

JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: ALEXANDER DANKO

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JAMES GLEESON: Alex, can we begin at the beginning; when and where were you born?

ALEXANDER DANKO: I was born in Adelaide in 1950.

JAMES GLEESON: Exact date?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Seventh of April 1950.

JAMES GLEESON: Any background of interest in the arts in your family?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Not directly, no.

JAMES GLEESON: No. You've just sort of developed an interest automatically, as it were?

ALEXANDER DANKO: I think the interest developed through contact with students at high school and the kind of group that I was moving in through high school.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. Did you do art as a subject at high school?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, I did quite well and that's what sort of prompted me to go on then to follow it through as a course.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. By the time you were in high school you knew you wanted to continue that?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Where did you go from high school?

ALEXANDER DANKO: From high school I went to the South Australian School of Art where I did a Diploma in Sculpture.

JAMES GLEESON: And your teachers were?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, in the actual sculpture course I had sort of quite a list of lecturers over the period of the actual course, the actual sculpture course itself.

JAMES GLEESON: Was how long?

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ALEXANDER DANKO: Three years. There was a common course which was in 1967. Then in the actual three years of a diploma course itself, on the actual sculpture diploma course itself, there were people like Bill Clements, Owen Broughton, Bill Gregory, Max Lyle, Milton Moon. Did I mention Owen Broughton?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I believe Nigel Lendon was a fellow student?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes. I mean, there were quite interesting students around at the time which provided a fairly lively sort of atmosphere because over the three years there were only something like 10 to 12 students across the three years. So there was quite a good interaction between students as well as staff. There were people like Nigel Lendon there at the time, Peter Cole. Tony Milawick was an interesting person. There was another person called Heiman de Vere. Yes, so there were sort of people around.

JAMES GLEESON: What year did you finish?

ALEXANDER DANKO: I finished in 1970.

JAMES GLEESON: Nineteen seventy.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, at the end of 1970.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. Almost immediately you began working on works that are now in our collection because we have ones dating back to '71.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right. Well, my first show was really 1970 when I was still a student.

JAMES GLEESON: In Adelaide?

ALEXANDER DANKO: In Adelaide at the Llewellyn Galleries. That was kind of a kind of beginning, like a primer for some of the works which occurred later as well. There was that sort of connection between objects and word relationships which then got developed further and further from that point on.

JAMES GLEESON: When did you come to Sydney?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, I visited Sydney through 1971 where I began to make contacts with sort of various people in the sort of art scene in Sydney, as well as making contacts with people at the Sydney University Art Workshop. Then I actually started working in Sydney I actually made a ceramic piece in Sydney in 1971, late 1971.

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JAMES GLEESON: Is that the one in the Sydney Gallery now?

ALEXANDER DANKO: No, it was called *Bill posters will be prosecuted*. No, *has been prosecuted*, sorry.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, I remember that one.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Which was large sort of ceramic like monument or tableau and it was actually made at the Art Workshop in late '71. Then went back to Adelaide and then decided to come and work and live in Sydney in '72 and I've been here ever since.

JAMES GLEESON: I remember Gary Catalano wrote an article about you, I think it was about 1974, for *Art in Australia*. Do you remember that?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, I vaguely remember that.

JAMES GLEESON: Do you regard that as a sort of a reasonable assessment of what you were doing at that time, of your position and stance?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, yes. I mean, I quite respect Gary and he showed me the article before it was published. I mean, it has more a kind of literary analysis of the work, which I quite liked.

JAMES GLEESON: There is a literary element in, well, in most of your works in the sense that you use words as a sort of springboard, a pun.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Does this come before the work is visualised or is it something that comes afterwards? You know, when you do things like *Trick brick* or *Dankorub*, does this come first and then you can see the object or does the title come after the object's formed in your mind?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Usually there's like a sort of a phrase or a word that sort of appears first and then the object is built around that. But sometimes, you know, it's sort of spontaneous, like happening at the same time, like simultaneous.

JAMES GLEESON: Do you regard that as relating you in any way to the sort of conceptualist forms of art? The words and meanings of words play a role in that form.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I just wondered if you thought of yourself in any way as being—

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ALEXANDER DANKO: No, no. I mean, I recognise the possible links. I mean, I recognise the work that's come out of the so-called conceptual art framework. But the work that I've done that may seem to be related to that is more like a parody of it rather than like a serious attempt to be a conceptual artist or a conceptual art work.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. I notice that there is a strong ironic or satiric element in most of your work.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean, the level of humour in it for me is very important, especially in those earlier works where they were sending up certain aesthetic notions.

JAMES GLEESON: Heavy aesthetic content.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, right. I mean, there was a whole show called Heavy Aesthetic Content and it was just sort of sending up notions of aesthetics that were around me at that time, I guess. And people who were very serious about their art, I guess.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes. What about *Autorealism*. Was that a send up of Dali, for instance? Dali had a theory of auto-surrealism, didn't he?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, I wasn't really familiar with his theory. I mean, it was like *Autobiography*, and it was like a shift in that sense. It became like *Autorealism*, auto portrait.

JAMES GLEESON: That's right. You did a whole series of things relating to portraiture, your own portrait.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right, my own image.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: So that was like a quick device. I mean, like a statement, a mirror device that sort of encapsulated those. Like preoccupation with self on that level. But then with other viewers too, like the viewer became the portrait as well.

JAMES GLEESON: Alex, if I remember correctly, in Gary Catalano's article you talked about you exploring that frontier where life and art sort of interrelate or meet and trying to sort of—he doesn't use exactly these words but I take it he means that you're working in an area where art and life itself are just inextricably involved with one another. Do you feel this is true? I'm thinking now in the way that Marcel Duchamp explored this area in his later work. Has that had any influence on you, or were you aware of it at all?

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ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, I mean, there was a certain preoccupation with that because of my involvement with, say, performance work, that sort of developing, which really kind of started back in the late sixties when I was still a student when I was writing poetry and whatever. That poetry moved into like scripts for performances and then that sort of continued on into the seventies.

JAMES GLEESON: Were those performances ever taped, video-taped?

ALEXANDER DANKO: No, not really. I mean, there's a certain amount of photographic documentation around but the performances sort of dealt with real time rather than that sort of removal of time by actually being put on to tape or film. I mean, some of them operate in the kind of happening area or whatever, or just pure fun. But that sort of relationship between art and life was somehow connected to those performance things. Also in the way I use materials or whatever or to make my objects. There were traces of life elements or things from the environment that appeared in the work. But I didn't sort of assume that like the art was life or life was art. I mean, I wasn't really that interested in that relationship.

JAMES GLEESON: You didn't have Duchamp's fascination with found objects?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Oh, I did to a certain extent.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes. But, I mean, it was a bit of that sort of investigation like Duchamp had gone through. But it was more like sort of the extension of the sixties. Things like pop, whatever, that sort of brought out those sort of connections. I mean, like there's a number of sort of strains, I guess, that link up the use of found objects. Like sort of Duchamp Dada, I mean, aspects of Surrealism. The fifties and sixties, abstract expressionism, and then just use of things which are related to the sixties and seventies as found objects or whatever.

JAMES GLEESON: Do you feel in any way that there is a surreal element in your work, the operation of a sub-conscious element?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Oh, in some of the work, I think. Because, I mean, a lot of those things just happen fairly spontaneously or very intuitively. I mean, so there is a kind of subconscious at work. Because I surprise myself with some of things I make. And later when I look back on some of the work I've done, it has a different kind of presence to—I mean, it looks like someone else had done them almost.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, there seems to be, you know, quite a range of elements in your work. One of them is what I'd see as an operation of a subconscious, a (inaudible) element in it. Another which appears certainly in

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some of your work, a much more formal preoccupation, which is sort of quite anti-surrealist in theory at least.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right.

JAMES GLEESON: Now, at the moment, how do you stand, how do you feel? Have you reached any sort of point where you're dead committed to one direction or another, or is it still all?

ALEXANDER DANKO: What, in my present work?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, in my present work at the moment I'm not really making objects. I mean, if I do make objects they're usually for friends. Or there are very specific objects for a specific context, rather than having a big show of things or objects or artworks. Because the area that I'm more interested in at the moment is performance.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I've been sort of involved in that since '77, and that's been in collaboration with Joan Grounds.

JAMES GLEESON: Where have you (inaudible)?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, I mean, our collaboration really began when we made the film *We should call it the living room* in 1974-75. Then in '77 we were invited to the Paris Biennale, and we did a whole range of performances dealing with Australiana, Australians of political social issues, which we performed during the Biennale. Like at the Museum of Modern Art, Musée de Moderne Art, I can't pronounce the word, as well as performances on the streets. We went as two lawn bowlers and performed on like a map of Australia made of butcher's grass, a green map. We dealt with issues like the White Australia policy, uranium issue in Australia, conservation, as well as just presenting. Like in the gallery presented a whole range of slides, images of urban Australia, tourist images of Australia, uranium demonstrations. So it was like a travelogue in one sense about Australia.

JAMES GLEESON: How long did this go on? Was it a recurring thing over a period of days?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, look, yes. Well, the one we did at the gallery itself in Paris was a piece which lasted for four hours. Where we bowled on a very large map of Australia, actually playing proper games of bowls for four hours, including tea break. While we had a very large rear projection screen which was like a backdrop to the bowling which presented all the images of Australia. As

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well as that we had like a sort of sound backdrop which was a combination of two tape loops. One loop of sheep bleating and one tape loop of Aboriginal music, which then sort of phased in and out of each other, provided a very sort of eerie kind of, slightly tongue in cheek sound background as well.

JAMES GLEESON: I take it that the intention was not purely aesthetic. It was a multi-level sort of performance with political and social, all sorts of implications carved into it.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes. It was almost like a cultural sort of audio-visual presentation, but with other ramifications.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes. Was that the only performance you did there?

ALEXANDER DANKO: That was our only indoor piece. All the other pieces occurred on the streets. Because initially we just wanted to perform on the streets but seeing we were in the catalogue we were obliged to actually perform a number or, you know, one or two pieces within the actual gallery context of the Biennale. That was the work we came up with, which was a fairly long, dense work. It was like an installation where people could come and go. I mean, just like at an exposition where there's a display, people could stay and partake as long as they wanted to. Come back in half an hour or whatever.

JAMES GLEESON: What other Australians were there at that time?

ALEXANDER DANKO: At that time the other Australian was only Mike Parr.

JAMES GLEESON: Mike Parr.

ALEXANDER DANKO: We were the three who were invited by the Paris Biennale to participate.

JAMES GLEESON: That's the sort of direction that you feel that you're heading now? Performance.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, and its performance work that's still with the collaboration of Joan, so we work together on performance projects.

JAMES GLEESON: Does Joan Ground live in Sydney? I thought she was a Melbourne girl.

ALEXANDER DANKO: No, she lives here.

JAMES GLEESON: Does she?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I must talk to her too.

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ALEXANDER DANKO: Right.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, can we now look at some of the specific works we've got of yours? The first one I think is *Autorealism*. I'm afraid the photograph doesn't do anything for it, that transparency. But you remember that one, do you?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Oh, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: You told me this was the first of a series of ones that you did, this one dating from 1971, but that you returned to the same theme later on through '74 and '75, was it?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, that one was made in '71 within the context of the show *Heavy Aesthetic Content*.

JAMES GLEESON: They were shown at the Watters Gallery?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: July '74.

ALEXANDER DANKO: No, they were shown in 1970. I mean, that one was shown in 1971. That's when the show was on, *Heavy Aesthetic Content*.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Nineteen seventy-one. That was when it was purchased.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I can't remember how many. It was like a sort of unlimited edition as well. On the back of each one it stated who actually purchased them. So like the first person who had bought one would have just their name on the back. The second one would have their name and the previous person's, so it would build up in that way.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. How many were there in the—

ALEXANDER DANKO: I think there's a total of seven that I actually produced, and the final two were made in 1975 for a show called *Fragments 1971*.

JAMES GLEESON: Where was that show?

ALEXANDER DANKO: That was also at Watters Gallery.

JAMES GLEESON: You mentioned that they varied slightly in the wording or the way the words were (inaudible).

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ALEXANDER DANKO: Only very slightly in the construction. The ones in '71, the word *Autorealism* was an engraved plaque, the chrome engraved plaque that was actually screwed on to the mirror surface. In 1975 the word itself was actually sandblasted onto the mirror. That was the only difference.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. All the other ones, succeeding ones, were sandblasted?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, the ones which were produced in '75 were sandblasted, so I think only two or three were produced then.

JAMES GLEESON: This does relate to those other self-image works that you did in '71, does it?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Oh, only sort of very peripherally, I think.

JAMES GLEESON: Does it? Because it's meant to be a send up of anyone who's looking (inaudible).

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes. I mean, it's saying like 'That's your portrait'. I mean, it's like self-realism. I mean, it could be a sort of a layer of meanings to it if one wanted to really become sort of analytical about it. But, I mean, I just keep that fairly open in the work.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean, I leave that up to the viewer.

JAMES GLEESON: *Month of May*. Again '71, acrylic, wood, metal, plastic, bought from the Watters Gallery in '73; a fairly formal sort of statement in a way. Does that belong to a series?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, there were two. There was *Month of May* and *Chromium May*.

JAMES GLEESON: *Chromium May* I think is reproduced in Gary Catalano's article, isn't it?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Probably. I can't remember. Yes, I think it might be. Yes. That's in *Art in Australia*.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, the *Month of May*, like very gaily painted. It was more like a painting like in relief. It was like reference to merry month of May because it was like very—

JAMES GLEESON: Springlike?

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ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, it was very colourful. *Chromium May* was very grey silver, the same size, the same format, but instead of being sort of gaily sort of painted, it had a chromium plaque saying 'Chromium May'. Whereas in *Month of May* it just says 'Month of May', which has got lots of colour in it. It was just like a wet day. So it's like a Southern Hemisphere winter.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: And that was like a Northern Hemisphere winter. I mean, that was like the sort of thinking behind it.

JAMES GLEESON: Alex, in so many of your works: words, letters figure. Did you ever study lettering, or is it just the meaning of the thing that is important to you? Not the actual shape of the letters themselves as in, say, Jasper Johns.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Oh, no, I'm not interested in just in pure typography.

JAMES GLEESON: No.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I did lettering when I was at the art school. I mean, I'm sort of interested in typography, typefaces, layout and whatever.

JAMES GLEESON: But it's not the *raison d'être*?

ALEXANDER DANKO: No. Like, I mean, they're all full words. They're not just random letters.

JAMES GLEESON: No.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean, there are specific titles for specific objects.

JAMES GLEESON: So the meaning of the words is the important thing?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, it's the relationship of the phrase or the words or word to the object.

JAMES GLEESON: And the idea, yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, the sort of interaction between the word, phrase or whatever, to that object. Then the viewer reading, perceiving, and then those two things interacting in the mind of the viewer.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, good. *Heavy aesthetic content*. The work was the title of your show in '71. Purchased in '73, wood, chrome, Perspex, bolts, et cetera.

ALEXANDER DANKO: It was actually glass, that section in there.

JAMES GLEESON: Is it?

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ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes. It's not perspex. It's very heavy plate glass.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh. Well, that's a thing that has to be corrected. It's not perspex but plate glass.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, it's about half inch thick plate glass.

JAMES GLEESON: Fine. So we'll make that correction when we get the transcripts from the tape. Did you know John Armstrong's work at this time?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, I did.

JAMES GLEESON: Is there any sort of connection there?

ALEXANDER DANKO: No. I mean, it was just total coincidence. Like there was a piece called *Block bag* that I made in 1970 and he apparently made something which was similar to that. I can't remember what his was called. Then in this show in 1971 I made a piece which was sort of dedicated to him. It was called an *Arm strong*. It was a piece of log that was sawn off with two very heavy four by four sections of timber which were then screwed on to that cross section of wood with handles. There was a plaque with some woodgrain finish that was actually set in the grain of the wood which said an *Arm strong*. So you can actually lift it up (inaudible).

JAMES GLEESON: For a while at this time there was a kind of relationship where you used words and puns and just ordinary material that you found in lumber shops and so on, metal, hardware stores, not the fine art materials that's usually went into the making of art objects.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Oh, well, I mean, some of the pieces, like *Month of May* for instance, had a very painterly use of materials.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: But predominantly the show consisted—I mean, like *Heavy aesthetic content*—of prefabricated sections or materials. Most of the objects in that show were found in a very specific sort of way, like medical equipment or whatever. There were some objects which were sterilising trays, for instance, filing cabinets. But they all kind of fitted in around the context of *Heavy Aesthetic Content*, and plaques which were engraved. So most of the things were like prefabricated and then just assembled by me.

JAMES GLEESON: There's obviously a sort of ironic undertone to *Heavy aesthetic content* in this work and in the exhibition?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Oh, yes.

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JAMES GLEESON: You were querying the premise that art, you know, had this heavy aesthetic content.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes. It's sort of slight slang too, like it's an American sort of slang-heavy.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean, that was like a term that was being bandied about, you know, 'That work was really heavy', you know. So it was like slotting that in to the aesthetic, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Or laying the two along side each other, because at that time there was probably like still a fairly strong preoccupation with sort of formalism, formal painting and formal sculpture. A lot of people thought that my work was just a joke. So then I decided to extend that joke as far as possible.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I guess to aggravate people further. Because of my kind of nonsense approach or apparent nonsense approach to their kind of very serious attitude towards art making or art objects or whatever or aesthetics.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: But, I mean, the things I made were still, I mean, they were still aesthetic and still had their own aesthetic at the same time.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes. Well, that I think is a very beautiful formal piece.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right.

JAMES GLEESON: Even though it is in a way sending up the very thing it (inaudible).

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean, that's always the problem. Like when one's making art about art one's still making art.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: So it's like a conundrum, you know, in that sense.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes. It's a beauty, I like that one. *To picket* 1972, ceramic and timber. We haven't got a photograph of that. I don't know why. It's probably difficult to photograph, is it?

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ALEXANDER DANKO: I wouldn't have thought so. I mean, it's quite a large piece. I mean, it was predominantly made of ceramic material. I mean, it's all handmade sort of. It has two columns which were like fence posts but they've got a kind of brick veneer finish all out of clay; two clay bodies, one white, one red. So the piece would be about, oh, eight feet wide, I guess. There's a length of timber that spans the two upright members, and there are ceramic pickets which have been press moulded and they have written on them to the words, 'To picket'. They just are bolted to the timber member so they span that space in between the two columns.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: That's what it is.

JAMES GLEESON: Can it be taken apart?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, the whole thing unbolts.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, it unbolts.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Where did you make the ceramic posts?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, the whole piece was made at Sydney University Art Workshop.

JAMES GLEESON: They have a kiln there?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes. That piece was from a show which was an all ceramic show called Ideas, Words, Processes. I mean, that show followed after the show Heavy Aesthetic Content. I'm just trying to sort of fill in why I started working in ceramics. Is that okay?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, sure.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Because like in '71 most of the things I'd made were like pre-fabricated and I just assembled them. In '72 I decided to actually make everything myself as far as possible. So that's why I decided to work in ceramics. I mean, I had worked quite a lot in ceramics when I was a student and hadn't really worked in that medium for about two years. I was given some space at the art workshop to actually set up a small studio. So I actually worked there for almost a year assembling or actually building up a show which was all ceramic work. That piece comes from that.

JAMES GLEESON: The one the New South Wales Gallery have, is it *Yesterday, today and tomorrow*?

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ALEXANDER DANKO: That comes from that same show.

JAMES GLEESON: Same show. Well, they're fairly big pieces.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: The kiln must have been a pretty big one to fire those.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right. Well, like the piece *Yesterday, today and tomorrow* was done in sections.

JAMES GLEESON: Was it?

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean, it was built in one piece and then the piece was cut so you could actually then fire it, you know. Still a reasonably large kiln that would take up to four foot high pieces.

JAMES GLEESON: What about *To picket*, was that done in sections?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes. Well, like the columns were about four feet high by about a foot.

JAMES GLEESON: They weren't fired in a single piece, a single firing?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: They were?

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean, like the columns were fired in a single firing.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: The pickets were fired separately.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Then the whole thing was just bolted together.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. Now, the next one is just a pile of tricks with a *Trick bricks* in it. That was again Watters in '73.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, it was in '72. It was from the same show *Ideas, words, processes*.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, *Ideas, words, processes*.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes.

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JAMES GLEESON: We bought it in '73 from Watters.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right.

JAMES GLEESON: It was in the show of 1972.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right.

JAMES GLEESON: That was the year it was made.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Again at the workshop, the university workshop?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right. Well, I made about 200 of them and they were again press moulded. I used two plaster moulds which I pressed the clay in and knocked out the bricks. It was like a production line in the wax. I made about 200 of them. I also wanted to make a work that was quite cheap, because I sold them for \$2 each.

JAMES GLEESON: This arose, I imagine, from the association of the sound trick and brick (inaudible)?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, because that's the phonetic play.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. Now, this one I think needs a little bit of explanation. *Ian Bell will arrive in London, January 3rd 1974*. It's a book, an edition of two of which we have—

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, there are two editions of 20.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean like two editions of 10 in each. So edition one had something like 16. You got 17 20.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: So that there was a total of 20 that were made.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, but in two separate editions.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes, edition one and edition two.

JAMES GLEESON: Was there any factual difference between edition one and edition two.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Oh, only just the binding.

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JAMES GLEESON: I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: The second lot of binding was red; the first binding was black.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. So ours comes from the second lot.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Right. But it's the same thing inside. The piece consisted of, well, Ian Bell was like a very old childhood friend of mine who was going to London at that time. He was going over there to study. I found out. Well, he wrote me a letter saying he was going in about August '73. So I actually started putting together this journal as a gift for him, which then became like a sort of notebook for reminiscences about our past, my own past. Like a sort of a diary and notation book. It sort of had its very kind of specific structure where I set a task for myself to actually write a page a day and take a photograph a day. It was like a photograph of anything that sort of interested me on that day. The written page, yes, it was like a notebook. I mean, it sort of covered a whole range of sort of ideas, experiences, whatever, reminiscences et cetera.

JAMES GLEESON: Would you say that this is as close as you ever come to a truly conceptual work? Or is it far too personal?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, I think it's more personal. I mean, it sort of comes out of that sort of area of so-called conceptual art but I don't place it within that.

JAMES GLEESON: No.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean, I just place it as a kind of document about my life at that time, which deals with my life in a very sort of open-ended sort of way, almost sort of quite romantic.

JAMES GLEESON: You regard it as a work of art rather than, say, as a journal or a diary? You conceived it as a work of art?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Yes. I mean, it was conceived in that context.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

ALEXANDER DANKO: I mean, it becomes a work of art.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. Well, Alex, I think that covers it pretty well, unless there's anything else, you know, you'd like to add, any other ideas you'd like to talk about, about your work or (inaudible).

ALEXANDER DANKO: No, I think that probably covers it quite well at the moment.

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JAMES GLEESON: Alex, Alexander Danko, where does that name come from? What's your family background? What country are you from?

ALEXANDER DANKO: Well, my parents are from the Ukraine. Yes. I mean, they came out here in 1947.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Just after the war.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, thank you very much. I think that does cover it very well.

ALEXANDER DANKO: Okay. Right.