

The Oxford Times

Trailing Conversations: Art Jericho

10:45am Thursday 12th February 2009

Subtle, superbly creative, witty and engaging, this exhibition is deceptively compact, indeed minimalist on first sight, disguising the immense number of artefacts and the range of media involved.

It is based on words and phrases that artist Karien van Assendelft has collected over the past 12 years, and in part, owes its origin to the legacy of blank index cards van Assendelft inherited from her collector (hoarder) grandfather, and on which she records what she hears: on public transport, in the street and in bars and cafes. These snippets of conversation speak volumes of the person who has said them and of the context in which they are said.

Van Assendelft has lived and worked in Oxford for the last two years and much of the work uses the language and preoccupations of the city's varied denizens, as reflected in the title of the exhibition. One Oxford piece provides three simple images: index cards, wall-mounted, and on each in a fading old-fashioned typeface written: "She gets like so, you know."

Unusual and welcome is the invitation to actually become part of the installations in the exhibition, by physically entering into the space, sitting on chairs and turning pages.

The largest installation comprises a table complete with ancient typewriter, chair and desk light, with a framed statement on the table, "I think I'd know normal if I saw it," providing a questioning antithesis to the other artefacts. These include box files filled with written words that paint a series of vivid pictures, and through which one is invited to rummage. In the background a sound recording runs of discreet shuffling, gentle coughing that is almost reverential, and the occasional scrape of a chair. This is an actual recording made in one of Oxford's academic libraries.

"Pigeons just don't care anymore" (above) was overheard on London's South Bank. By setting it on a slightly worse for wear Jericho windowsill, van Assendelft opens it up to an intriguing range of interpretations.

This is a large exhibition, so do allow time to explore it to the full and give yourself time to engage in your own conversations with it.

The exhibition is at Art Jericho, Oxford, and is open Wednesday-Saturday 10am-5 pm, and continues until February 27.

Anne James

[Back](#)