

Dialogue:

(3 Card Monte)

[Aerial shot above table]

Now, both figures are notionally present, sitting either side of the table. Only hands are visible in frame. Figure A (sitting to the left of the frame) removes black leather gloves, and produces a coarsely folded sheet of paper from coat pocket. Figure B carefully draws three paintings from the top of the frame and positions them in a row, roughly bisecting the image vertically. Figure A has unfolded the paper and placed it casually in the bottom left corner of the frame. Figure B has set a fourth painting aside from the first three, towards the bottom right corner of the frame. Figure A claps hands together rubbing them vigorously. Figure B moves the first painting into the position of the third pushing the other two down frame, making the third, the new second and so on. Then Figure B continues to move the paintings in an apparently random manner. Figure A is making notes on the paper. Sometimes Figure B rotates the paintings, as they are being placed. This continues until figure A points at the painting currently occupying second place (middle frame). Figure B stops moving the paintings, pauses momentarily and points to the fourth painting at the bottom right of the frame. Figure A raises hands in surprise and then drops head forward into frame clutching head in hands. Figure B moves the fourth painting into the line replacing the second, which is consequently set-aside in the bottom right corner of the frame. Figure A passes over five £10 notes. Figure B leaves the frame and Figure C moves in as a replacement. Figure A claps hands together rubbing them vigorously and the game restarts.

[Camera rotates 45° clockwise locking firmly in place]

NW: Let me start by asking you about the note that you emailed to me in preparation for this visit. I'll read it out:

PSR Studio notes: 16/04/12

Four paintings as thick as grass.
They weren't like this before. *They've been ironed flat.*
Last time they were funnelled, siphoned. Now scrubbed.
Mix ochre with egg, get yolk.
Also high-vis and marrow together
And a Blue Map.
Fuck, I've dropped beetroot on my trousers

We are sat here in your studio with four paintings on the table in front of us. These could feasibly be the paintings you described in the note. Each painting is roughly 40cm square, and consists largely of flat areas of bright colour, gouache on paper.

PSR: Watercolour

NW: Watercolour, my mistake, sorry. This is the first time I have seen any of your paintings, I mainly know you as an artist who makes films. So perhaps you could explain a little about the various roles that painting, film and perhaps writing, play in your practice?

PSR: Painting is something that I consciously stopped doing in about 2006. Before then, the act of painting had never been a decision; it was always simply something I had done.

NW: So these are recent paintings?

PSR: Yes, very recent. I remade them from a small photograph of a group of paintings taken about ten years ago. Originally there were eight paintings in the series; they were a combination of oil paint laid in thick impasto and household gloss in various

puddles and pours. The originals were made together in a crowd, between the floor and the wall. The series had the loose appearance of fitting together as a jigsaw puzzle, in which a gesture could travel from one image to the next. The canvases were continually moved and rotated while being made. Do you follow me?

NW: Yes, I think so, a kind of patchwork?

PSR: Sort of ... but I don't really like term patchwork, it's the kind of expression that means everything and nothing isn't it? These recent watercolours were made face up, on this table, transcribed from the paintings in the photograph.

NW: Is that what you are referring to in your studio note when you say, "They weren't like this before, they've been ironed flat"?

PSR: yes that's right.

NW: So do you want these paintings to be seen flat or on the wall?

PSR: Are you being serious?

NW: I mean, um, are they to be seen in any particular configuration?

PSR: What?

NW: Let me clarify things. I will try to describe how I read them, So that we have some common ground to talk from.

PSR: Okay.

NW: I should say that I feel influenced to talk specifically about the colour of these works based on the language that you used in the studio note.

PSR: Okay. I mean, fine, if you want to. Whatever gives you the material that you need?

NW: The four paintings sit in a horizontal line and read as a sequence, which from my

perspective, operates from left to right.

PSR: Uh huh.

NW: The first painting has one large muddy yellow area partially obscured by various intrusions of red. From the bottom is a peculiar orange-red that also appears over here in bottom left of the third painting. The third and fourth paintings are linked by areas of a dullish Prussian blue that appears to run from one to the other. Almost seamlessly, as if they were painted together and then cut apart.

PSR: I see that.

NW: There is an area of fluorescent yellow that is common to both, but in the third painting the yellow is buried beneath the blue and in the fourth painting it bleeds over the top. Seemingly this mark deliberately oversteps the boundary.

PSR: Yes

NW: The second painting has a range of what I think of as cliff shapes or hills coming in from the top each rendered in a variation of deep blue-greens. And these are offset, almost like a Christmas tree with lipstick red and a vibrant rouge pink.

PSR: Mmm.

NW: Looking back across the paintings the third painting stands out as the most figurative and the first seems like a way in to the series. Sort of like an establishing shot.

PSR: What do you mean by figurative?

NW: Well the green, it has something of that flouro yellow in it as a base, or. Well I think what I mean is it doesn't look like a pure pigment, whereas a lot of the others look like they are straight from the tube, or the pan. In my eyes the green is made from a combination of the yellow next to it and the blue that runs over it. The green looks synthetic, both unnatural and a synthesis of elements that surround it. Also it sits partially landlocked by a large area of bright orange and so looks a bit like a carrot.

PSR: What happens if I rotate this painting and switch it's position in the 'sequence' with this other one?

NW: Can you do that?

PSR: Actually I prefer them in a grid formation. Don't you think they look better if I move them like this?

NW: I, I, I'm very sorry,

PSR: Are you okay?

NW: Yes. But Iv completely lost my place, that long bit of descriptive text was. You know. It was a lot to remember, a lot to recite. Can we start the interview again from the top?

PSR: Yeah that's totally fine; I'm here for you. But lets get to the bit about three-card Monte a little bit sooner.

NW: Fine.

PSR: Oh. Before we start are you okay for a drink?

NW: No. I mean yes, I'm fine, thank you.

PSR: Great. Start whenever you are ready

NW: Okay. Let me start by asking you about the note that you emailed to me in preparation for this visit. I'll read it out...

PSR: Actually, do you mind if I stop you a moment. I think I'm going to have a tea. Would you like one?

NW: Yes thanks that would be great.

PSR: We've got peppermint and err. There is one lemon and ginger left and we've also got normal.

NW: Oh normal is fine for me

PSR: Great

NW: Thanks

PSR: Do you take sugar? Or I've got honey?

NW: A drop of honey would be brilliant. Not too much, thank you

PSR: Milk?

NW: Yes please, just a dash

PSR: [Shouting from kitchen] KEEP TALKING. IV JUST GOT TO FILL THE KETTLE UP.

NW: I really like these chairs

PSR: SORRY, I MISSED THAT

NW: The chairs I really like them. It's a beautiful green, really unusual. Where are they from?

PSR: They came with the studio. Apparently they are from the Natural History Museum originally. For some reason they were being thrown out and Alessio managed to retrieve them before they were skipped.

NW: But they are pristine?

PSR: I know. It's amazing what people throw out.

NW: I'm going to start now.

PSR: Okay, keep talking; I'm just waiting for the water to boil.

NW: Let me start by asking you about the note that you emailed to me in preparation for this visit. I'll read it out:

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Mix ochre with egg, get yolk.

Also high-vis and marrow together

And a Blue Map.

Fuck, I've dropped beetroot on my trousers

We are sat here in your studio in South London, near the Oval cricket ground, with four paintings on the table in front of us. These might well be the paintings you described in the note that I just read out. Each painting is roughly 40cm square, and consist largely of flat areas of bright colour. They look to me as if they are gouache on paper.

PSR: Watercolour

NW: Watercolour, yes I keep forgetting. This is the first time I have seen any of your paintings. So perhaps you could explain a little about the various roles that painting, film and perhaps writing play in your practice?

PSR: I'm not sure it's so much about any particular medium playing a role in my work, as rather me enacting being someone who uses that medium, someone who partakes in that discourse. For instance a series of engagements with paint: as a painter or someone who makes paintings or as someone who writes about the paintings or writing about talking about the paintings. Making anything for me is a lot like giving

birth to a baby dragon. The pain of the enduring labour of producing, producing pretty much anything makes me hot and bothered, difficult to be around. That goes for writing, drawing, filming and editing. I get quite frantic making things, nervous and then fall out with the things I have made afterwards and then have to slowly learn to love them again. So perhaps, rather than staking a claim for identity with any particular medium, it's something of the neurosis of production or struggle with the act of making that remains constant in the work.

NW: So you don't feel, like with this work in front of us: A group of remakes of what I understand to be quite visceral paintings, you don't feel that the choice of material guides the way you present your work? A painting is very different to a photograph of a painting or a poem about a painting wouldn't you say?

PSR: How do you know whether or not these works are remakes?

NW: I seem to recall that you mentioned earlier ...

PSR: What are you talking about? We've only been talking for about three minutes. I think I would have remembered saying something about the paintings.

NW: Are these paintings remakes?

PSR: I mean yes, but, what? They aren't just remakes, they are ... I really don't like the way you have framed this. Where were we?

NW: Talking about the way different materials effect ...

PSR: Yeah, Okay. As part of my research I spent some time in a small factory that made printed circuit boards. The machinery and processes were highly evocative to the senses; there were chemical smells that could burn your nose hair off. I was most fascinated by the industrial use of screen-printing: After the boards had been copper plated and drilled they were screen printed with diagrams and codes. This printing had a functional use as a guide for the assembly of the electronics onto the board. The printer would deal lashings of thick gloopy yellow ink from a big tin into a paper cup. He would add white spirit as a thinner and beat it like double cream. It's a really

tactile procedure that I have since attempted and failed to replicate many times with oil paint. The printer would mask out the silkscreen surface with reams of brown tape and deftly pour out a line of the yellow ink onto the shiny new brown tape. Then wielding an impeccably clean squeegee would pull, drawing the ink across the screen, flooding it with colour. I mean, this stuff isn't really esoteric to most artists, but I found the viscosity of the process tantalizing; the transition from tin to cup to screen to board. You wouldn't be able to get that kind of saturation of colour with acrylic, the binder can't hold nearly as much pigment, you would have to mix in a white pigment and in so doing you would lose the intensity.

NW: Just to make sure I have this down right. In printing a drawing there is a sense of repetition and difference. Albeit that the 'original' image is the first iteration of many repetitions to come. Also there is a real sense of flatness. Would you say that you were referring to this screen-printing anecdote in your studio note when you said: "they weren't like this before, they've been ironed flat"?

PSR: Yes, that's right.

NW: Let me just open something up about these paintings in front of us, I'm trying to navigate a way of thinking about the paintings, the note and this conversation. Currently the paintings are face up on the table unframed. So do you want these paintings to be seen flat or on the wall?

PSR: Are you being serious?

NW: I mean, uh, are they to be seen in this particular grid configuration? Let me try to describe how I read them, So that we have some common ground to talk from.

PSR: Sure, I mean, it's important that you get the material that you need, so shoot.

NW: The paintings are in a grid of 2 x 2 in no obvious sequence, however there are visibly push and pull relations between them. The two closest to me both contain contradictions of colour temperature.

PSR: Bitter yellow and blue alone bite cold...

NW: Within the closest left painting a golden colour appears, hopefully.

PSR: ... but in combination rape and rattle as hot as mustard.

NW: It's a heady concoction of modern yellows and yellow oranges: Barium yellow, lemon yellow. In the painting closest to you is a big slope of vermilion.

PSR: Vermillion, the queen of reds

NW: Quenched by the blue hills below it.

PSR: Red in tooth and claw.

NW: The top right painting has a large area of yellow, which looks quite different to these close to me, an older yellow, possibly early nineteenth century from the stable of sulphur, selenium and chrome; a kind of pre-cadmium dirty yellow. Back to this one here on my right, a large spillage of Jaffa Sunkist Outspan. And ... err ... err...

PSR: Look at the yellow curtain?

NW: Shit! I've lost it again, it's such a long bit of text to remember.

PSR: Don't worry, it came off well, do you want to swap places? I can be you for a while and you can be me?

NW: Okay thanks that would be great. Just for a bit.

PSR: Fine. Before we start would you like a drink? Iv got tea and the coffee is really good here.

NW: Tea would be great thanks.

PSR: Are you sure I can't tempt you with a coffee. We have a really impressive machine downstairs, digital coffee; it's the Rolls Royce of coffee machines, none of this

Nespresso crap. I looked online and the machine alone costs about 2 grand. They made a serious investment.

NW: Thanks for the offer, but I had a coffee before I came. Tea is fine.

PSR: Wait a moment then, I just need to pop out to the kitchen to fill the kettle.

NW: These chairs are really unusual

PSR: SORRY I MISSED THAT, WHAT DID YOU SAY?

NW: I SAID THESE CHAIRS ARE REALLY UNUSAL

PSR: REALLY COMFORTABLE AREN'T THEY?

NW: yes lovely

PSR: Just have to wait for that to boil, do you take sugar?

NW: No thanks just milk.

PSR: Do you want to start?

NW: So ... I think we have established a way of talking about these paintings?

PSR: In part yes, although it has mainly come from you.

NW: What would you like to add?

PSR: Well, I think it is important that the paintings are drawn in watercolour with quite a fine brush. I mean, when doing any kind of fine detail work like this one's body closes down and concentrates its energy through very small gestures. This kind of working requires a certain amount of meditation, which in turn produces certain effects.

NW: could you elaborate on that?

PSR: Drawing opens up a kind of unmarked psychological space. Any drawing does this pretty much. I'm loath to give it a quality that would make this too specific, so it's not a paranoiac space, or at least not just that. For instance, you just said, "look at the yellow curtain"

NW: Yes, well actually you said it.

PSR: Well, that kind of phrase means something in common parlance. It's fixed somehow. But I think if I was drawing right now that phrase might enter into my mind from different places and might well stick. It's difficult to describe, but in order to find the concentration to do this kind of work, I often find myself reciting a mantra. A kind of cyclical thinking it has a similar effect on the body as swimming lengths. It becomes a closed phrase, that sticks in the mind and when thought repeatedly it unfolds a far bigger imaginary landscape with far more possibilities.

NW: Can you give an example?

PSR: Yes, well when I was painting these two here, the phrase "look at the yellow curtain" kept cropping up in my mind. I have a vague idea where I first heard it and somehow, while I was here in this studio painting, I was also back in the place where I first heard it, with the person who said it. But it's not just about people, it's about feelings and space, I mean it also feels a bit like it fell out of a script for a movie, a thriller perhaps.

NW: It's a startling prescription.

PSR: Try it now for yourself. Say it out loud.

NW: Look at the yellow curtain.

PSR: Now say it again, but say it like you mean it, with emphasis, like there is something terrible behind the curtain.

NW: Look at the yellow curtain. LOOK AT THE YELLOW CURTAIN. LOOK AT THE YELLOW CURTAIN.

PSR: It's creepy as fuck.

NW: I definitely felt something.

PSR: So I think it's possible to explore the shape and depth of a sound of a phrase when making these kinds of paintings. A kind of haunting of the mind that is productive.

NW: It influences the way you make decisions within the painting?

PSR: I'm not sure that within painting there is ever a decision

NW: No, a negotiation perhaps?

PSR: Something is being negotiated yes, suspended within the space of the word, the phrase; the yellow curtain perhaps? Within the yellow curtain certain things open up.

NW: Could you say some more about that?

PSR: Well, as I said before it's an imaginative space and the curtain can bring actions into being. Like when writing. When writing this text for instance I can alter the state of affairs, I could change the situation.

NW: I'm not sure I follow.

PSR: Well it's quite straightforward. The

JD: I'm really sorry to bother you both. I've had my bag stolen and I really need to get back to Tottenham. I've got one pound eighty and need fifty-five pence for the bus. Could you help me with a little change?

PSR: I'm sorry I don't have any change.

NW: Me neither

JD: IS YOUR FRIEND DYING?

PSR: What? No. I really hope not.

JD: MY FRIEND'S DYING. HE'S IN HOSPITAL AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DOOO. I NEED TO CALL THE HOSPITAL. Can I use your phone?

PSR: Um, no, I don't think so.

JD: I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DOOO. HE'S DYING. I can't afford to bury him. Do you have a job?

PSR: Um yeah

JD: A full time job?

PSR: Well kind of at the moment, for a short while, well for a month or so.

JD: So you're all right then. What about you?

NW: Yes I make some money. I'm self-employed.

JD: IV GOT NO MONEY. MY FRIEND'S DYING. HOW AM I GOING TO AFFORD TO BURY HIM?

NW: I'm not sure what to say, I haven't got any change.

JD: CAN I USE YOUR PHONE?

NW: I'm out of battery

JD: CAN I HAVE A CIGARETTE?

PSR: We don't have any cigarettes

JD: WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? WHAT SHOULD I DO?

PSR: I'm not really sure. This is quite awkward, but we were in the middle of quite an important interview, which we have to do. Would you mind, um, leaving now?

JD: BUT, IV GOT NO MONEY

PSR: This is a private studio block. I'm afraid you're not allowed to be here. So I will have to please ask you to leave.

JD: AH, YOU FUCKING ARSEHOLE, YOU'VE TAKEN MY MONEY. YOU FUCKING CUNT. I'V BEEN ROBBED. HELP ME. HELP ME. HELP ME. THEY HAVE TAKEN MY MONEY.

PSR: PLEASE. You HAVE to leave

JD: GET OFF OF ME. DON'T TOUCH ME. I'M GOING TO CALL THE POLICE AND HAVE YOU ARRESSTED.

NW: Do you need a hand?

PSR: Thanks, that would be great.

NW: C'mon this way

JD: AHHHH. GET OFF ME. GET OFF ME.

NW: Bloody hell, that was a bit of a shock.

PSR: Yeah I'm glad she's gone.

NW: Does that sort of thing happen a lot here?

PSR: Never before, I think the front door must have been left open.

NW: It's completely knocked me off course. I've forgotten where we were.

PSR: Me too, shall we have a quick break?

NW: Yes, I need the loo actually

PSR: Do you want a drink?

NW: Do you have any coffee?

PSR: Yes, Coffee we do have. It's really good coffee actually.

NW: I would love a black coffee

PSR: Sugar?

NW: Yes, one please

PSR: Would you like a coffee as well?

JD: Yes please.

NW: Sorry where is the loo?

PSR: It's just downstairs, at the end of the corridor on the right

NW: Do you want me to bring the coffees up after I've been to the loo?

PSR: That would be great thanks; you know where the machine is right?

NW: I think so

PSR: here take this bag of beans. It usually needs a bit of a top up. You have to open the front of the machine from the right hand side. It swings open, so watch your head.

The beans go into the top right hand container, but don't put the whole bag in, that bag has got to last me until the end of the month, you know it costs twelve quid for a bag like that of Lavazza beans?

NW: No Problem. Actually, thinking about it, I know you are pressed for time so do you want her to take over from me for a while and I'll bring the drinks up – just to keep the energy flowing.

JD: That's fine, I can do that, and so are you playing me now?

NW: Yep

PSR: Just one thing though, I thought she came in a bit too aggressively. It was a bit disruptive.

JD: That's verbatim for what happened, though

PSR: I know, I know, but could we try it where you are a bit more like DEEP. Do you know DEEP?

NW: Yeah I know DEEP.

PSR: Can we go from the top?

NW: I'm ready when you are

PSR: Start with the studio note

NW: Yep okay. Just pause for a second. Right. We are here together today in your studio in Oval in South London. And you have invited me to look at your paintings and to talk about them.

PSR: That's right, I do want to focus on the process as well though.

NW: Yes. That was in your email; in fact I've printed it out here.

PSR: uh

NW: I must say you are much more organised than most artists that I have done this kind of thing with before; this list of pointers is really helpful. So just to run through it, you want to describe your process of working. And thinking. And you want to focus on relationship between ... sorry I can't read that, my printer is running low on ink ... the relationship between writing and painting? And ... this is very faint ... I can just make out the words "propositional space".

PSR: Oh yeah. Well that relates to the text I sent titled "pop pop". Did you see it?

NW: Pop Pop. I don't think ... hang on, I can check it on my phone. I just remember seeing something about the paintings the colour of beetroot. Was that the piece?

PSR: No, no, there was supposed to be two attachments.

NW: I've got the email here. Hang on. Oh yes, sorry I must have completely missed that one. I can read it out from my phone, should I do that?

PSR: I'd like to read it myself, pass me the phone

NW: here

PSR: **Pop Pop.**

The crowd is patchy, an irregular flow of Marks in dribs and drabs. The rain seems to have cleared for the moment and I didn't bring my camera so am limited to the memory of a middle aged Hungarian man crouching in a dark green bomber jacket, which simplifies the contour of his upper torso, from plump to round; He's got bad teeth and a crew cut, but is clearly a top and ball mechanic. "pop pop, pop pop".

How do I move down the page?

NW: just move your finger like this

PSR: Okay yes.

... He's got bad teeth and a crew cut, but is clearly a top and ball mechanic.
"pop pop, pop pop".

Two younger guys, possibly his sons, wear almost exactly the same as he, with the subtle addition of imitation Oakley sunglasses (shorthand for 'tourist'), therefore legit disguise for a roper. They play vibrantly, switching and shouting with great colour, fisting each other with wads of cash. Big Ben chimes loudly at Four O'clock providing yet further cover for this spectacle. "pop, pop, where's the ball? Can you see the ball?"

Camera-huggers come close and occasionally buy in. There's no way to win. But the booster seems to handle the cool off well; at the same time she charms fresh faces into believing that this is nothing but a shoot. Two dippers work the crowd around the edges. It seems like I am the only educated one here.

NW: Okay, a lot going on there, so, what, may I ask is a top and ball mechanic?

PSR: I mean, a mechanic is roper slang for someone with experience, someone who has been in the game for a while, who is an expert at the trick.

NW: Sorry which trick? In fact can I just look at the phone?

PSR: I wrote this after I had been wandering about near Westminster. I was acting at being a flâneur for the afternoon.

NW: Okay, hang on ...

PSR: yes and I came onto Westminster Bridge and became totally engrossed in watching a game of top and ball.

NW: Top and Ball?

PSR: You know, the street con, its like three card Monte. They work as a team; the immediate game is really hammy. The mechanic is the guy at the centre with the cups and balls.

NW: It's a rip off trick isn't it? It's not a real game.

PSR: Depends what you mean by real.

NW: Well, it's not real. It's a fake game.

PSR: Perhaps, but it does mean something. I mean, on the one hand it is expanded theatre; the game needs several people to make it work and by work I don't mean you have to spend and lose money in the game; but it establishes narrative interference. The story unfolds like an omniscient onionskin. There are various foils, lookouts, protagonists and antagonists; so many in fact that it can cause one's mind to wander. I mean, there was a road cleaner who warned me to stop filming with my phone, because the people playing the game are dangerous and carry knives. But the cleaner himself was the spitting image of Sylvester Stalone and conceivably he was another part of the same theatre group.

[Camera rotates 45° clockwise locking firmly in place: slow fade to black]