegal! Totally bad! I believe there is one public radio frequency that's free. It's 88 point something. I believe I can find it on the Internet, and I wouldn't get prosecuted, you know. But keep quiet about that!!

So what happens if you use that and other people are broadcasting at the same time?

Yeah, right. Some of it has to do with locality. The transmitters I've looked at transmit up to 500 meters. So anything within that radius might be picked up. But because it's up in the woods in the Highlands, I don't think it's gonna be too much. Besides, whatever is interfering with the work is actually gonna be quite interesting, in this instance.

The idea is to allow the public to listen to trees during a walk on a path. At the moment that's it, but it may change. There are going to be listening posts at the bottom of trees, dotted around. And you'll be able to listen closely into what's happening up at the tops of the trees through these multiple microphones, maybe 10 or 20. You're listening to them collectively. So, in effect you're listening to an "audio sketch". A drawing of the tree in sonic terms. You're not listening to the squirrel on that branch, and you're not listening to the bugs working away on another branch, or the wind. You are listening to the whole thing. So as you start to interpret the collective sound, it becomes this, "What is the tree saying to you"?

I've felt it's very difficult working in a place as majestic as an oak tree forest. It's a 6000-year-old forest. What can I put in that context, without being completely overshadowed? Basically I just want to present the woods. I want to present people with a new experience of the woods. But anything visual I have thought of putting in context of the trees is a distraction. That's why I have come to using sound. You're being engaged, obviously, but there's so much around to look at. I want people to draw attention to that.

The problem with these things is that you have your own practice, your studio practice, and then something like this comes along. And you have to respond to it in some way and I find it quite difficult to reconcile the two. To make a piece of work that is identifiable as me, as my work, yeah? I like it when my work becomes quite kitschy, quite punchy and fun. There's no animal content to my work for Drum Castle. It's actually quite a serious piece.

It's the animals that you're most known for?

Yeah! Totally. I've been looking at animals for ages now and what it is with animals, and with people and animals, cartoons, anthropomorphises and that kind stuff. And what I've come down to is some kind of shamanic thing. It comes back to Beuys and the use of animals for shamanic purposes, for meditative and spiritual reasons, for getting in touch with nature and other consciousness. My work has been getting progressively spiritual, although it does remain animal based. It's just that my focus on the animal thing has changed. With this Drum Castle project I want to make the oaks speak, almost to get teachings and learnings from the oak. It's such a revered tree. See, the interesting thing with the microphones in the tree is, who knows what's going to happen? New work is made every time someone picks up the headphones. It's completely authorless in that sense. I can't predict how people are going to interpret the work or what they will hear. And that, in a way, is what's gonna make the work. Nice... But it's a nightmare with those bloody technical specifications, you know.

As you were talking about your studio work, is there a balance between that and a site-specific project...? Does the one contribute to the other or does it interfere with the flow in your work in general? Do you know what I mean?

Right, yeah. I see what you're saying, Eva. After being offered this Drum Castle thing and seeing the space, I have used a lot of my Celtic, and Scottish research to start me off, and to see what

would come out of that. And, at times I find it very, very difficult to reconcile the two. To come up with something that fits well with both. Saying that, I am quite new to this game.

So is it more of a problem than a challenge?

No, it's a challenge. It's definitely not a problem. It has a lot to do with me feeling a little unconfident in my own practise and direction at present. That's personal.

Back to the challenge. I see it as a challenge and a problem to solve. When you're self motivated you need to have some direction in your practise, so you can carry on developing on your path.

When you're faced with something site-specific you either take other considerations on board, or you start looking for things that ties your own practise to the environment that you're working in, yes? Speaking of this kind of research, I found this interesting member of the Irving Clan of Drum Castle. He had gone down to London and set up this church, The Holy Catholic Church of the Apostles, with relative success. He developed elaborate rituals lasting 3 hours, incorporating incense, baptisms and stuff. I don't think he was well liked up this way, hence he had to go down South. He believed in this "speaking in tongues". I got into that idea of divine intervention as a form of teaching; speaking and listening. I've related that back to the oaks, being some sort of godly source of wisdom. And however you might interpret the sounds could almost be like an act of... How would you interpret speaking in tongues when it's based in the spiritual world and totally illegible? It's an interesting phenomenon, and I'm keen to bring a bit of that out.

Sounds really interesting. So what about the Glenfiddich residency coming up?

It's in April. 3 months, but I think it can last longer, if you can make the money last. I wonder if it can go into 5 or 6 months. I'm gonna move up there with my dog! I so need it. It's crazy.

The plan is to get as much out of it as I can. I'm gonna get to meet Claire Barclay and Little Warsaw, this Hungarian duo amongst others. I'm dead exited about that.

You're getting the best of both, a free, great big space to work in and a little community of international artists.

I'm also gonna get to grips with my practise and what I'm about, you know.

I feel like I've lost things over the last couple of years. It needs to be brought together again; it needs a new emphasis on what I'm actually doing... I find refinement a useful process.

Do you plan in advance or are you totally open to what's going to happen?

You see I've got plenty of ideas for going up there and getting me started anyway. Some of them are performances, some are things I just want to do while I'm out there. But I also want to make some proper sculptures.

Proper sculptures!

Yeah! I found that a lot of my work has gone rather logical or static. There's quite a lot of writing. It's moved away from tactility and a visual dialog between materials. And I want to bring back some of my abstract unspoken qualities, which I used to have. Supported, obviously, by the rational logic of the conceptual that I've developed.

Do you think you become in control too much or what?

Or too literal almost. I'm not saying one way or the other is good or bad, Eva!

Do you know Eva Hesse? She was a major influence for me; I used to love Eva Hesse. And you know, Joseph Beuys and Boltanski...

But there is something in the abstract, the unspoken, the thing you can't quite touch, and the feelings that you get inside. And I'll be keen to try and bring back some of that. I used to make more abstract work when I was at art school, latex and fur and antlers and stuff like that. It has just developed this way. I want to draw as well again. I've not drawn for ages. I mean I draw in my sketchbook and stuff. But I would love to be able to develop a new way of drawing.

It's challenging to get back to this freedom...

...freedom of thought! Yeah, there's an essence there, the basis of everything comes from the drawing. I found some slides of older drawings the other day. They still inspire me now; there must be something in them.

Yeah, of course. But what if you couldn't and it didn't come natural for you. Do you know what I mean? It's like you've gone in a new direction. You've got to be where you are and look forward and get on with it. What if you realise...?

That I can't... could it be? Well, it's funny; there is a conflict there. You know, I was a painter. I haven't been formally trained as a sculptor. I wonder if there is a different process in conceptually led work and 2 dimensional, compositional work. When you do drawings and oil studies, and sketches overlap sketches, it's very different to think about something related to a social issue and tie it into some other aspect that reflects it. Like getting some deer in town... Never mind. Conceptual work, I think is very very different to these developed aesthetics.

Do you think it doesn't have the same kind of intuition?

That's what I wonder. It would be interesting to investigate that. I do think that women however are a whole lot more intuitive than men, who are more logical, rational beings. I don't wish to over step the mark but... I need to lean back to more feminine issues. Things like big seven pointed antlers are very masculine! HA HA! A lot of my work is about gender actually. I like that area of interest. I'm not a very masculine male, you see. There's been times in my life where there's been issues of sexuality. So sexuality and gender have been a driving force before. I was thinking about these things more, allowing it to feed into the work. When I talk about going more abstract I do mean more intuitive, less spoken, more lunar. Yeah, being more unconscious and maybe addressing my feminine side more. I mean I'm proud to be who I am. I wonder if being up at the post office, has made me have a sort of armour or something. It's very male dominated up there and any weakness is picked on. I wonder, when I get out of that post office, if I'm gonna be able to be the artist and free thinking once again.

When you get there you will be able to look back at yourself.

Sorry, but it's interesting when you ask what's gonna happen when I start drawing again. If I start drawing again! Ha ha! Ooohhh... maybe I *have* gone past that?

I hope not. I'm gonna come and check on you at Glenfiddich!

There must be some kind of balance there. But if you don't challenge it then you're at risk.

That's it. I would think so. If you don't question it... That's why you might want to do things you were doing before. What was it that is still appealing now? What would you choose to bring back?

I think I need some late-night, early-morning drawing sessions. I need time to think. I'm treating the Glenfiddich residency as a sort of going-into-the-woods-coming-out-a-different-man thing.

And there is this reoccurring thing with the deer that keeps coming back...

What is it with the deer?

The deer. It's funny. Coincidences happen and have happened and it leads me to think of the deer as a guiding figure force for me. Shamanically speaking, I don't know, spiritually? Silly coincidences. This one is a beauty: one day on my postal delivery there was a woman in a newsagent who came running out, "Oh my goodness, did you see what was just in front of you"? And it was a freak deer, yeah, in the town, walking down my delivery in the city. Just like the Glenfiddich advert on TV!

Way before any of this, I was making these lures to take out into the woods to encourage them to come. I made these deer head things that I put in the trees with speakers in them and they spoke out mmmoooouu...! (Deer sounds). I hid in the bushes to see if they would come, and they didn't. Then I did the same with humans and lots of humans came! Obviously deer are a lot smarter. They didn't get lured by any dodgy artwork! Nice! And I made a camera trap. It was a little tripod stand with deer's legs. I put it out to try to take photos of these deer and again nothing happened. And now I'm going to Glenfiddich...

I also found out about this... here we go...

(David picks up his sketchbook, which has a Jägermeister label on the cover. It's a deer image).

Oh, you might be able to read this. Excellent Eva! You see this here? Saint Eustace is a Christian Saint who was a bit of a heathen, a drinker and a hunter. One day, he went after a stag and it turned around and it had a cross in between the antlers. The stag is a symbol of Christ, yeah? I didn't know this before. And when Eustace saw this deer he became a Saint, a guardian protector of animals.

Where did you pick up this story?

Oh, I've got it in some old Saint book up here on the shelf. Can you read this?

(I try to read the German text on the Jägermeister label, which is something about the hunter that protects the game and something with honour, maybe an old way of saying. Many of the words I don't understand).

It's a bitter that you drink on the hunt to keep warm, it's pretty good...

I just drink it straight on ice!

The stag looks pretty much like the one in Glenfiddich's logo. You're going to the right place!

Oh yes. It's really good and this is why I think that things have got to happen. I've put a lot of hard work into the post office. I have done that. Now it's time for a change. My expenses are here in the city with Sara and Christopher, which is why we have discussed about moving out in the country. In many ways Glenfiddich might be a test run for this. When Christopher is off on the school holidays I will have him up there with me to see how it goes. He's 13 and he actually likes the country. I think he would get a lot out of Huntly. And the schools... the Gordon School is very good, and the school here is not the best. And Sara will come up and try to commute from Huntly to her part time job in Aberdeen. It might not work. We'll wait and see. You do need some income somewhere. But you've got to take chances too. Some of the old people on my postal delivery they say, "You're still young enough to go and take a few risks".

How old are you?

Hehe! I'm 27. This year is the first time I felt that I better get a move on.

Maggie Craig put it in this way: "I have always traded less money for more time"!

That's a good philosophy. There's no job security now is there? The only job that we're guaranteed is our artwork, you know. When I was signing on and with Limousine Bull I didn't work hard enough. But I know that now.

I just love doing this interview business!

I can see why! Another cup of tea?

Sure! David, have you got a final comment for this conversation or for anything else?

Have you ever seen one of these?

(David brings forward a bronze bowl, which looks to me like a mortar with a wooden pestle).

This is my Tibetan singing bowl. This is my final word.

I've seen them.

Have you ever tried them?

No.

Have you ever heard them?

Yeah, once at a Buddhist ceremony.

I have never recorded one, so can we do that?

David gives the bowl a slight hit with the cosh, and it gives out a gong sound, and then he slides the cosh on the edge of the bowl, round and round, and it brings out a loooooong, delicate and beautiful sound, which is impossible for me to describe. And that's it.