

RWF organised, with PiPs, a debate and discussion at the TateLiverpool gallery on Thu 24th April.

The Tate staff had been most helpful, promoting our small project and providing a room for up to twenty so that we could divide comfortably into two groups for discussion.

We achieved the maximum of 20, mainly PiPs but with three RWF trustees and several who had come through the Tate's web promotion.

Derek Tatton gave a brief ten-minute talk on RW and Keywords then two groups - one led by Derek and the other by Paul Doran of PiPs - discussed works in the exhibition and their relationship to Keywords. Notes for the discussion are below...

The feed-back from participants and TateLiverpool was very positive

Keywords - Debate and Discussion

Raymond Williams Foundation (RWF) with Philosophy in Pubs (PiPs)
Thursday 24th April at Tate Liverpool, 14.00 to 16.00

A brief talk - by Dr. Derek Tatton, (Administrator of RWF) on Raymond Williams's book *Keywords* (1976 and 1983 editions) and the later *New Keywords* (2005) written by an international array of noted scholars - will be followed by discussion using the notes below.

The facilitators - Erica Brook, Painter and Trustee, RWF; Paul Doran, National Co-ordinator of PiPs and Derek Tatton - will follow PiPs and Discussion Circle guidelines.

1. 'The original general meaning of **art** to refer to any kind of skill is still active in English...' What skills are evident in this Tate exhibition? Are some works, in your view, devoid of any special skill, prompting the feeling 'I could do that'? We'll consider RW's 'complex set of historical distinctions between various kinds of human skill' leading to the distinction between '**fine arts**' and '**useful arts**'.
2. Looking back over the '*Art, Culture and Society in 1980s Britain*' are there **ideological** issues relevant to assessment of the works we have seen? We can take **ideology** as meaning *illusion* or *false consciousness*, or the apparently more **neutral sense of ideology** (we are all capable of being conscious of the developments, conflicts, tensions and contradictions within a given historical period).
3. Take the word **convention** - many contemporary artists prefer to be unconventional? Are there, however, conventions, customs and mannerisms that come through in this exhibition?
4. **Consumer**: 'In almost all its early English uses, consume had an unfavourable sense: it meant to destroy, to use up, to waste... It was from the C18 that consumer began to emerge in a neutral sense in descriptions of (the) economy... In C20 ... the predominance of the capitalist model ensured its widespread and often overwhelming extension to such fields as politics, education and health'. We live in a **consumer society** - does this exhibition offer any insights into *consumerism* or are its interests and aims located elsewhere?
5. Which of the keywords on the gallery walls relate most directly to individual works you have seen? Can words 'get in the way', pigeonholing, putting the 'art' and the 'artist' into a straightjacket? Do we agree with Adrian Searle, *Guardian* critic: 'The uses of language, as Williams's book constantly demonstrates, is slippery and more nuanced than this exhibition implies'? (Sat 1st March 2014).
6. We'll take these works to discuss their impact and quality in particular: Bill Woodrow's **1981 Car Door, Ironing Board and Twin Tub with North American Indian Head Dress**; Helen Chadwick's **1986 Carcass**; and several others selected for consideration from within the group.
7. '**Realism** is a difficult word, not only because of the intricacy of the disputes in art and philosophy to

which its predominant uses refer, but also because the two words on which it seems to depend, **real** and **reality** have a very complicated history'. Do you come away from this exhibition feeling that you have been in the **real world**?

8. **Postmodernism** is a widely used term. Here's a crisp definition: 'The contemporary movement of thought which opposes totalities, universal values, grand historical narratives, solid foundations to human existence and the possibility of objective knowledge. Postmodernism is sceptical of truth, unity and progress, opposes what it sees as elitism in culture, tends towards cultural relativism, and celebrates pluralism, discontinuity and heterogeneity'
Is this a keyword, relevant to our discussion?