p h o e n i x n e w s

In the first of a planned series of interviews, I spoke with long standing member and chair of Phoenix, Martin Denyer. You can read our conversation below.
If you would like to interview another member, or be interviewed yourself, please get in touch.

Have you always lived in London?
I grew up in Hertfordshire but moved to London when I was about seventeen because I loved it. And nearly always in Hackney and Stoke Newington. I started off in in a private rented house which I shared with a few others, and I squatted for a bit as well. There's been massive change in Hackney, its posh now - it used to be a lot rougher, I got mugged a couple of times back then

Do you identify as a Londoner?
Yeah I do

What were you working as at that time?
I was a university lecturer for 14 years, I taught critical and contextual studies for fine art, at Middlesex, Goldsmiths and University of Hertfordshire. I enjoyed it and I do miss it. My first degree is in History of Art and my MA is in Visual Culture at Middlesex where they asked me to stay on and teach after I graduated. Then I got work at Goldsmiths and at Hertfordshire University.
[It spills over into your life,] I was doing quite a lot of psychoanalytic theory, stuff to do with identity, post structural philosophy and weaved that into a criticism of art

Do you have a favourite artist?
Oh I've got a few. I love Andy Warhol, and a lot of conceptual artists, I'm big into that. That's one of the reasons I taught at Goldsmiths, they were very interested in conceptual art. I sent my CV out to loads of places and Goldsmiths rang me up and offered me job. I thought it was a friend taking the piss at first and then the guy said I genuinely am the head of critical theory at Goldsmiths - could you start on Monday?

How did you get involved with Phoenix? How long have you been a member?
I'd been asked to leave a private rented house, the woman was selling it and kicked us all out. I knew someone who was already in Phoenix and I got in touch and joined in 1997. I moved into Comberton Road which happened to be with someone I knew already, and then I was offered my own place in Mare street where I lived in a one bed flat for a couple of years.

How long have you been chair of Phoenix?
For about five or six years - I'd already been on Man Com and Dev Com and I knew about the processes, about what was going on. So I drifted in because of that. My role is making sure meetings run smoothly, making sure everyone gets a chance to speak.

How do you see the future of the co-op?
We've been buying a few properties in recent years.We've sold a couple of places that became empty by accident (eg Reighton road for £1.1 million) which means we've been able to buy properties without mortgages. We can then borrow against these in future to buy properties with mortgages. We recently bought a two bed flat in hackney without a mortgage, so in couple of years when we need to develop we can mortgage it and buy on that. We are always thinking for the future. I live in a co-op owned house and myself and the others who live there have agreed to move so we'll have enough money in reserve from the sale of that (valued at £950,000) to buy two or three two-bed flats. As long as I'm rehoused in Hackney I'm happy.

Are you scared about the future of Phoenix?
I am a bit scared for the future, a lot of our short-life places are due for hand-back quite soon, which means we may be unable to re-house some very good and active members of the co-op.

Do you like living in a cooperative?
Yes, for the sense of community.

What makes a good member?
Being active.

What makes a good leader?
Well I don't see myself as a leader, more of a facilitator of conversation and participation. I don't accept the role of chair as a leadership position. The same goes for Colin's role, he is not necessarily a leader but he is supremely good at his job. He's a people person and really understands the members.

If you could have an agenda for Phoenix, what would it be?
More secure housing.

Quick fire questions

Who are your heroes?w
I don't know if I've got any heroes.

What's the last book you read?
I am reading a book of poetry by Benjamin Zephaniah called City Psalms.

The last record you listened to?
Probably David Bowie.

Favourite food?
I like curry - vegetarian though, I haven't eaten meat for 35 years.

Who would you like to interview next?
An active member.

Any questions or anything else you'd like to add?
No…to be honest I was dreading this a bit but it went better than I thought.

self portrait by Andy Warhol

The Fall of the House of Fitzgerald

Me, Horsemouth & Catastro/fille have been having fun doing this home-made video. When I found out that my block was being handed back for demolition, I wanted to preserve on film the mural on my living room wall, a reproduction of Kandinsky's Composition VIII. "Music is the ultimate teacher" said Kandinsky and this is our dancing about architecture project. The destruction of a piece of architecture, a Tower block in the East End of London that has been housing over 100 people across 19 floors over the decades since the 70ies. We made this because we believe The Fall of the House of Fitzgerald should not pass unnoticed. Extra special thanks to the one and only Catastro/fille!

- Enza Ascione

[follow the link to watch]

Andrew Coram's TOP TRACKS number 8

Another curated collection of oddities, [listen to it here]

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vegetable risotto

recipe from Graham Wright

I got this recipe whilst in Occupy in 2011 and fed 70 people with several helpings for almost nothing. It has more protein than steak giving you back all the brain food amines as well as being good for your mood and digestive system.
It is also very versatile and can be served with any other dish.A simple base dish of wholegrain/pulses with added cooked and raw vegetables to make it colourful, tasty and nutrient rich. Inspired by Mujadarra, a Middle Eastern dish
Will keep in the fridge for 4 days..

Ingredients:
· Short grain rown rice and/or brown Basmati Rice
· Barley
· Spelt
· Puy lentils or Brown lentils (whole lentils with skins on rather than the orange ones)
· Seaweed: Wakame, sea salad or other seaweed/sea vegetables are added chopped to the grain and lentils mix (very cheap from Chinese supermarkets). This makes the dish very mineral- and flavour rich.
· bay leaves
· garlic
· chopped fresh herbs
· extra virgin olive oil
· cooked and raw veg of your choice

Put roughly equal amounts of grains into saucepan, along with some seaweed, bay leaves and fresh crushed garlic cloves.
Addabout double the water, cover and simmer very gently for about 30-40 mins.
Add salt and pepper.
Check half-way that the water has not boiled away, and add a little more if necessary. It should be completely
absorbed once the grains are cooked. Check that the lentils are soft.
Before serving add large handful of chopped parsley or coriander
Add Extra Virgin Olive oil and lemon juice to make the dish juicy.
Add chopped red onion or more fresh crushed garlic and lemon juice. Delicious with goats' cheese or sardines too.
Make with other small beans and grains – they all cook at about the same rate
Spelt an ancient form of wheat with a less indigestible form of gluten

Quinoa SAmerican grain/seed, delicious, best protein and most nutritious seed known
Barley whole barley is slightly preferable to pearl, which is polished with some of the husk removed
Millet and rye.
Aduki beans and mung beans.
Bigger beans need soaking overnight eg. cannellini, chick peas, flageolets, butter beans, etc. You can use tins, but rinse the beans, if no time to soak. To cook soaked beans – add garlic etc as above for lots of
flavour – and add much more water to cover well. Bring to boil and simmer for at 40-60 mins or until soft

The secret is in the dry seaweed which you can get from any ethnic Chinese shop for £1.69. It replenishes the serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine and epinephrine needed by the brain to function properly. The slow moving fibre in the grains and vegetables etc. aids the digestive system. Stools are firm and light and you won't need toilet paper. The feel good factor lasts several days!

as ever, please direct any contributions (opinion, events, horoscopes, recipes, poetry, recommendations, manifestos etc) to emmajrock@hotmail.com
See you in December...