



SJ You know, as a film-maker, is there any other art-form that you identify with? Do you think yourself close to a painter or a sculptor or a composer in organising material?

PG I think there's lots of different art-forms I am influenced by. Design is one, and film-making is like for me the core practice.

SJ but it is relatively – I suppose historically, it is a relatively recent art-form. But do you think, if you think about the process of film-making, in its antecedents, do you think it leads back to any particular other art-form? For instance, do you think it comes from the way painters organise their material? Or do you think –

PG I think you learn about colour from painters, and texture. I like – I think, when I am making a film, in terms of texture, or surface, not necessarily grain, but computer surface as opposed to celluloid surface, or even treatments of image.

SJ so you feel closer to how a painter would feel about treating a surface like a canvas. Is that how you see it – do you see it is like the screen like a canvas and you are building up colour on it? Is that how you see it?

PG sometimes, I would never think like that – would never think, I am making a painting. I do think images can function like film paintings, like moving paintings, and –

SJ all the words that you used in some ways – those are words that a painter might use – you know, texture and surface, the way colour communicates.

PG I think the missing thing is time. You are affecting the viewer over a period of time. I think the main thing that I am interested in is inducing different states of mind in people. If there is any root practice to the way I work - is probably psychology – is the thing that would probably influence me more than anything else. Like pinpointing interior states or trying to fix on a way of communicating a non-verbal, unconscious idea.

SJ I know – we have obviously done one project together – *Phantasmaton* – and we are just in the middle of doing another. I think, with *Phantasmaton*, one of the biggest things that I think we finally didn't actually resolve between ourselves – you often asked about the music, and I really – I think, until the end, I didn't understand why you asked so many questions about the music. Because, for my own self, when I am in the studio, music is running in parallel, in tandem, but I don't look to clues for organising material. But do you feel that music is something quite important to the way you organise your own material?

PG not necessarily organise, in terms of rhythm, and not necessarily cutting rhythm but pulse and against, like a

feeling. So you get sensual feeling – it is like a colouring component.

SJ so are you saying that music is a partner to the image?

PG yes and no. Because you can work in a way that counterpoints – I think, it is like a colouring, you can use it in a way that's – I think you have to talk in terms of sound and not music. It affects the image so much, to the point where you physically change the image, or – I was going to say, change the velocity, but the dynamic of the image, the same way – in music, with a piano chord, you can change the dynamic and feeling of a chord by the pressure, and you can use sound almost to pressurise images to be more intense or more quiet.

SJ ok, so that used to be the traditional relationship between movement and music. For many hundreds of years, people didn't actually think of movement as something separate from music. Often they felt that the movement sometimes illustrated the music or music was such an essential partner to movement that it was difficult to think of movement without music. But I think with choreography, it has moved to a place now where I think people are interested more in the kind of integrity of movement without any other partners and then think of the partner. So people, for instance in the seventies, there was a whole group of choreographers who actually just danced with no music, and at first people didn't like it. Do you feel – I suppose, when we had all those conversations about music and the importance of the music to what you were doing, I suppose one of the questions I was asking in lots of different ways was whether you feel the image you are creating, you don't think it has an integral, you know, dynamism and emotion, quite apart from any effect the music would have on it?

PG again, I think it is sound and music, and music is just one component. Sometimes I would use a soundtrack – I would construct a soundtrack to be the driving force. It has got musical component, because it has rhythm and sound, but not necessarily a musical composition. It does, but very rarely, do I use – I am just trying to think whether I have ever used an image – I made a completely silent film, and I don't think I have. And so, I think the thing that surprised me during *Phantasmaton* was that you were working without music. You were working on pieces that you were not marrying – and then you would move them around, so you wouldn't work to one particular thing, you would shuffle them around. So for me, that was a very odd way of working. Because you were building component based things that you could shuffle around in different orders.

SJ because for me, sometimes in the studio, I find if I listen to the music too early, or I try and make movements to the music, I feel I haven't given movement enough freedom to actually in some ways lead me to other places – because often, if you start with the music, it is giving you such strong information about dynamic quality, about texture, about rhythm. But for me, it is always interesting to make movement that actually comes out of other stimuli, you know. And then it is like having a marriage, you see what you have created in the studio – whether it will go with this bit of music, or it won't. I just presumed that that is how you would make the image. That you would make the image and textures and hints about the dynamic quality would actually come from what you are looking at in the screen and then you'll see what kind of music suits it.

PG I think sometimes I construct a soundtrack alongside – if I am doing the music or sound myself, I would sometimes start manipulating sound at the same time as I would use an image, so I was working on something where I was taking the bleeps from a telephone and slowing them down and distorting them, and that was part of the soundtrack that I was making at the same time. But I had already shot some images at that point, so I was working in tandem. I often work at the same time as sound, very rarely do I work silently.

SJ so it must have been quite strange to do *Phantasmaton* because you didn't have it. I mean you had a little bit of the music at the beginning...

PG I think it helped structure, with something like that it was useful because there was always a third component in the choreography that I couldn't... well I could see, but it –

SJ so music generally is a structuring device for you, or a structuring partner?

PG I don't think you could say that, because it sounds too much like putting images on music. Sometimes you have to do that, in the case that you are cutting something to music, but, for example, the project I have just finished with Michael Nyman, I constructed a soundtrack and gave him the soundtrack, so I constructed audio soundtrack of station noises which I gave to him, and he wrote to. He had seen the images but he was using elements of the sound to structure his composition.

SJ So maybe music is not the right word, but you want a kind of audio –

PG audio-visual, has to be – marries the two, and sometimes the sound can be more important than the image, often.

SJ and, actually when people have asked me, who are you working with on the new piece, *[h]Interland*, I talk of you as a film-maker, but I know that obviously, finally, the images that you are going to give me, you are not going to give me stuff that I would maybe expect from a conventional film-maker, because I always feel that whatever you – the first stage, which is putting the image in your camera, capturing it, always phase one, and that you are going to be sitting there much later using software to actually manipulate the material. In the end, that is what I am interested in. so, do you recognise yourself in that sort of label as digital artist?

PG No. Artist, yes, but digital artist for me, I suppose it is like a temporary term for other people, to organise people who have been working with new technology. But I work, for example, all the material in *[h]Interland*, I have been using analogue effects boxes, so I have been using lots of analogue technology, so film on digital equipment, and then making it - almost making it look rougher using analogue equipment, and then taking it back into the computer. So there is no dividing line. My own website and area I have called 'mutant film'. So it is specifically marrying these two sides, it is like mutation of film language. Very influenced by early computer-generated film-makers, first computer film-makers from really the 1940s and 50s. Often they were using computers that were not digital computers, so what were called analogue computers, so that difference between analogue and digital is not one I really make. And the other side of things is, because although I am working as a film-maker, and I have almost decided to keep calling myself a film-maker, but in fact the other areas I am working in are to do with wireless internet technologies and the internet, for the last 7-8 years. A lot to do with computer technologies. So, I think it is important, especially now, to recognise that the root of those disciplines comes from cinematic language. I have begun to refer back to the terminology of cinema, much more. It covers this area that stretches from cinema, from film-making, in the origins of celluloid film-making to digital and beyond.

SJ so do you think these new technologies – what sort of difference do you think they have made to the process of film-making? In what area do you think they have had the greatest effect?

PG you can complete films, without having to beg for money – that is one thing, on an economic level, which makes a big difference, it is not something to be dismissed.

SJ do you think it makes you more self-sufficient, because traditionally one –

PG completely. I can start a new film whenever I want. My output I think has gone up five hundred per cent since I moved to digital equipment, even though I am still working on Super-8 – I will work on Super-8 and also celluloid, but I think in terms of being able to complete things and start new projects, it is a complete transformation.

SJ and do you think – because you know, the process of manipulation and change, you are saying it is far more accessible and it is so much more wide-ranging. In terms of the aesthetics of any project that you do, do you have a very clear idea of what the final thing is going to look like, or is it really something that reveals itself in the process of doing it?

PG sometimes, depends on whether I treat the image or not. For example, I made a film called *Anything is possible* and it was shot over a period of a year, and I shot one piece – just playing around really – with night-vision camera, and didn't really know what to do with it, and it was about two years ago, and I borrowed another camera, had a light on the front of it, it was someone else's camera, and it had this strange kind of night-light, that had a little torch at the front. And I shot some other footage, and I ended up marrying these two things and making a film. Literally montaged together, one was green and the other was red, and I just cut the two things together, and there was no manipulation. So that was predominantly through cutting. So, sometimes, in terms of processing, the colouring of the image is an integral part of the film, and sometimes it is not. Often I shoot in camera – I actually shoot a lot of the time with things over the lens, so I will construct little devices to stick on the front of the camera, or film through things. Sometimes I make little optical lenses that I put on the front of the camera – this is even with digital equipment - so I will actually shoot through them. I don't particularly like relying on filters and just pull down menu, and apply this filter to this, I don't do that at all. *Phantasmion* didn't use any filters at all. Everything in that was either programmed artificial life sequencing or just other kinds of manipulation.

SJ I think that that was the first time you had worked in live theatre? Did it really effect the way you would normally construct an image, make a film? I am sure there were lots of frustrating things about it.

PG I found it quite natural. I think one of the key things for me, influential things, was expanded cinema, so I was very influenced by expanded cinema of 1960s and 70s, and ideas of being outside cinematic environments. I don't particularly like cinematic environments, I think that they are restricting. I like – but don't particularly like being confined in gallery

spaces either. So sometimes I do that. Sometimes I show films in that context, sometimes I don't. I like trying to find new ways of showing film image and so, for me, it was a really natural place to be.

SJ I suppose my last question, probably the one that maybe you haven't thought about a lot. I think that maybe when I first met you – I mean, I was looking for somebody to do the film for *Phantasmaton* and, you know, I don't like being type-cast as an Indian choreographer just because my name happens to be from India or Sri Lanka, or wherever, and – but, actually, just my experience for that particular project, I thought that actually I would like to work with somebody, not necessarily from India, but for whom I felt that maybe that exotic gaze, which I think is so kind of programmed into Europe, could be slightly lessened. And I think I spoke to you, and at that point you said that actually I think my Indian-ness has nothing to do with the way I work – I mean, after *[h]Interland*, and your visit to Bangalore, have you changed your mind about that do you think?

PG I don't think that I've ever made a film about 'culture', as people present it

SJ not as a context.....your eye comes in

PG there is this expectation that that is an area of automatic interest, and for me, the psyche is much more interesting.

SJ but does culture educate the psyche and therefore educate your eye? Is there a case for that?

PG it was not a factor. I think the very first time I addressed any sense of culture in the way people perceive it and talk about it, was because of *Phantasmaton* and – to be honest – if I wasn't asked to do it, I don't think I would have gone anywhere near that area. Just because for me, it is not the most interesting thing. I think about – you think about the psyche, mortality, dreaming, the unconscious – these are universal, timeless themes that I would be naturally drawn to. But in the context of – so *Phantasmaton* was a stepping stone, to begin to look like that. But because it was really looking at it within quite a restricted sense - Going to Bangalore was – a very different experience, and I think I did make, apart from the film itself, I decided to do – I had an idea for a piece, I suppose you could call it video-art. I don't normally make video-art pieces, it was very much in the context of Mark Wallinger or Gillian Wearing type piece. And I did it on the last day that I was there.

[end of recording]