Chris Burden in conversation with **Thorsten Knaub**

- TK: What is the question most people ask first?
- CB: What's the question they most ask?
- TK: Just so I don't ask it again.
- CB: No, that's okay. Go ahead and ask it again
- TK: I'm quite curious as to what is the first thing they want to know when they look at your work.
- CB: Well, that depends on what we're talking about, usually. I'm trying to remember what the students I spoke to earlier today were asking me. I think it was about whether the work that I do with my hands is more personal to me than the work that others build for me. And I said that it isn't because as soon as you put your name on something, then it becomes your work because people judge you by the fact that you have claimed it.
- TK: So, for you there's no difference if other people produce the work?
- CB: It's still my work. It's not possible to do everything yourself, especially on a project like this. I wish I could but I can't. If I had to make all the steamroller parts, I'd still be working at it; do you know what I'm saying?
- TK: Sure.
- CB: I'd have to learn how to be a welder. It's like the architect is responsible for the building, that doesn't mean he puts every brick in place. And nobody says, 'Well, this is his building and that's yours' because bricklayers built it. In an ideal world all architect would have to build their own buildings, but then there'd be a lot fewer buildings.
- TK: People have this misconception that the artist has to do everything by his hand somehow. Maybe it comes from the classical period?
- CB: Yeah, I know. You go back in history, and think about the Sistine Chapel for example: I don't know exactly who put the paint on the ceiling there, do you know what I'm saying? And there's a whole group of artists now that have computers that make the art for them.
- TK: But obviously the idea is the driving force of the work?
- CB: But it's always nice to be able to have your hands on it. Personally, I wish I was out in the studio working with my assistants instead of in the office doing office work. On a lot of the projects, like the bridges, I made them initially, or I designed them, and then I'd pass that information down to the people who worked for me and then they could do it too.
- TK: And what is the process, when you say you make them or you design them? I know quite often that you make a really rough initial sketch.
- CB: Yeah.
- TK: Do you make a smaller model first with your assistants, just to get your head around how you would approach it, or do you just work it out on your own?
- CB: It depends. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. For example, with the sculpture of Metropolis, I was very much involved with trying to figure out how to make those cars go up the tracks successfully. We tried all kinds of things, and it was my idea to use the magnets. But then the people who worked for me went and looked in the catalogues for the right magnets. But it was definitely my idea.
- TK: How long did it take? I saw a picture of it yesterday at your talk at the Tate Modern and it was quite a complex thing. I have never seen it exhibited here in London, but was it shown somewhere else?

- CB: No, it was bought by a museum. It left my studio and it went to Japan, and that's the last time I ever saw it. I didn't see it in Japan. I didn't go. That video that you've seen is in my studio. That's why you see a dog walk by and people standing around and boxes in the background.
- TK: Is this sometimes a disappointment because you would actually like to spend some time with the finished work?
- CB: I would. I felt, yeah, I would have liked to have had that around some more. I may make another one that's similar just for that reason. And also, because we spent so much time and money and energy developing that, it seems, in some sense, wasteful not to use all that research to apply it to a bigger one, and to make even more complex ones. We worked on it for about three or four months and then put it aside for about a year and then came back to it, worked on it another year. It took about a year to make. Nine months, a year, something like that. So, somehow I feel I should use the fruits of that research and use it some more. Which I may do and I may not.
- TK: Will you do it just so that you have it somewhere on your property?
- CB: No.
- TK: So someone would have to come and say, 'Could you do another one for us?'
- CB: Well, my gallery in New York wants to do a show and they want to do it in March, and I'm thinking, March, hmmm, that's pretty soon. How am I going to make a new body of work? But with Metropolis, we've already worked out the technical problems, and we could learn from some of the mistakes. I wouldn't use the plastic tracking and we'd make our own track. But it would be a solution to coming up with a new work in a quick way. And also, I've had a desire to use that research, because we spent so long developing it, and then it just left. It was like it was plucked from my nest.
- TK: And I guess it's quite a good position to be in, because once you've sorted out all the technical complexities you actually can really concentrate on how you would want to see it.
- CB: Yeah. Well, it would be bigger and more complex, but we could build on what we've already developed. If that makes sense.
- TK: You mentioned the studio. Do you go every day?
- CB: Oh, yeah.
- TK: And it's on your land?
- CB: Yeah, I live right next door. It's a three-minute walk from my studio. I go back and forth all day long. Oh, I left my glasses at the house. Oh, my phonebook's back there, and run back and forth continually
- TK: And do you go in there in terms of, I have to do this, I have to do that? Or is that really time to think? Just to sit there and to think what kind of work you could do now? Is the studio a place where you come up with new ideas, or do the ideas really happen somewhere else?
- CB: The ideas usually come to me somewhere else. When I'm swimming, or relaxing, or...
- TK: Just doing other things.
- CB: Yeah, they just pop in. I don't go to the studio to come up with new ideas. I go to the studio to work, usually. And as I was saying to the students, most of my work is managerial. Writing proposal letters, you know, writing letters back and forth. Every project ends up with a huge file. I have a computer, but everything gets printed out. I like paper files. And it's all based on dates, and we have tons of file cabinets, and so on.
- TK: When you first started to make art did you expect all that administration?
- CB: Life was simpler then. When I first started making art, I was just myself. And I was doing performances, and all I needed was a still camera and a typewriter. So, it was a lot easier then. But I would spend a lot of time after a performance, looking and sorting through the photographs and making a decision about one iconic photograph that would represent the whole work.
- TK: So you were quite aware even from the first performance of looking for that 'art image'. Did you ever consider, like a lot of people at that time, using video?
- CB: I didn't want to. But there is a video that exists of some of my performances, and it was made after the fact. Sometimes people would bring a film camera or a video camera and so I had to go back and find those people to try to retrieve their films. But it wasn't something, at the time, that I was interested in doing, because when people see a film they assume they were there. And they say, 'Oh, well, I saw that.' Well, no, you didn't, because you're only seeing a film of one little square. You didn't see the dogs walking around or the smells, or whatever else. People see movies and they get movies confused with the real thing. But I thought that people are sophisticated enough to know that that a photograph is not the actual event. We know that a static photograph is not the whole story. But they're not sophisticated enough about filming to realise that. And so I wanted to make sure that people knew they were only looking at a symbol, and not the actual event. Using still photographs was a way to make sure that happened. So, I specifically didn't film and videotape things.
- TK: But at the same time you chose the image or cropped the image quite particularly?

- TK: So, in a sense the photograph is also not a true representation.
- CB: Oh, I know that.

- TK: So that was intentional, but also there was a bit of manipulation.
- CB: Yeah.
- TK: ...and playing with the idea of an iconic image.
- CB: Right. But I realised people were sophisticated enough to know that a still photograph doesn't really give you enough information. And so they know it's only a stand-in and it's not the actual event. That was really important for me.
- TK: But also because you wanted people to imagine a bit about what actually happened.
- CB: Yeah, exactly. It's the difference between listening to the radio and watching a TV programme. I remember as a child we used to listen to radio programmes. And in a certain way it's like reading, Your imagination fills in everything when you listen to a radio programme or a radio drama. But if you see that same drama as a film or a TV show, you can't imagine the table being purple if it's red in the film. So, you're right, it was a way for people to be able to exercise their imagination more.
- TK: And maybe that's also why you only had a small audience at your performances, to make it a private event in a way?
- CB: Yeah, that's true too.
- TK: And is this also to do with what people say and write about your work as being about danger and risk and the psychology behind it? That you want the people to get this feeling in their own heads, when they look at this image of a the performance, like Shoot.
- CB: Yeah.
- TK: I think you once said about *Shoot*, which is very famous, of course, that it is conceptually a very clean work, and I was just wondering, not so much about the actual performance, but what you went through when the idea first came into your mind. 'Well, maybe I should do that', and then how long after that the work was actually executed, which, I guess, was just the last bit for you when you actually made it?
- CB: Yes.
- TK: And then it belongs to the audience afterwards?
- CB: Right.
- TK: What's the period of time? Do you know?
- CB: It's a long time ago, but off hand I'd say, three months, four months, five months, something like that. It was an interesting thing, with the performances, because basically they were ideas, a fantasy in my mind, and then for a moment they actually happened. And then they became myths.

So, they only existed in actuality for usually a very brief time. And that's why I kept the audiences small, usually. Unless I was doing it at an institution where I had no control. But if I had control of it, I would only pick people that knew me and who were sympathetic to me. Mostly other artists, basically. They became the broadcasters. And I knew they would see it from my eyes, and that the story would be told the way I wanted it to be.

So, it's a way of controlling things, because I realised early on that this kind of art, this action art, was the opposite of theatre. In theatre there's the audience and then there's what's going on, on the stage. And you never really confuse the two in traditional theatre, right? Whatever's happening on the stage, no matter how terrible or horrific, you know it's being acted. You don't feel compelled to jump out of your seat and go and call the police.

- TK: No, sure.
- CB: But I realised that in the art that I was doing then that the audience was actually part of the work. It wasn't like I could separate them from it; that there was a barrier. The people who were seeing it were part of the work and I had to control that, because it was one of the elements in the work, if that makes sense?
- TK: So you gave them certain bits of information you wanted them to have?
- CB: I would pick them and I would say, on such and such a night I'm going to do a performance here. And they would come, whatever it was. I did a performance for two people, or three people.
- TK: Yeah. So a lot of the audience were also artists? And that's maybe also why they were more involved in the first place?
- CB: Absolutely.
- TK: Was it a very close scene?
- CB: Yeah, it was, when I first started I lived in Venice, California. There was a big community of ours, maybe 50-60 people that were within a quarter of a kilometre, really close, we all had the cheap studios there. There was a real community then; that was a real thing. I had a friend and I could call him up on the telephone, and his living quarters were in the back of a studio, and I could get on my bicycle and I could get to the front door of his studio before he could get from his back room to his front room. So, he'd hang up the phone and I'd be knocking on his front door and he would still be walking towards his front door.
- TK: When you first started out were there certain artists who influenced you, artists you looked at during that time?
- CB: It's interesting, because and I think this was particular to California there were a lot of artists who were friends, who were painters. I don't make paintings.

- TK: You never did?
- CB: I've never made a painting in my life.
- TK: Never?
- CB: No. I was able to go through art school without making a painting, which I think is a very big accomplishment. We had drawings, but I never made a traditional painting.
- TK: You studied architecture in the beginning. Was there still a proper painting department when you started?
- CB: Yeah, there was. But you could take sculpture too. And so mostly I did sculpture. That was really my interest and where I put most of my effort.
- TK: Another thing I found interesting was the idea of the smaller performance in terms of it being just for a few people and the question of how to value the work...but maybe for you it wasn't an issue, you knew the photograph would go out as the work.
- CB: So did the people. They would say, 'I was at this Chris Burden performance and he did this and this'. So it would be like a story. It was an oral story, so it wasn't that other people didn't know about the work, they did, but only through hearing about it. And I knew that would happen. But that's why I picked people that were sympathetic to me who would tell the story as if I would tell the story.
- TK: A bit of myth-making...
- CB: Yeah. So, the audience wasn't just limited to those people. Those people became a way of disseminating the information.
- TK: And was this myth-making already playing with ideas about art, the art institution, the gallery context?
- CB: Right.
- TK: So do you think it is something which later translated into work, where you played with the idea of the art institution; looking at its limitations and what it is able to do? Or in the case of Exposing The Foundation of the Museum, the question of where the art institution ends or stops? Is it something you see very differently? Do you see it more from the engineering side or do you see it as connected to the performances?
- CB: Well, it's like God needs the Devil or he wouldn't have a job. So, I've used the institution as a foil.
- TK: But are you playing a game with them, or wouldn't you call it that?
- CB: Well, yeah. You need something to push against. Like children need parents. You need something to push against, and the institution has done that for me, in many cases.
- TK: It's like a counterweight.
- CB: Yeah, like the counterweight on a steamroller would be, you're right, yeah.
- TK: When you talked about *Medusa's Head* yesterday, you said that the Museum of Modern Art bought it recently. And you smiled and said that it would cost more for them to keep it than they actually bought it for. Is that part of the same game, or not really?
- CB: Well, no. I was happy that the Museum of Modern Art bought it, because if another institution bought it and they couldn't afford to maintain it, then it would be destroyed. And as an artist you hope your work will outlive you. That 200 years from now it would still be around.

The Museum of Modern Art bought another sculpture of mine called the Flying Kayak. Then it was shown in Vienna in 1996 and they insisted that it come in a huge insulated crate and a courier. It costs something like \$50,000 just to send it from New York to Vienna. And I thought, this is ridiculous. And then I went on and I thought no, it's not ridiculous because they're trying to ensure that 200 years from now, 150 years from now, that the thing still exists. And what seemed excessive, actually I felt no, they're trying to do their best to preserve the work for the future. And I think that's the job of institutions like museums, to try to preserve for posterity. And not all places can do that.

- TK: Has it ever occurred to you when you're working on something like the Medusa's Head that maybe you shouldn't do it like that because it's just going to be too difficult to preserve? Is there a limit?
- CB: No. No.
- TK: Was there a practical limit, in terms of the 16ft diameter you chose?
- CB: Yeah.
- TK: Was there a certain limit you couldn't go over? Or was it just the right size?
- CB: It was more the right size and it had to be cut into four pieces. I started it in my house, which was just one big room and a bedroom and so the big room was the studio. And I had a door that was only eight feet wide to take out the part, and so that was a limitation. It was like building the boat in the garage. You wanted to make sure that you can get it out. So, that was a practical limitation. If the door had been bigger, I might have made it bigger. But I had to be able to get these quarters out of my studio, otherwise... We supported it on legs, like tripod legs. Each quarter was supported on legs, and then we added more and more wood. And then we came in with a saw and we cut out some of the wood and started putting in wood places for the tracks. And then we added steel mesh and then concrete and rocks. We use this special concrete for bathrooms and it has some latex in it. And so we built it up. And it has to be shipped in four pieces, and then you have

to assemble it. And then you hang it from the chain.

- TK: On a pretty good ceiling.
- CB: And then you take all the legs out. And there are special parts, the plugs that go in to hide where the holes for the legs are. And it's pretty interesting too, because the tracks have to go over the seams, we have to wait until it's hung to fix where it's been separated. Because it's so big that it changes shape. When you hang it it's so heavy that when it's just put together and it's standing on the legs it's one shape, but then when you hang it, it gets longer because it's so big and heavy, it stretches. So, you have to wait until you're hanging it before you start putting all the tracks back together.
- TK: And can you say something about the title, *Medusa's Head*? Given that the title of your work Samson also refers to mythology. Is it something you're quite interested in?
- CB: I was just playing on the idea of this world gone berserk with railroad tracks, which was, as I said, this 19th Century nightmare that was going to happen. And in fact there's places in the UK that do look like that. And there are places in New Jersey and Chicago that do look like that, but the whole world didn't go that way. So, for me, it's about what your fantasy of disaster is and what actually happens. This sounds crazy but I used to say Medusa's Head is about AIDS, and people would look at me as if to say, 'What are you talking about?' Because before AIDS first happened everybody thought that disaster would come from outside; it could be the nuclear bomb, it might be something like an invasion from outer space, I don't know. But something from outside, right? And then all of a sudden it's from inside.
- TK: Yeah, and in our bodies.
- CB: Yeah, and it's woah, that wasn't what we were planning on. So, things are often the opposite to what you anticipate. To me that's very interesting, because you imagine one thing, and then it comes from behind, Bam! It's like, wait, we're supposed to be coming from that direction. So, it's an exaggeration a little bit, but I think I made the joke at the lecture, right, about if you live in a bad neighbourhood and you're always scared of being robbed and mugged, or whatever, so you move to a much better neighbourhood, and then that's when you get mugged. Because you think 'Oh, oh, great; I'm in a good neighbourhood now and everything's safe'. Bam! That's when your car gets stolen. I think it's hard to anticipate everything, so you focus on one thing and then you lose your focus on something else.
- TK: Can you descibe the work about the neutron bomb, The Reason for the Neutron Bomb?
- CB: I kept reading in the newspapers and magazines, and stuff, about how the US was going to develop this special bomb, called the neutron bomb. It was an atomic bomb that supposedly would not destroy hard things, walls, tanks, cannons. The reason given, during the Cold War, was that Russia had a tremendous amount of tanks and that all of NATO and all of the US and Europe put together had much fewer tanks: half as many in fact, and they were mechanically inferior. So, the reason we needed to develop this neutron bomb was in case all these Russian tanks came across from East Germany and Poland. We would have this bomb that we could explode and it would basically kill the soldiers inside and then our soldiers could get inside and drive their tanks. But I kept reading this figure, 50,000 tanks. And I'm thinking, well, this is an abstraction. It's ink on paper; 50,000, what does that mean? So I wanted to take this information and transform it from an abstraction into something physical. And I wasn't taking a position. I wasn't saying the neutron bomb is bad or good. I just wanted to physically transform that information into a different form, so that we could re-examine it. And so that was why I wanted to make this model, in essence, of the entire Russian tank force. I took these coins, these metal coins that are 5 cents, and a little match, a little wooden match that's cut short to fit onto the coin. And then when you look at it, it's like hmmm, yeah, that is a lot of tanks. And you go, Nantes, Paris, Dijon, yeah, you could have that many tanks in the North Sea. You could have this many tanks in Strasbourg. So, you could read the information either way; as saying it is a terrible idea, or as saying yet maybe it's justified. And I wasn't taking a position: I just wanted to re-examine the information.
- TK: You said you didn't want to make a point if it was a good thing or a bad thing. Do you think art or the artist should comment on the outside world? Can artists actually avoid commenting on the outside world?
- CB: Well, I think you can bring up the issue, but I think there's a fine line between raising the issue and then being didactic. War is bad, yeah, but I have problems with art that is too didactic because it can become propaganda.
- TK: Or could be used as propaganda anyway.
- CB: Well, I'll refer to some of my own work. I did a sculpture called The Vietnam Memorial. My own self-criticism of it is that it's too didactic. I was criticising the Iraq War at a time when I made this piece, the first Iraq War, but I couldn't talk about that because it was too sensitive a topic. So I decided to talk about the Vietnam War. There's a big block memorial in Washington DC, but there is also a smaller version that toured the US, and it was black plexiglass. It would go to different greens in town centres. I was up in Northern California visiting my wife's sister and she said, 'Oh, you'll have to go and see the miniature memorial, because it's touring'. So we went and saw it, and it's sad; there are flowers and letters and stuff, but I kept looking at it and thinking, well, wait a minute, what's on the back side? Aren't there two sides to this memorial? And I thought, what about the Vietnamese names? And that's where I came up with the idea that there should be the other side's names too. We can grieve for our own losses, but what about theirs?
- TK: And where is *The Vietnam Memorial* now?
- CB: It's in Chicago, in the Museum of Contemporary Art.
- TK: But not on display, as such?

- TK: Sure, statistics.
- just a number'.
- TK: And he should know.
- different readings.
- good art has two sides.

- TK: Could you tell us how you found it?
- TK: But was it still in the Navy colours?
- and some graffiti on it.
- object that was interesting.
- CB: Yes. That's true.
- even give it a second thought.
- CB: No.

CB: Well, no, not permanently, they put it up sometimes. It's like a big rolodex, but vertical, and it has big copper plates and the names are in six-point type. It's a little bit of a fiction. We don't have the three million names because obviously they didn't keep records of every poor villager that was killed. So, basically we got three million Vietnamese names and we used a computer to scramble them around. It was just the enormity of it and I was trying to talk about the US and that we were responsible directly for killing three million people, and the Nazis killed 12 million, or whatever the figure is.

CB: Yeah. It's a little bit like this whole controversy with Turkey and Armenia now. It's the number thing again. I've read somewhere that Stalin said, 'If ten people are killed it's a tragedy, but if three million people die it's

CB: Yeah, he should know if anybody should know.

TK: You said, that one criticism of *The Vietnam Memorial* is that it's almost too much a statement in one direction. It almost leaves the realm of art as an art object, and becomes a political statement. But then if you're interested in these issues, is it quite difficult not to make a statement, to find that line where the work doesn't become didactic?

CB: Well, that's what I would prefer, but I felt strongly about that, so against my better judgement, or something, but I remember another project where I did an edition of oversized Los Angeles Police uniforms. They're 10%, bigger than normal, and a symbol for the US policy. To me they're scary. The idea of 30 policemen standing around you with clubs and guns and stuff, you know what I mean? That's what they represent to me. I showed them at the MAC in Vienna ten years ago at the press conference and I talked about the uniforms a little. I asked the press people what they thought of the uniforms and this older, very well dressed lady, raises her hand and she says, Oh, no, she doesn't see them as threatening at all. She sees a handsome young officer about to take her to the ball. And I just did a double take, you know what I mean? And I said, well, that's wonderful, because she saw something completely different, almost the opposite of what I saw, but it was still working for her, just in a completely different way. So, I think that good art does that, do you know what I mean? People can take away from it completely

TK: I guess otherwise it's probably too close to being didactic...

CB: Yeah. It's a polemic that it has only one side, and I think that really

RA: Is it correct that the steamroller was used during the Vietnam War?

CB: It was used to make runways, I think, in the Philippines. To me that's not an important fact because it looks older than that, you know what I mean? It looks like it's from the 40s, or something, and it's actually relatively new.

CB: A friend of mine saw it and he said, 'Boy, you should go and look at this thing. It's really huge and it's really cheap. And you might really like it'. And so I went out and said, 'Yeah, that's pretty good; I should get this'.

CB: Yeah, which was a rusty grey, a dark grey. There was a lot of rust

TK: So, for you the object was interesting and it wasn't about the history?

CB: No, no. The history of it wasn't important. It was just the physical

TK: So you get inspired by big objects like the steamroller or the street lamps, you collect them and then you wait until you know what to do with them.

TK: Do you ever look for certain objects if you have a certain project in mind?

CB: I think my interest means I always look for objects. Not for specific projects but just because I have an eye out for things. So with the street lamps, I was looking at imitations in home building centres and was already cued to looking for them, so when I saw the real ones I got very excited. But if I hadn't been already looking for reproductions, cheap Chinese made aluminium ones, I wouldn't have been interested in the real ones. I'm not sure it's totally random, and I think it does come from some other source too. You have to be open to receiving it. Another person could drive by that steamroller and never

TK: With the street lamps you collected 100 or 200?

CB: Yeah, close to 200. I keep getting them too. See, now I'm addicted.

TK: But you said you would like to have them as one piece?

CB: Yeah. I will have them as one piece. Except for these 14 that are in the South London Gallery; these got split off to a sub-group.

TK: Would it be something interesting for you, if somebody would buy these other streetlamps, these 200, to put them back onto the actual streets?

- CB: I know what you're saying. No. I want to keep them more concentrated. So, it's obvious that they have been taken out of their context. If I install them at another place outside my studio, they may not be as close, but they will be much closer than a normal streetlight, so that even people who don't know anything about art, or care, will know that they're not functioning only as street lamps. Why would they put 20 lamps in a row one metre apart? It doesn't make any sense. So it will be obvious that something else is going on.
- TK: But your ideal place would still be an urban environment, or could it be non-urban, somewhere out in nature, so to speak?
- CB: I want to keep them together. An institution with a big park could put them around the institution. That would be okay. I want people to be able to experience them. So that's a good question and I haven't really thought about it. I want them to be displayed in a very certain manner. I wouldn't just say, 'Okay, you buy the lamps and you can install them anywhere you want'.
- TK: You want to display them like street lamps, but also like a symbol of themselves?
- CB: Yeah. And also this repetition of form. When you walk through them it's a very strong feeling. It's a little bit like walking through a Greek temple, because they're using the same fluted columns, so they transport you back to classical architecture, in a certain sense.
- TK: But it also condenses it in a way, because it's a bit closer than it would be.
- CB: Yeah. I think you can sense their physicality too, don't you? Just intuitively, I think people know they're not fibreglass. They're not Hollywood props. And I think you can sense that off them. I don't know exactly what their cues are, but they're not papier-mâché, and I don't think you need to be told that to feel that.
- TK: People somehow pick up that kind of information. Is this something which is important to you? This bodily reaction to objects?
- CB: Yeah, it is. And I think it's what sculpture's about too.
- TK: And there is also a kinetic element in a lot of your sculptures...
- CB: Well, that's performance carried through the object performing for me.
- TK: ...and you quite like to demonstrate with these sculptures ideas of physics and the fundamental laws of how our world works. Are you making a point about technology and the individual, reminding people of the basic laws of physics which we don't really think about anymore because we're in such a technological world, where we don't connect with the basics any more?
- CB: Yeah, I remember when I used to teach performance, one of the first assignments that I would give students was to go out from the classroom and find the heaviest thing that you can bring back to class. It's very interesting, what people considered the heaviest thing that they could bring back. And it was a real physical exercise, because a lot of people never even have that experience of what weight is, or even distance, do you know what I'm saying? I asked 'How much do you think that thing you brought back weighs?' And people would have no idea. It was really strange that they didn't have - and it's a good lesson. How your body relates to other things and how they interchange.
- TK: Sure, and I guess it's understanding your limit.
- CB: Yeah. How much can you pick up?
- TK: And then how you can push it further.
- CB: Yeah, exactly. How do you get it back to the room, do you know what I mean? Do you drag it? Are you gonna put it on wheels? Are you gonna have a blanket and just slide it on? Are you gonna get a news rack? And some people come back, 'And that's the heaviest thing you could find?' Hmmm.

When the steamroller is shipped it goes in a 20 foot container, and they're supposed to build and block up wood to about waist high so the steamroller can't move, because it's so heavy you can't just put on chains and a clip. So, that's the way we shipped it the first time. And then the second time, when it went to Lyon, I didn't go down personally to see it in the container, because these were professional shippers. They just put a small board under the wheels and during the whole sea journey the steamroller rolled back and forth. So it hit both ends of the containers, and they were all punched out. And I thought, you fools, because if it goes through, it sinks the ship.

This interview took place at Chelsea College of Art & Design in London on 13th October 2006.

The Flying Steamroller by Chris Burden, 2–15 October 2006 was supported by Bloomberg

Additional thanks to Arts Council England, Chelsea College of Art & Design, Gagosian Gallery, The Henry Moore Foundation, Moose Foundation for the Arts, Vicky Hughes and John. A.Smith.



TK: I was thinking it kind of goes full circle - they used to be street lamps, then they were scrapped and then they become 'sculptures' of streetlamps again.

CB: Yeah.

EIGHT

70

13 ALLED GALWY

Спк THE FLYING **STREAMROLLER** a film by Thorsten Knaub

1 mar 1 mm

