

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Fionna Barber**

Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**

Date of interview: **31/03/2014**

Important

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Clip title: Teaching and learning Art History with Marxist Methodology

Duration: 00:02:17

Clip start point in full interview: 00:02:17

Clip end point in full interview: 00:17:00

Interview identifier: 057_T_01

Description:

Fionna Barber, Open University Associate Lecturer, describes students cascading learning from 'Modern Art and Modernism' to other prisoners, student interest in its Marxist Methodology and the impact of that engagement on her own teaching and self-perception as an Art Historian.

Transcript:

Well I think the thing about The Open University 'Modern Art and Modernism' course, is that it has Marxist Methodology. So I think this was one reason why they took to it or you know in terms of the wider political debates and so on, there was very little, very little gap. And this really surprised me when I went in because if I had thought about it, I probably would have realised that— so, I really felt I had to up my game quite a lot because they knew all the stuff that you had spent the first couple of sessions talking about with students on the outside. And so I really had to begin to think about this and I just had a sense that then information was being passed on about how Art could be seen in terms of relative autonomy or as a form of ideology or fitting in with ideas of base and super structure and so on and afterwards I think I really realised that it was something that really kind of fundamentally changed how I operate as an Art Historian. I think because I had to really begin to explain things. So I am not entirely sure in any detail what actually happened after I left the room so to speak but I do know that something did and that things definitely went further.

And you had an opportunity to explore Marxist Art Historian ideas in a more practical context was that it?

Yes and this was actually quite liberating for me to begin to think about that and to begin to apply those ideas, rather than them being academic within a kind of a third level Art History course. So pedagogically, that was actually really interesting and opened my mind in a way that I hadn't expected would happen at all.