

Playing Suzi Gablik

The writer, activist and art critic Suzi Gablik published a ground-breaking book in 1995 'Conversations Before The End Of Time'. In this series of nineteen dialogues with artists, writers and philosophers, Gablik addresses the central questions of the meaning and purpose of art in an age of accelerating social change and spiritual uncertainty.

'Doin' Dirt Time' is a powerful and haunting interview with American artists Rachel Dutton and Rob Olds. The interview is recorded immediately prior to Dutton and Olds giving away or burning their entire body of work and embarking on a spiritual journey involving learning tracking and survival skills in order to live more simply with the earth.

In February 2013 'Doin' Dirt Time' was re-created by Fern Smith and Philip Ralph and presented in front of live audiences in Swansea as a performance and provocation piece for Volcano Theatre's 'Birthday Party' Festival. The technique used was to record the interview which was read from the original transcript and then re-create it in real time by means of playback devices. The part of Suzi Gablik was changed for each performance with the guest artist (sometime female sometimes male) having no knowledge of reading or listening to the interview. Following the first showings attended mainly by students and guests at Volcano's Birthday Party Festival the piece was offered to a number of other artists or ecologically minded projects to present in a setting of their choice.

Invited artists were approached to participate in the spirit of continuing a dialogue already begun through Emergence. Each invited artist has made a conscious choice to depart from a traditional arts practice in order to engage more fully in a personal and creative enquiry into the role of the arts in a sustainable future.

'Doin' Dirt Time' is presented with the knowledge and blessing of Suzi Gablik and aims to bring new readers to her inspirational writing. We also wish to introduce the inspirational story of Dutton and Olds to new listeners to support dialogue into the role of art in a rapidly changing society.

Jason Benson (Doin' Dirt Time at The Birthday Party, Volcano Theatre, Swansea, February 2013)

I am Jason Benson, a lecturer in Contemporary Performance Practices at Swansea Metropolitan. I played Gablik on one occasion during Volcano's *The Birthday Party* in March 2013. I was also an audience member for two other performances of the piece. Playing Gablik became watching playing Gablik. It is difficult in some ways looking back to extract one experience from the other. When watching playing Gablik, I was in part re-playing Gablik. Now as I attempt to re-play the events I recall an excited engagement with risk; stepping playfully into the unknown. There is ordinarily a familiarity to performance which comes from the process of rehearsal undertaken. Here, process and performance were combined in the moment of participation, to some extent folding back into the same time / space / event. The performer who takes the role of Gablik experiences performance and process simultaneously. That process is also open to view to the audience rather than hidden away. Within this is a structure that seems to me to be an invitation to open up discussion about our concepts and preconceived notions – either of performance or of the subject of the discussion performed. The event of *Doin' Dirt Time* is a process, a structure for discussion of the content, an opportunity to open dialogue. This to me fits in to the spirit of the original interviews; dialogue, exchange, conversation, works of art. To borrow a term employed by Beryl Graham, performance or an artwork can become host to conversation.

Lucy Neal (Doin' Dirt Time at The Birthday Party, Volcano Theatre, Swansea February 2013)

I was excited from the start. I had wept reading *The Re-enchanted of Art*. Here were words that were on the button and I'd been looking for for years. Art has responsibility. Art is everyday. Art is looking, being,

doing, seeing. Art is connecting through, with, around. Magical and momentous, it matters.

Being asked to *play* Suzi Gablik in Doin' Dirt Time was thrilling. I had a picture in my mind of how Gablik held her interviewees' attention, listening, cajoling, seeking clarity, gently holding people to account. Open, curious, improvising.

I wondered what to wear on the night and found a green and silvery satin 1950s dress in our dressing up box. I don't wear heels often but decided to.

My memories of playing Suzi Gablik are very visceral. Fern, Phil and I were perched on the stage, (at Volcano Theatre, Swansea) quite close together. My chair was 2 inches from the edge with a drop to the floor. I could see little of the audience because of the lights and was sitting sideways to them, to face 'Rob' and 'Rachel'. I had an awkward physical sense of feeling unsafe, on the edge of my seat in everyway. Paying attention to what was being said to me, and admiring - in an out of body way - how the words needed came out of my mouth. It was hallucogenic really. I couldn't believe it added up to something for the audience, which it clearly did. The discussion afterwards brought us back to the Volcano theatre space, but I knew we had glimpsed the scenes in the desert, watching the open sky, listening for the wind, cutting cow tendons with bow saws and tracking deer. The concentration left me feeling very alive.

Long may we wobble between the fixed and unfixed. Stable enough to trust the next step and know that art matters, unstable enough to be truly open to what comes next.

Emily Hinshelwood (Doin' Dirt Time at The Birthday Party, Volcano Theatre, Swansea, March 2013)

I'm Emily Hinshelwood, a writer in the Amman Valley and also part-time Arts and Climate Change officer for a local environmental charity Awel Aman Tawe. I was excited to be part of Doin' Dirt Time during Volcano's 25th Birthday celebrations and I loved the challenge. What struck me most was the rawness and immediacy of the experience. There was no

time to take in and think about what was being said – and consequently what I was saying – rather, it was a case of saying whatever came into my ears. This ‘being out there’ responding to unknown, unpredicted words, feels like it has a strong resonance with the concept of survival: the day to day coping, the inability to plan and the absolute need to have faith that it will all be okay. This meant that the process felt highly appropriate to the subject matter. Interestingly, it wasn’t an unpleasant, scary or stressful experience, but rather exhilarating and charged. Something like going out into the desert and doing art! How exhilarating would that be! - Thanks to Fern and Phil for involving me.

Rhodri Thomas (Doin’ Dirt Time at The Birthday Party, Volcano Theatre, Swansea & at World Stage Design Festival, Cardiff, February & September 2013)

I am Rhodri Hugh Thomas, actor, writer, producer, teacher and sustainability specialist. I played Suzie at 229 High Street Swansea as part of Volcano’s Birthday Party festival. I enjoyed the experience very much. I don't have much memory of what we said - I found that most of my concentration was devoted to the mechanics of performing to a live(recorded) feed. I expected the audience to ask questions about the process of performing, especially as they were largely drama students but instead they were interested in talking about the content and the story behind the characters and their experiences as well as the wider issues the performance addressed. It was a very stimulating experience and I would gladly do it again and even experiment with it. What little I remember about the content relates to the idea that one can or should remove oneself from modern technological society and live close to nature. Is this heroic or deluded? Can we ever escape the rest of society? There is certainly a truth to be found and a deeper something to be connected with but I fear that as a species we have left it (whatever it is) behind forever. Maybe we will find it again when we go outwards and colonise other planets or maybe instead of in a desert, we will find the same truth in the loneliness of space?

Tom Payne (Doin’ Dirt Time at The Birthday Party, Volcano Theatre, Swansea & Llanrhystud Theatre in a Barn, March & April 2013)

I am Tom Payne, performer, filmmaker and teacher. I played Suzie twice. Once as part of the Volcano birthday party celebrations and then again

at the opening of Ty'n yr Helyg Theatre, Llanrhystud on the 14th April 2013. I remember a specific moment in the delivery of the transcript in the second of these performances. In the moment in question, Rachel Dutton (Fern) is talking about how to create fire with a bow drill. I can't remember the precise words that she uses but in her account Dutton indicates that creating fire is reasonably straightforward. The night before the performance, Fern, myself and several others, were applying ourselves to this very task; with a bow drill, steel and flint, and a fire mushroom. Our aim was to produce a flame that we could use to light a pit-fire kiln in the middle of a field on Ty'n yr Helyg farm. In spite of our best efforts, including some truly determined drilling, we managed to produce no more than a little heat and the tiniest wisp of smoke. When Fern delivered these lines the following day, everyone in the room shared a moment. The transcript connected with our immediate situation, our shared labour, and the difficulty that we had had in producing fire in the way described by Dutton. It makes me think of how simple and clear much of what both Dutton and Olds have to say is, but how difficult I would find it to follow the example that they have set. Like the fire, there is always an easier way.

Rosie Leach (Doin' Dirt Time at The Woodland Pavilion, Machynlleth, July 2013)

I'm Rosie Leach, a community theatre producer, performer and researcher; I'm interested in bringing people together to create, appreciate, reflect and dream, across disciplines and cultures. I played Susie Gablick at the Woodland Pavilion stage in Machynlleth on the afternoon of 7th July 2013. I found the experience of delivering recorded dialogue enlivening and enjoyable; it forced me to be in the absolutely alert in the present moment and let movement flow automatically from the delivery of the words, when at first I tried to move consciously it distracted me from the task. The performance had a particular magic because we were outside, surrounded by trees and looking out over the sun-lit green hills of the Dyfi valley. As we talked of the wild, it was there as a palpable presence and reference point. The audience were fully engaged during performance and discussion. We talked about the process of recorded delivery; what might have happened to Duttons and Old in the years since the interview; what the role of art is in society is, and where that blurry line between art and life falls. Some people felt that any act done with care and quality can be art-full; one person

suggested that an artist is someone who is paid, while another posited that art is a realm outside of the market- which challenges its values.

Clare Whistler (Doin' Dirt Time at Green;Purple Festival, Hastings, October 2013)

I have read her books from way back , one title, The Re-Enchantment of Art captured and spoke to all I was feeling, and then I read them all. I discovered that an influential book Centering, by potter C.K. Richards, a book I found in a second hand book shop in Berkeley in my early twenties and made a performance about, had been one of her formative books too. I have just finished her first book, a high art modernism critique. She is a person who has immersed herself into each part of her life as it arose and changed her. For me the history of her books is like the evolution of a woman's life on the deepest level, so when I heard that you, Fern and Phil, were going to re- enact Doin Dirt Time from Conversations Before The End Of Time, I wanted to be involved in some way.

Co-curating a week of events Green;Purple about 21st century Suffragettes it seemed the right opportunity to bring in the work of Suzi Gablik and the back to nature agendas of Rachel Dutton and Rob Olds with a film of performance of Creeping Buttercup, about the endangered plant and an old gaelic custom of burying women poets or bards face down so their voices were not heard.

Doin Dirt Time is presented as a verbatim theatre piece with an uninitiated person being brought in to be Suzi Gablik

whirlwind

my nerves are sparking
afraid to miss the voice
mistake the voice
mishear the voice

this act of listening
waiting for one's own voice to ask the questions
where one does not know
what one is saying

near a shamanic state,
a place of speaking where one cannot recall
what the meaning is
as another person's words leave my lips

tension grips the spine,
my eyes follow the enactors
in a glare of filtered fright and attention
who interpret my leap into unknown present time

*

I read the words I was to speak
in my mouthing they were transparent
the watchers and listeners heard what I could not
although it was my voice saying her words

Sarah Woods (Doin' Dirt Time at The Birthday Party, Volcano Theatre, Swansea and at the Dark Mountain Festival, Hampshire, March & August 2013)

"If the real question is, "What is our task?" I suppose our task is, at the very least, to be constantly vigilant in considering what our task is, rather than mindlessly pursuing our own agendas". Suzi Gablik – The Re-enchantment of Art.

I was delighted when Fern and Phil asked me to 'be Suzi Gablik' in one of their performances of Doin' Dirt Time. I'd already read, with huge relief, Suzi's book The Re-enchantment of Art. Reading it was like having someone point out an inherent order to the complexity of thoughts and approaches I was developing in my work – and my life. It made sense of shifts I'd been making as an artist and, inevitably, as a person.

I found the prospect of 'being Suzi Gablik' without reading or hearing the text beforehand exhilarating. Looking around at Fern and Phil, all of us wearing headphones, in the moments before we all pressed play and simply spoke what we heard, felt like the perfect embodiment of this interview: matching form with content. As Suzi says in *The Re-enchantment of Art*:

"Develop a mind that can work with whatever happens. Allow everything to be all right as it is and simply remain true to the quest. When you learn to stop struggling and do nothing, everything is possible. Submit, surrender, become an embodiment of the feminine principle. Don't assume you know the right answer in advance. We are simply part of the vaster design that is unfolding".

(The Re-enchantment of Art).

When she says 'do nothing', I don't feel like she means stay in bed. I read it as: don't act for the sake of acting, don't always bring yourself with you, learn to occupy the spaces between things, to pay attention to the connections. This is what I had been doing in my work – I'd called it trying to 'become invisible', Suzi expresses it far better as being 'part of' the vaster whole. So this is what I did when we all pressed play. I didn't act for the sake of acting, I spoke as I heard the words – I didn't wait for them to make sense, for the end of a phrase. I let the words speak.

"S.G: So the price of re-enchantment is direct experience. You've set out to live the implications of your vision, which is breaking your cultural beliefs and is taking you beyond the traditional path of the artist".

(Conversations Before The End of Time).

Few of us artists will go as far as Rachel Dutton and Rob Olds did – giving away their art and walking out into the wilderness. And I don't believe we need to. But in 'being Suzi Gablik' in her interview with them in 1992, I feel I have learnt from the path they took – by directly experiencing their thoughts as they broke into words.

“S.G: You wanted to do something to break the patterning of your own thinking, to experience a form of reality other than our particular cultural trance”.

(Conversations Before The End of Time).

I don't think it matters how we break the patterning of our thinking, how we move out of our cultural trance, or how – as artists – we create the conditions in which other people can do that. There are many sorts of wilderness and the challenge that 'being Suzi Gablik' has made clear to me, is simply to remain alive to it.

Gary Anderson (Doin' Dirt Time at The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home, Liverpool. November 2013)

I wanted Sid my six year old son, head of research at the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home, to do it and sent an email to Fern requesting so, claiming she'd collaborated with my other two sons for Emergence at various points and now it was Sid's turn. The weekend before Fern and Phil arrived Jane Trowell was here and we got talking a little about what Doin' Dirt Time was. Jane had seen it in Hastings. 'Who's playing Suzi?' she asked with a slightly troubled look. 'Me,' says I, 'but don't tell me anything about it. Apparently there's quick fire questions, so Sid mightn't be ideal. Suppose I'll do it. 'Tsup to them

really.' Jane looks through me the way people look through you when they know something you don't. 'I've got to tell Fern and Phil that story about Suzi, I totally forgot about it in Hastings'. Jane told me nothing else about the project.

OK. Quick fire questions. I'll just make sure I don't have a beer before they start the show, then I'll be fine. So they'll probably want me to invent quick fire questions or something in response to whatever they are up to. I pump myself up artificially. I've done some of this experimental theatre malarky in the past, no need to stress. Leave Sid out of it. I wonder if I should go the bathroom and secretly rehearse some quick fire questions?

I'd asked Fern could it be for families, y'know, would it add anything to the mix if this show were based in a council house in Everton, Liverpool (the home of the Institute) with only families invited as audience? Fern and Phil, as open and trusting as their delightful Jack Russells Betty and Jaffa, thought it would be an interesting set-up. Half an hour before the show Fern and Phil take me into the back room at the Institute and pull out lots of earphones with mp3 players. 'Let's have a five minute rehearsal!' says Phil untangling the wires. I can't quite form a question except something like 'WTF are they going to do?' or 'is this some conceptual shit where people watch us listening to music they can't hear?' The next thing I know there's Phil counting down from 3 in front of an audience ranging from 4 year olds to 40 somethings, from three continents of the planet, all making their way noisily through packets of Monster Munch crisps that Fern had handed out a minute before. The younger ones, sitting neatly together, cross legged, like in school, but with loads of crisps and sweets, are staring at the three of us sitting right up against the window, me half hid by a yuka yuka plant rammed into the corner of the small room to fit everyone in, who have started talking to each other about the end of the world.

For me it's sheer panic though. The first and last thought is something confused, like this:

'don't muck it up for Fern and Phil, they came a long way yesterday, with their dogs, who are currently in the boot of their car coz Jaffa, a rescue dog, might nip one of kids, now they are taking all of this very seriously and not only are they honouring our little house, our Institute with their work, they've agreed to do it for local families, even though those

families are from Gambia and North America, so I better not let them down, even though they probably expect a dropped line or two given the nature of things and of the piece, and I mustn't try too hard, or be too actor-y or do it 'too well', mustn't deliberately change the emphasis of a question to make it sound spontaneous, everyone can see I'm listening to it too, must try to listen and enjoy the piece at the same time though, but whoosh, one of the kids has got up and left and I'm still looking at Fern trying to guess when she will stop answering this question and it'll be my turn again, I'll have to do that man Patrick doing Suzi in my ear, and the plant has drooped a little over my face and now Phil is laughing at something, like corpsing, Fern also notices, and now I've got a really big bit to say and Phil can't look at me coz he's going to start laughing properly, so he looks at the floor, then I'm looking at Fern and she looks away with a smile at the corner of her mouth but covered over with some actor's experience or something, are they laughing at me? Am I doing it wrong? It must be this plant, it must look like a funny hat on my head or something, now the children have started bustling around the room, and that one who went out has come back in and is now sitting with his Dad who is listening really carefully with a big smile across his face, but I turn to look at Phil who tells me with a little nod that that lag in speech was supposed to be my bit, so I catch up as best I can and ask another question, with what feels like a hundred mini pauses and stammering and can't quite equate the sound of my voice with the audience reaction, it's all out of kilter, and I'm hearing what Patrick is saying a little bit too early, coz I pressed play when Phil said 'Pl', this is putting me at a slightly unfair advantage I reckon, well, whatever, as long as the people listening have a good conversation afterwards, that's what it's all about isn't it, a conversation afterwards, yes, will there be a conversation afterwards? Jesus, how long is this thing going to last and when will Suzi stop asking these bloody questions...'

We talked for hours afterwards, everyone, the kids, the groan-ups. Me and Phil shared a post performance beer – that felt good. Fern, atop of the table we pushed to the side to let the audience in, was responding carefully, compassionately to the questions put to her. What started off as a more or less safe review of the themes raised in Doin' Dirt Time, turned into a real conversation, warm and health, human. It was bliss to get Patrick's Suzi out of my ear though and re-join people where they speak and listen in familiar time, not with this intolerable lag in communication.

When everyone left we let Jaffa and Betty back in. Our kids had a conversation with them before they all went off to their sleeping spaces. No lags in communication there, just a slow-growing love for each other. For the kids this was the best Institute residency ever – I can hear them saying so in my ear, over and over again and I repeat it with them, this was the best Institute residency ever.

Tim Dalling (Doin' Dirt Time at 'A Bit Crack Storytelling,' The Star and Shadow Cinema in Newcastle on Tyne. March 2014)

I am Tim Dalling, a 53 year old musician and comedy performer from Scotland originally. I've played for years in a comedy-folk band called The Old Rope String band and then we became the New Rope String band after one guy died. I feel a bit like an old Vaudevillian who's been plying his piano accordion antics round the more obscure end of the showbiz world for a bit too long. I have just recently taken the decision to hand in my notice with the band and setting myself off into the wilderness in the company of Coyote stories and some songs and autobiography. My wilderness is just the showbiz unknown- I won't be learning to make bowstrings from deer tendons, although I dare say it would inform my Coyote musings. And instead of a shallow hole in the desert I will use my terraced house in Newcastle upon Tyne as a base to return to with my fresh kills.

Anyway, I was Suzi at the Star and Shadow cinema where a Bit Crack hold their storytelling evenings. It was a last minute thing that I was going to that particular evening so I hadn't had much time to think about it beforehand, but was keen to take part and enjoyed it very much.

I enjoyed the experience of being Suzi, although it would have been interesting to have her actual voice to copy. I'd heard of the theatrical use of 'instant-relay' verbatim use of recordings in an earpiece, but it was the first time I'd witnessed it, so interesting to actually be one of the ones doing it. As a result, I felt I did miss some of the content of what was being said by trying so hard to catch 'my' voice and keep the flow going as naturally as possible. Having said that, in a way I was amazed at how much I could still take in. I found the story of the artists' experience fascinating, their disillusionment with the art world and their leap of faith into a new life and landscape inspiring. That, paired with the second half's risk of spontaneously taking to the stage to talk without a plan made for a great evening and a confirmation of the notion of vulnerability being a key ingredient of good theatre.

Taskeen Nawab (Doin' Dirt Time at Green & Away, The Fold, Worcestershire. July 2014)

I'm Taskeen Nawab, a student of History and Economics, currently about to enter my second year at university. I played Suzi Gablik while interning at Green and Away when Phil and Fern set up the 'Doin' Dirt Time' performance for the volunteers. When I was told about it beforehand, I assumed there would be a script with words to read out. Though surprised and a tad apprehensive about the idea of repeating after words as I heard them, the experience proved to be quite interesting. This was especially the case when I got engrossed with listening to the answers that 'Rachel' was giving to Suzi's questions.

The recording contained the voices of Fern, Phil, and a man called Patrick playing Suzi. Twice, I mistook Patrick's voice for Phil's and did not start speaking till I realised it was my cue after a fairly protracted silence. I found myself changing around words to compensate for the gap and still retain the sense in the sentence, and in a strange way that helped me keep it a bit more natural than it may have been otherwise. To a large extent though, it wasn't really a performance. The answers I was hearing were generating further curiosity, and the resulting intonation was a product of that.

In many ways, I was more a member of the audience than one of the performers. There was minimal context provided before the conversation was reenacted and the content explained itself as the interview went along, for those who were listening as well as those who were speaking. Knowing then that there were many who had done this before, and that this was a single thread in a larger fabric, diversified solely through its audience's responses and the nature of each performance, made the general experience more weighty - which is not to say that it needed to be, but just that it was. The audience brought things into perspective too. The idea of 'living life as a prayer' was made out to be a luxury available only for those who could afford to leave behind what they had and experiment with a new life, rather than those who had responsibilities that could not in fact be burnt away like a pile of old art. Yet, this was tempered with the idea that the whole endeavour was about setting things into perspective and that the conversation was not an effort to make everyone follow suit, but at most perhaps an exercise in provocation.

It has been a pleasure to be a part of this experience.

**Janne Tooby, therapist and co-founder of The Fold
www.thefold.org.uk
(Doin' Dirt Time at Resurgence Summer Gathering, The Fold,
Worcestershire. August 2014.)**

I was thrilled and honoured when Fern asked me to play Suzi Gablik to her & Phil's Rob Olds and Rachel Dutton in 'Doin' Dirt Time'. I hadn't really got a clue what it was about, but had complete faith in Fern & Phil whom I hold as two of the most creative people I know. I'd heard about them developing 'Dirt Time' from Fern on one of our occasional but very resourcing meetings with another friend, when we walk talk and eat cake, and really wanted to see it. Little did I know I would also be part of the performance experience.

Although a little apprehensive of the technique which we practiced a little bit beforehand, I felt so encouraged and gently held by the absolute confidence of Fern and Phil, that I was fascinated to know what would emerge.

Once the performance was underway, and I got the hang of listening for and speaking directly after the soundtrack which was playing in my ear piece, I found myself fascinated by what and how Rob and Rachel were exploring their lives. Led by their art, I was particularly impressed by their courage of making their whole life an expression of their art. I loved it and resonated with the whole story wanting to ask questions of my own but being bound by using Suzi's words which simply came out of my mouth rather than through my brain. It struck me that this is what Fern and Phil are also exploring within their own art form of theatre. There's something really groundbreaking about this work which if I tried to explain, would negate it. I think, as Rob and Rachel did, it is to be embodied through experience rather than cognitised.

And yes, we need more people having this dialogue, sharing it and moving towards change.

**Isabel Carlisle
Education Co-ordinator, Transition Network**

(Doin' Dirt Time at Schumacher College, Devon. August 2014)

Suzi Gablik had been a mythical figure for me when I was working in the art world in London back in the 80s and 90s. Iconoclastic, and alarmingly intelligent, she was definitely in a kind of avant garde of art criticism without being exactly an art critic. When I read her latest book, "Living the Magical Life", lent to me by Fern, I understood that her path out of the art world and into a different more earth-oriented way of being in some ways mirrored my own. Only she had done it in a very public way, documenting the whole process of the art world losing meaning for her and then finding her spiritual centre of gravity.

When Fern and Phil asked me to play Suzi G. I was intrigued at the possibility of briefly inhabiting a persona that harked back to my past. I left the art world in 2002 to set up the Festival of Muslim Cultures where the arts, religion and politics collided (without any collateral damage, fortunately). Now I live in Devon and design projects that combine ecological awareness with social and ecological justice. Also learning pathways for school children and young adults that give them agency in solving real-world problems.

I enjoyed the whole experience of Doin Dirt Time: not knowing what was going to happen, listening intently and being fully in the moment, keeping pace and then slipping behind and my mind and tongue playing catch-up. I was constantly surprised at what I was hearing. Suzi Gablik's disbelief became my disbelief. It felt like worlds colliding. But Fern and Phil were so fluent they carried me along.

Joseph Campbell and Tom Brown were familiar names, but I didn't know the artists that SG had interviewed or their work so I got really intrigued. What was motivating them? Could living in the wild be called an art form? What were they escaping, and seeking? We careered from apocalyptic visions to the desert, cow tendons and an eulogy for the hunter-gatherer way of life. Then it all stopped. Suddenly. I wanted to know what happened next. It had been like a landscape seen out of a train window.... flashing past telegraph poles like frames in a cine film. A wild ride, and I loved it.

Jane Trowell

Artist & Educator, Platform <http://platformlondon.org>

(Doin Dirt Time at In Dialogue conference, Nottingham. October 2014)

As the performer, I really liked doing it. It was exciting and challenging. It was hard to know when or if to put expression in. I remember that Clare W did it with a neutrality and focus that I liked. I worried afterwards that i'd tried to have expression and that the expression might have got in the way. Also, I was aware that some of the expression was MY expression - doubt, scepticism on occasions, and not Suzi's. Don't know. It would be interesting to know what you felt.

I also felt I could not sense the impact on people in the room as we went through the piece. The job of listening and repeating and not fucking up gave me a focus which meant even the words i was saying were a little remote (although more later). It was a bit like being inside an astronaut's helmet!?! Enjoyable though. I could sense people's body language. I liked being next to people, close up.

I felt very in touch with you Phil (maybe because you were seated nearer) and less so with you Fern. But I was very aware of the greater load of words that Rachel has to say. This led me to feel that you Fern were in a totally understandable way *in a kind of trance*. Which is kind of perfect too in that it is a trance-like narrative. Phil, for me you made Rob seem more 'in the world' because of your body language and eye contact and the way you responded or referred to people in the group. A kind of interlocutor.

To me, your performance Fern, gave the quality of Rachel being some kind of seer. Rob was more 'in the world' (Don't know how this relates to gender archetypes?)

I loved doing it in the round like that. I think it had a profound impact on how it was received. The 'listening in' quality that some people reported. The sense that you could not agree with what was being said but you didn't feel compelled to speak assertively about that because of the communitarian vibe.

Being Suzi? Suzi mostly asks questions in that interview - it doesn't become a conversation in the sense that some pieces do later in the book. So it felt more neutral. I didn't feel that Suzi's questions were rich in Suzi-ness but more enquiring, more wondering, clarifying. That was

interesting. It is the second piece in the book....

Maybe there's another one later in the book or from another context which is more Suzi-ful. Could be interesting to think about a juxtaposition.

I got the sense we could have all talked for hours afterwards. Which was wonderful. I also got the feeling that the heart had been put into the conference for those who came...