Introduction: Community Arts? Learning from the Legacy of Artists' Social Initiatives

Andrea Phillips

Community Arts? conference, Black-E, Liverpool Biennial, 2015. Photo by Charlotte Horn.

The conference Community Arts? Learning from the Legacy of Artists' Social Initiatives took place in November 2015. It sought to position ongoing and historical projects made by artists with and alongside communities in the context of contemporary social engagement discourse. In developing the conference, Sally Tallant, myself and our co-workers at Liverpool Biennial and the Black-E, Liverpool, wished to address an endemic problem within the arts which is enabled by three things in particular: firstly, the post-relational aesthetics reinvention of subject-object connections within the arts under the terms of new forms of utopian communicability rendered both investable, collectable and fashionable; secondly, the desperate enforcement of participatory practices by funding bodies under pressure to justify in governmentalised terms their spend on the otherwise elite arts in the UK context; and, thirdly, the erasure of the term 'community' within artistic, art theoretical and more general discourse and practice over the past 20 years. We recognise that there are many practitioners – some of whom were able to join us for the event – who recognise and continue to practice within this composite problem. We also mark the strong affiliation with feminist struggles, anti-racist campaigns and demands for intersectional recognition and acceptance that the Community Arts movement in the UK supported, drew inspiration from and continues to struggle within today.

The institutionalisation of participation and engagement is now endemic within the structure of and financial organisation of arts institutions. Across the world, museums, galleries and biennials invite artists or handle artistic initiatives for the purpose of shaping their publics into temporary, qualifiable and quantifiable community. The banalisation of community is pervasive within the cultural industries in the UK as elsewhere – a banalisation rendered complete through the hegemony of that which Wendy Brown recognises as the governmentalisation of 'good practice' within the structure of the arts[1]. A banalisation, qualification and quantification demanded by state funding agencies and, increasingly, private patrons.

At the heart of this banalisation – which must be understood as a political investment – is the misrecognition of the subject of its intent – the participant. Here social engagement in the arts not only fulfils private and public criteria of inclusion (remember the shift from exclusion to inclusion in

mainstream British rhetoric?) but also maintains – does not disrupt at all – the modes through which the person – the participant-subject – is utilised within a scheme that is entirely wrought through European histories of benevolent liberal governmentalisation. As Isabell Lorey says, '"Western man" has to learn to have a body that is not dependent on particular conditions of existence, which means he must learn that "his" precariousness assumes different extents that he can influence. [...] Through attending to what is one's own, the ties to others are dissolved, relational difference is segmented. Individualisation is the precondition for the Western liberal governing of everyone's body and self'[2]. Perhaps most frightening is the export of this model at a global scale as increasingly states take up the discourse and practice of participation in the spread of cultural industrial models for the purposes of city branding and neo-financial practices of community investment.

This market relation needs to be examined carefully, for it is the practice that renders Community Arts a brand and branch of liberalism, despite the criticisms of its participant-makers. Our understanding of the Community Arts movement is the exact and angry opposite of this.

What is another rendering of community? Those people that live and work alongside us, physically and virtually. Those people who we affiliate with in different ways, as well as those people we find difficult, have different experiences and lives to us.

Community – rendered explicit and political by writers such as Judith Butler and Silvia Federici – includes our own bodies, whether we be artists, curators, museum directors or other workers, in the development of forms of cultural facilitation. Community includes the fight for local schools, local housing, as well as global justice. This understanding of community – one that has been apprehended across decades by many uncelebrated practitioners – is a direct critique of cultural entrepreneurial community, fashioned in eventual forms of celebration in hierarchies of anticipation and reception.

But community – and here is the configuration that was troubling for our conference – is both a permanent and a transient concept. We know that communities are historically produced (indeed many Community Arts projects were and are founded on the rights of such communities, especially when they are threatened). We also know and experience communities that form around sites and issues, matters of concern, then dissipate. We know that communities are often the strength of temporary agency formation. Yet the contradiction – often conflictual – between temporary and more stable concepts of community comes to be questioned (made questionable) when the facilitation of temporary community is done by artists and arts institutions, through artistic intervention that is misunderstood in inception by parties both within and without, misaligned, ignored, antagonised or otherwise rendered misleading in forms of artistic, curatorial and institutional intervention.

We can say that Community Arts – and specifically the Community Arts movement of the 1970s and 1980s in the UK – sits at the site of this uncomfortable facilitation. Importantly – and missing from many contemporary practices of relational and so-called engaged artistic and curatorial initiatives – is the deep and careful understanding of the power and autonomy embedded in facilitation itself. I have politically foundational, exhilarating and uncomfortable memories of working in Community Arts in the late 1980s and early 1990s, at The Rotherhithe Theatre Workshop, with The Theatre of Public Works, with writers and theatre-makers Ewan Forster and Chris Heighes. However researched and connected, I was always to some extent working as a privileged visitor to the site of others (a poor Devon ex-fishing community, a traveller's site under the Hammersmith flyover, in the Peak Freans Biscuit Factory, Bermondsey, for example). Working across huge cultural divides. Working in solidarity. Learning to be wrong a lot of the time.

The Community Arts practices that we discussed at the conference were not and are not glamorous and they are not invested in the accrual of cultural capital, though must now learn the game to survive. We were privileged and delighted to be joined by practitioners who work with the difficulties – the necessary conflicts - of community work. People whose practices are long term investments in sites of political and

social struggle, whose focus is less on the production of aesthetic outcomes (although their processes are always driven by the skills and tools of artistic and curatorial making) than on the care for the ecologies of celebration, commemoration, demand and desire of those people with whom they form often long term alliances – those people including ourselves.

Videos: ***Community Arts? Learning from the Legacy of Artists' Social Initiatives***

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[1] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), p.13.
[2] Isabell Lorey, State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 25-6.

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Pass the Parcel: Art, Agency, Culture and Community

Nina Edge

Contravision: Repeat patterns for Condemned Housing. Phase 1: Wallpapers for the Dispossessed. Nina Edge Liverpool Biennial Fringe 2016. Photo: Tom Lox.

Liverpool Biennial's 2015 Community Arts conference offered lots of people a ten-minute speaking slot. In some presentations, the organiser's goal for an artist to build community would be warm and clear. In others, artists would electrify groups, and occasionally a community's ability to build an artist would come through like light through a cloud. Community Arts is an area of work that at its best, catalyses creative action - and at its worst, exploits and makes fools of us all. The most successful and admired work I've made in the field falls outside the existing frameworks and expectations of Community Art. Its scope, longevity and ambition went beyond anything facilitated by arts administrators and well beyond anything I imagined possible.

Guest List

Much has been said about Community Arts, often derided as not being a fitting area of work for serious artists. In the 1980s and 1990s, I was cautioned by curators and artists to avoid getting involved; it would reduce my value, it wasn't artwork, it was social work. It would prevent me making serious work, they said. If I made work with communities it would downgrade my status, and doors to the higher institutions of art would slam in my face. Forever. Such critics saw art practice as a kind of exclusive club with a strict door policy. For them, art had a particular audience: entitled, educated people approved by the gatekeepers of creative activity. The cutters of the curranty cake of cultural resources. It all felt a bit limiting to artists like myself who saw creative practice as a party everyone was invited to.

It turned out that the mission of Community Arts was limited in its own way too. Its stated intent - to bring production resources to 'ordinary' people - seemed simple enough. But what artists and the public could do with these resources was tempered by the administration's need to court sponsors, funders and local big-wigs and the press. So a community access programme was desirable when it was celebratory and photogenic, but much less so when it was radical and provocative. Challenging the status quo or fostering sedition were not permitted, regardless of what was being shown in the main programme. If it did open opportunities for 'ordinary' people, it was an opportunity restrained by PR considerations.

The selection of groups for inclusion in Community Art projects was made to serve many needs - just

not necessarily (or in my experience, not often) the needs of the communities selected. The soft social messaging that community projects offered promoters of health and equality is not necessarily how host groups would invest their cultural resources - given the choice. If chosen, host communities were confined to having a slight influence i.e. a-bit-of-a-say in an artwork, and occasionally to handle materials and have a-bit-of-a-go at something. Works were usually devised and delivered by an administrator and their professional artist(s) in response to a brief limited by the interest of the funder. My proposal that public arts spending should inevitably belong to the people is popular with the people, but not at all popular with administrations who are inevitably invested in their role of arts professional or social benefactor. More like doling out pocket money and ice cream, less like a society reaching consensus about how resources are used. The cake and the knife are kept out of reach.

Since earnings for artists were scarce, the field saw artists and organisations chasing small amounts of money using bold claims to plant projects amongst the least powerful groups in society. Groups for whom art was not always a huge concern. Slowly but surely, though, socially engaged practitioners have refined their trade, or cried trying. The sheer volume, invention and vigour of work in the field has impacted critical frameworks, so respect - and even accolades - have followed. The nomination and eventual award of the Turner Prize to Assemble in 2015 broke the mould by recognising a collective of architects, designers and artists who had been hired by the Granby community in Liverpool 8 to essentially deliver a design brief. The turning of the Turner prize is a significant gesture towards socially engaged practice, although Assemble appeared primarily to offer a socially engaged architecture and design practice at the time of their nomination. They were, after all, delivering costed architectural plans to their clients brief - and didn't necessarily view their own practice as art. Unusually, their clients were many: at least a community land trust, a wider district community, and a series of cash or in-kind benefactors. The community is hugely significant in this award. They are the force that protected the Granby houses from demolition, activated the site creatively and initiated an extraordinary process of area renewal following decades of failure by professional service providers. Together, they are the rightful winners.

With rare exceptions, like Granby, 'chosen' communities are recipients of a benevolence; Community Art is a 'gift' from outsiders. Outsiders who define the scope of creative activity, accept or deny access to participants, and control the criteria for evaluation. The possibility that communities have the capacity to initiate and create esteemed projects is confirmed in both Granby and the Welsh Streets both in Liverpool 8 in ground taking works that seem remote from schemes concerned with doing good or splashing the art-wash for organisations who recognise the PR potential for creative projects. Neither purveyors of the food parcel model of art-provision for the culturally hungry, or traders in the Fine-ar--with-a-capital-...F that pretends no hunger, foresaw the Turner Prize landing here, especially not the liberal elite who manage art resources, and who write and talk about art on behalf of society (Society and not Community).

Getting warmed up for the Brouhaha International Festival, carnival party on the corner of Kelvin Grove, 2013. Photo: Nina Edge.

House Rules

Self-directed creative communities like Granby are rare or at least rarely spoken of. There is much unsaid about the arena that simultaneously invites, values and depends on participation, whilst controlling, rationing, and patronising the recipients. Central to the administrative behaviour is the need to define acceptable content, corral expectations, and maintain control of resources. The administrative bodies that enable community programmes (or inclusion or outreach work) can be required to deliver to agendas beyond, and sometimes in conflict with, the agenda of the participating communities. For example, the administrative agendas of enacting-equality-by-performing-race, or crime reduction, or say health education, may have secured the resources that both seed and control creative activities. It is taken as read that the interests of the artist, the community and the delivering organisation are aligned. It is barely imagined that communities have an agenda or artistic proposition of their own. Arguably, community agencies and their artists depend on the poverty of the populations they work amongst, since other people's poverty is what levers in funds to enable the gifting of an art opportunity. Community Art might be deprivation dependent.

Whilst the administering sector seems embarrassed to acknowledge this reality, host communities readily communicate about the core inequities and tensions thrown up by the honey-pot that their poverty provides for the busy ambition of others. Liverpool Biennial saw their trestle tables overturned at their 2009 Happy City conference in Bootle, when access to a community food garden initiated by the organisation approached closure. The community felt used. My own technician was thrown into the Leeds and Liverpool canal whilst installing work for an MDI Year of the Artist commission one bright summer morning in 2000. The community felt suspicious. Nobody was hurt in either case. Maybe an injury or

manifest loss would have been preferable. Maybe then we would have had to reflect on the imposition and talk. The silence around such instances echoes other silences around art. The general lack of security, lack of resources, and lack of status in the arts produces an environment where self-criticism is being drowned out by self-congratulation.

Can the essentially exploitative dynamic of socially engaged art, dropped in like food parcels, be disputed in those (albeit rare) cases where artists are actually members of communities? The notion that communities might produce, co-opt or integrate artists comes as no surprise to artists who are the interfacing workers, the lubricant between social enterprises, public authorities and art institutions - all of whom are keen to trumpet how much work they do 'in the community'.

Artists' low incomes and insecure lifestyles make them in some small respects similar to the communities where they are sent, or live and work. Artists, and the communities they work with, are often on a similar band of the food chain. Curators, academics, arts administrators, critics and members of the press are seen more often at the more glamorous end of the scale where the wine and canapés are found, not so much in the church halls, community centres and clubs where the hospitality is loving, but more towards the Best-In coffee and Rich Tea biscuit end of the catering scale. There is a lack of discourse and integration around art and community in many of the organisations I have worked with. Linking the two terms 'community' and 'art' presents more a predicament and less a promise of power sharing.

Street Parties

Nina Edge, *Sold Down The River* performance, 1995. Film still: Sandi Hughes.

Sometimes, rarely but fabulously, a project achieves heightened power among the communities who provoke, collaborate, participate or watch it. In the 1995 Bluecoat Live Art Commission *S*old Down the River*,* more than a hundred people, young and old from all over Liverpool effectively *became* the artwork, watched by hundreds more. The work resonated. People wanted to be in it, organise it, add to it, come to it, record and recount it. Fifteen years later, when the documentation of the event was shown at

the Bluecoat Democratic Promenade show, participants remembered it and came to see the film. It was understood by viewers and participants because it encompassed their concerns, used commonly understood symbols and engendered a kind of collective understanding.

And no - it wasn't funded as a Community Artwork, it was funded as a live artwork by ACE Live Art and commissioned by the Bluecoat. We burnt waxed cash and 8 kg of frankincense, coated coats in cocaine wraps, put the 'flag men' in slave punishment collars, and launched corpses in Salt House dock. Images that resonate with the community don't necessarily attract community funding. Anyway, the performers, composers, dancers and designers who made Sold Down The River; A Post-Betrayed Ritual for a Post-Industrial City were not viewed as a community, not a single community – because they were like all citizens united in some respects and divided in others. They were a matching set of communities though united by their shared experience, their shared recognition of betrayal. Street Vimbuza complete with enduring archetypes. This was not pretty Mass.

Let's define a community as a cluster of interest around something shared, like a specific location, or experience, or value system. Work that might impress a community of interest can at the same time be viewed lowly, or absurd, by mainstream commentators, by the Grand Masters of the Art World. Particularly if the medium, as well as the community, is viewed as low-status or marginal. How does this impact the practitioner's currency, their value in a market place?

Does the status and earnings of artists whose behaviour is socially-orientated really diminish, like other workers whose practice is primarily social, public and practical, workers like nursery teachers, nurses and care workers? Locating their practice around their communities has been a practical solution for artists faced with an art market that would only ever provide a very good income. Artists working outside of the global Art Market may view the whole of society as their as their audience, rather than, the art world alone. They have created economies where more artists involve more of the the public on projects for which the artists may be paid. Artists working outside of the global Art Market may view the whole of society as their as their audience, rather than, the art world alone. They have created economies where more artists involve more of the the public on projects for which the artists may be paid. Usually poorly paid. Paid less than minimum wage as self-employed workers, and afforded social status on a level somewhere around volunteer, or student. The status of the socially engaged artist might be further diminished if their practice is too engaged with social action and approaches known political boat-rocking taboos.

As predicted by those who cautioned me about devaluing my personal cultural currency, my status, earnings and location in the cannon are all insecure even though my work has apparently been predictive, influential or thought-leading stuff. I chose to ignore the warnings and joined lots of big community parties rather than join the single snaking queue of an exclusive culture club, to which I and other socially engaged artists might be refused entry. With the passing of time, producing art which is enmeshed with communities has come with less of a devaluing forfeit. Ideas espoused decades ago are valued differently now. This is reflected in the Turner Prize award mentioned already and in funding streams like Awards for All, a Big Lottery Fund scheme designed to support grassroots and community activity. Also reflected is the stubborn low status of the area – grants are between £300 and £10,000. The will to empower creative communities is spread pretty thin. In State schools, especially in Academies where the battle for access really starts, creative subjects have all but been dismissed as folly, with little opposition from either the up-market art stars, community practitioners or public galleries. A community programme is now of course an ingrained and important strand of activity at publicly funded galleries. If artists with a socially engaged practice didn't access the higher reaches of the exclusive culture club, they may well have met the same people. Their own open door policies as community creatives has meant that falling art stars are caught on their way down - and invited in for a Rich Tea.

Door Policy

West Close Garden, community design Nina Edge and Green Youth Connexion. Ceramic production by David Mackie. Cardiff Bay, 1993. Photo: Nina Edge.

In 1988 Butetown, previously known as Tiger Bay, was about to be renamed Cardiff Bay. The city's slumbering coal docks were waking. One of the first portents of the investment to come was the appearance of public art, commissioned as a part of the re-branding process. West Close in Tiger Bay a.k.a. Butetown a.k.a. Cardiff Bay was home to the Green Youth Connexion. A group of teenage girls who had developed an exchange with me as children, via Sol Jorgenson at U-Print at Chapter Arts Centre, which was a kind of outpost of London's Cameraworks. We did printing workshops in the old slipper baths, reassigned as a Cultural Education Centre by a group of Welsh Rastafarians - the Inited Idren of Israel. The Green Youth girls, their extended families and I became friends during years of creative activity. We added textiles projects and carnival design to our activities and somehow I was living there and involved in the weddings, funerals, carnivals, election campaigns, picnics, and dances of everyday life. Three years into this exchange, a youth worker asked Green Connexion girls how they'd improve their environment. They said they'd invite me to join the group and take it from there. As far as they were concerned, they had a neighbourhood artist - like they had a hairdresser, a cook and a singer. They had no interest in approaching other artists. So the administration bent to the gentle insistence of the young women, who in turn knew and pursued the aims of their wider community. Normal recruitment, tender and selection processes were adapted or abandoned by sympathetic youth and arts trust workers. So via a bunch of teenage girls, the dock's community negotiated control of the site, the shortlist and the artist's selection. Although offered a window box and planters scale of project, we went onto produce a sizeable environmental improvement project on a vacant lot in a council estate. The original budget of about £200 was never going to be enough for the ambitions of the local people. We spent about £170k. I did the community liaison and workshops,

produced concept design drawings and took them out for public consultation. Then, working with local potter David Makie we turned an idea into West Close Garden, a place to show off, sit, play, chew ghat, smoke weed and meet. The 42 Nations who formed the docks community were traceable in the work. Many years later, my description for this kind of collision is Community Curated.

Gatecrashers

As well as commissioning permanent public realm and re-branding art works, regeneration companies routinely hire Community Artists for targeted direct contact with communities where regeneration plans are afoot. Artists are brought in to aid goodwill, engender trust, involve people, and mediate change, as much as to make art. The kind of art that might change perceptions of an area, adorn the pages of an annual report, be used in a Public Inquiry or add value to property development. Artist's residencies on regeneration projects have documented environments destined for destruction, used demolition spoil for building artwork, and collected The Hopes of a neighbourhood. The Fears though? Not so much.

The creative agenda for Community Art projects funded by the regenerist will likely differ from that of the local artists or residents. One is primarily concerned with promoting a Promised Land, the other is focused on surviving the external investment, and the social cleansing or gentrification that might come with it. The task of shining a light on the displacement and dismay of the people designed out of post-demolition development is not going to be supported by the developers and regeneration officials. Such visions run contrary to the interests of the development partnerships. By chance, I joined one of many communities destined for demolition in 2004, when my home and neighbourhood in Liverpool were scheduled for destruction. I translated my experience as a piece of human spoil into an art work that was appreciated by the local community and others like it. It was reviewed in the art press, covered in the academic press and was toured in a North of England textile exhibition. The work Nothing Is Private - a net curtain with audience activated security lighting was shown and promoted as part of Liverpool Independents Biennial in 2006. So it straddled many communities and resonated in multiple contexts. It was shown in the front window of my home.

Nina Edge, *Nothing Is Private, 40 Kelvin Grove in the* Welsh Streets, Liverpool, 2006. Photo: Peter Carr.

Nina Edge, *Nothing Is Private, 40 Kelving Grove in the* Welsh Streets, Liverpool, 2006. Photo: Peter Haggerty.

I live over the road from Granby in an area similarly blighted by failed regeneration schemes and where another grassroots campaign has succeeded in rescuing homes from the bulldozers. When my home and studio in Liverpool's Welsh Streets was threatened with demolition in a regeneration area, the Compulsory Purchase Orders did actually come with the sweetener of an official artist-in-residence, Moira Kenny, who came and worked in an empty house in Powis Street for a number of weeks in June 2006.

The residency, funded by the local Housing Market Renewal (HMR) company New Heartlands and their partners Plus Dane, took place in an empty corner shop on the contested site. Applications for the post were filtered. I was forbidden from tendering for the official Welsh Streets residency, despite being a Welsh Streets resident and an artist. As secretary and spokesperson for the local campaign group seeking alternatives to demolition, I had a national media profile, my opinions were known, and the protagonists of the scheme presumably needed to prevent me from articulating dissent amongst a local audience. In protest, a reputable local Community Art group refused to apply for it themselves as a response to my exclusion. So they filtered themselves out in solidarity. A closed tender process selected an artist from outside the area, but inside the arts community, who came and made artwork in Powis St. I showed my work concurrently with her official Welsh Streets residency work as part of Liverpool Independents Biennial 2006. I suppose I effectively infiltrated the programme of creative work visible in the district, made a local dimension available and overcame the ban by simply being a) a resident and b) an artist. The work - the net curtain - received critical acclaim expounding the loss of privacy and personal autonomy faced by the little people when confronted with big plans. Its performative aspect (the work exposed the household to the street by lighting them) was as uncomfortable for the viewer as it was for the viewed. Rather than sit by and become the invisible Welsh Streets resident artist passed over by powerful external interests, I created a piece that engineered super visibility. Without a doubt I was emboldened by the support of my community.

The *Nothing is Private* net was made and toured as part of the Mechanical Drawing exhibition

produced by the Embroidery Department at Manchester Metropolitan University. So it was enabled by another community: the embroiderers, textile makers, lace workers and academics in the North West who view me as a radical textile artist, and a bona fide member of their community. So they visited too, traveling to the Welsh Streets mostly from the North. I put out a visitor's book and people wrote in it, thus becoming part of the archive of commentary about the streets, the houses. A new dimension was added to the cultural tourism package that Liverpool is so proud of: the ghetto tourism of the tinned-up terraces. They were followed by Heritage tourists, UNESCO walking tours, Jane's Walk town planners, law and social science departments, urbanists, artists, drama, art and composition students, historians, archivists, architects and journalists, TV crews and animators. All visited the Welsh Streets and as campaign spokesperson I spoke with them all. In 2016, Samson Kambalu filmed in the Welsh Streets for a new commission that was presented as part of Liverpool Biennial 2016. He walks in the footsteps of numerous photographers, among them Mark Loudon & Sandy Volz (commissioned by Welsh Streets Home Group), Rob Bremner, Peter Carr, Peter Haggerty and Ciara Leeming, who included us in her comprehensive photographic journal of the HMR process. Kambalu will join countless press photographers, TV camera men and bloggers. All welcome, all walking the wasted Welshies, pointing cameras at our homes while we twitch our nets.

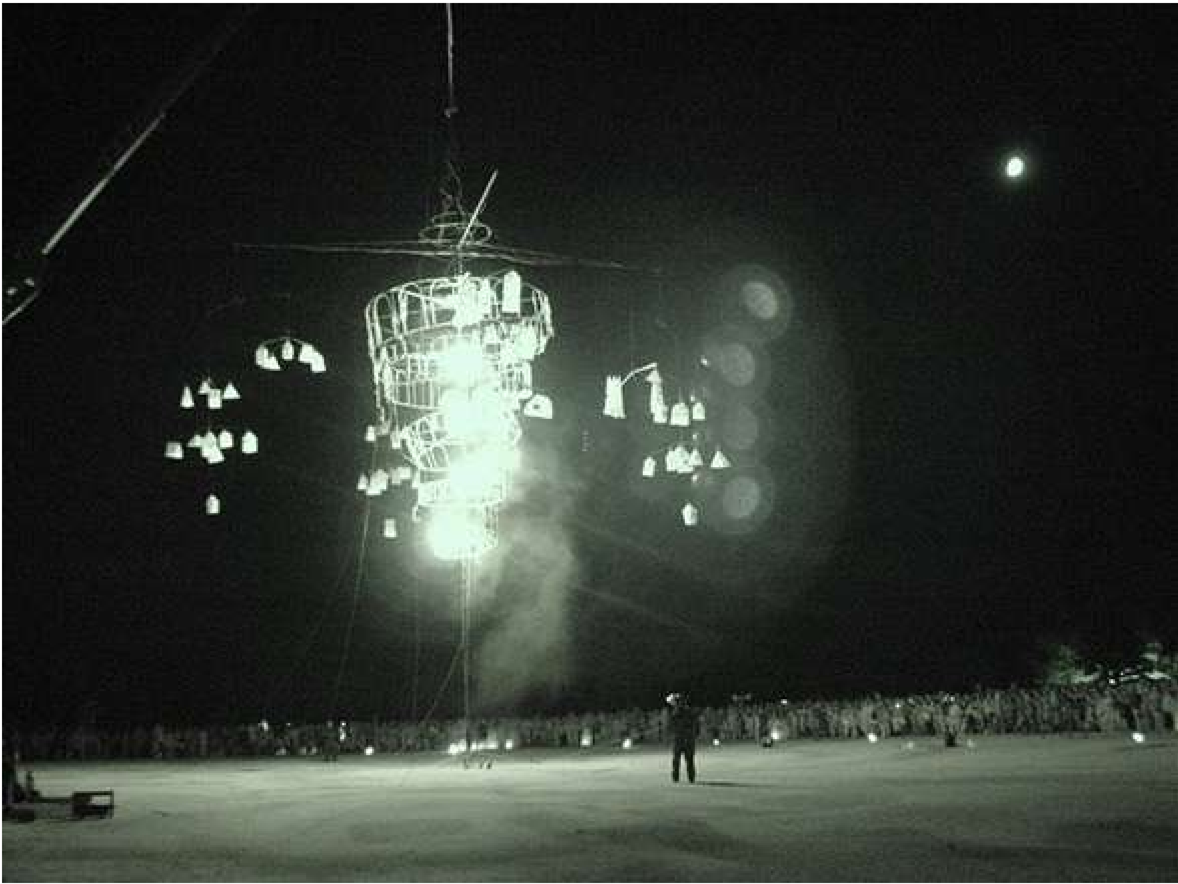
And me, I've taken thousands of photographs here too, because as campaign spokesperson, I found that a picture speaks a thousand tears.

The net curtain *Nothing Is Private* is a direct action that harnessed art as both a shield and a decoder in a war of information. It can be contextualised among other cultural resistances that re-negotiate imposed narratives. Here the flimsiest, lowliest media articulated the experience of dread and degradation experienced by communities in clearance zones and became a testimony to that experience. It was documented in art and academic publications. Could it have been commissioned by a Community Arts organisation? None that I know of. Community Art tends to avoid controversy. The work toured Northern cities where large-scale demolition was also being un-rolled, by coincidence of economic history and the demise of textile production in the region. The regeneration consortia have a commissioning agenda and PR budget focused on the need to mediate the developer's aspirations. Anything else the community produces – well, the community will pay for. And pay they did.

After Parties

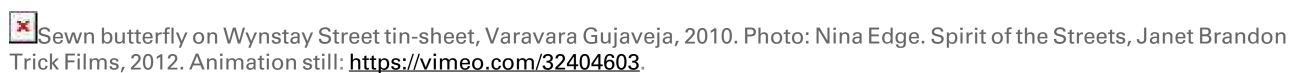
Cultural output from the broader community followed the net curtain. There was an extraordinary outbreak of unsolicited, unfunded and sometimes un-legal cultural intervention in and around the contested Welsh Streets.

The Anonymous Poet, *Welsh Streets Poetry Project,* papering over the cracks. Liverpool, 2008. Photo: Sandy Volz.


The Displaced, Halloween Carnival, Liverpool Lantern Company. Liverpool, 2006. Photo: Marc Loudon.

Community planting by Welsh Streets Home Group: *800 Daffodils for St David on Liverpool's 800th Birthday.* Liverpool, 2007. Photo: Jeremy Hawthorn.

Yarn bombed Railing for Rhiwlas Street, Liverpool, 2010. Crochet and photo: Beverley Dale.



Sewn butterfly on Wynstay Street tin-sheet, Varavara Gujaveja, 2010. Photo: Nina Edge. Spirit of the Streets, Janet Brandon Trick Films, 2012. Animation still: https://vimeo.com/32404603.

Playwrights, community theatre groups, poets, photographers, graffiti mongers, choirs, bands, film-

makers, animators, stitchers, photographers, seed-sowers and yarn bombers passed through the Welsh Streets each leaving a small mark. Mark of respect maybe. To residents each small work marked a small survival. Morale was super-boosted with every contribution. It blew over the road into Granby Four streets, who were, according to them, quite sparked up by the Welsh Streets tin sheet drawings and daffodil planting. They were to go creative in grand style - with paintings and planters that far exceeded our Welshie productions in scale and quality. The genius Granby neighbourhood campaigners founded a community market that included music, art, food and stalls. That meant a financial, social and cultural exchange mechanism was operating across two clearance sites, one on either side of Princes Avenue. It was a community, and it was art – but unique, self-directed and un-administered.

Beaconsfield Street in Granby with windows painted by the residents. Liverpool, 2010. Photo: Nina Edge.

Sewn cherries on Kelvin Grove tin-sheet, Varavara Gujaveja, 2010. Photo: Nina Edge.

We (that is, the Welsh Streets Home Group or WSHG) swapped campaign news, traded ideas and ran campaign events on stalls at the Granby Four Streets Market, at carnival, in Toxteth Town Hall, Toxteth TV and in the local shops and chippies. We had received local and national press for years, but nothing glued us together and drew us out and drew us together as well as culture did. A community of supporters had made themselves visible independently, creatively and repeatedly. The media coverage of threatened communities and their homes in the Welsh Streets was un-abated; four TV features supplemented considerable print and radio coverage. Liverpool Biennial began projects in Anfield and Bootle, both areas stalked by the bulldozers. As the renowned Homebaked Anfield project went from strength to strength, TV foodie Jay Rayner arrived to judge a baking contest. I entered a loaf of bread in the bake off, for which I made special commemorative packaging. It was a throwaway thing. Merchandising survival.

The wrapper read 'RISE UP ANFIELD' in red and 'Greetings from the Welsh Streets' in green. I took a picture and tweeted it. It pinged - appearing in ghost form when Liverpool Football Club used a similar wonky red text to repeat my slogan on a 12 x 24 ft hoarding outside the ground, opposite the Homebaked bakery. So Rise Up left the bread wrapper, travelled via social media and landed on the hoarding of (one of) our famous football club(s). You're welcome L.F.C.

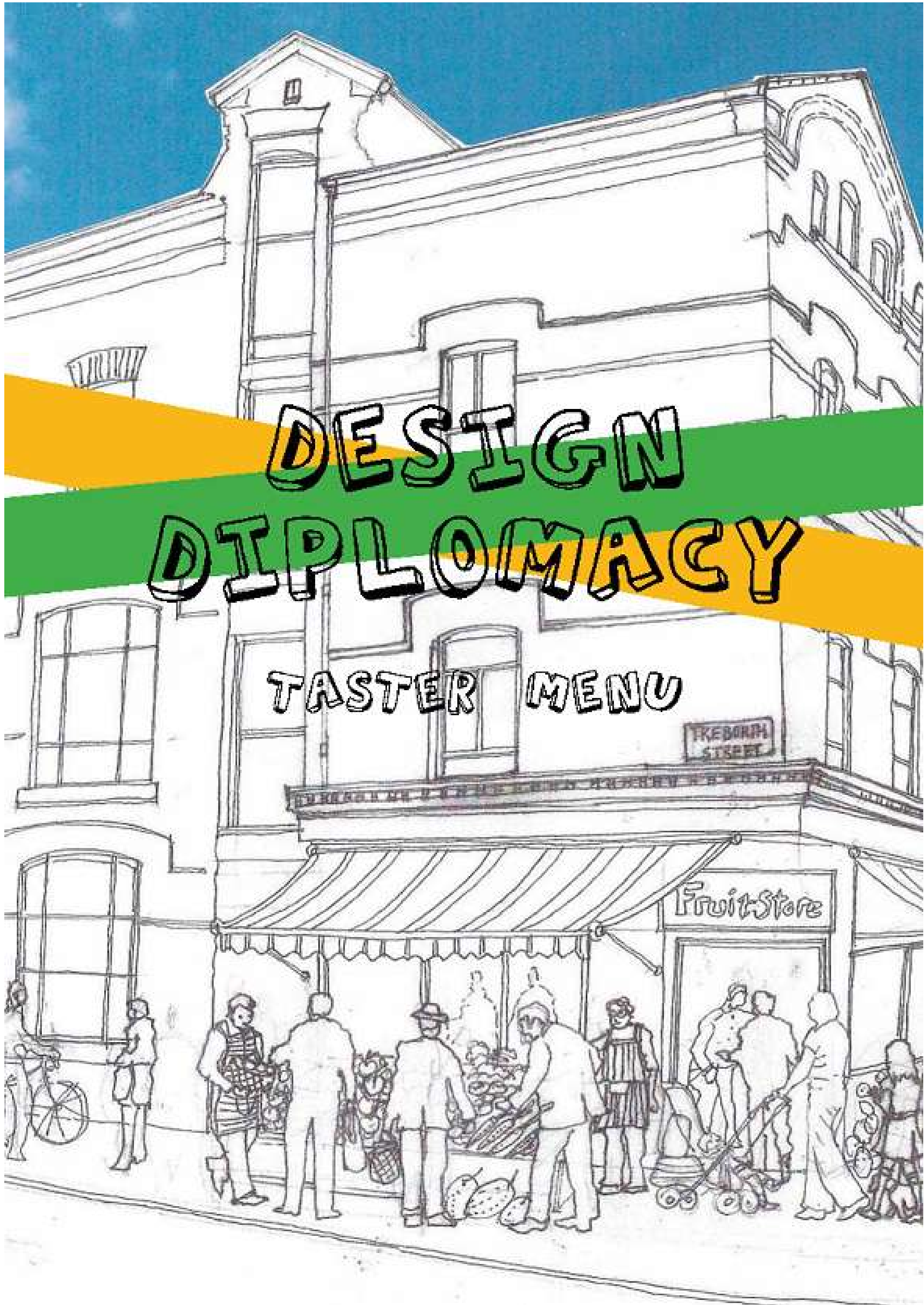
Rise Up Anfield. Liverpool 2012. Packaging, loaf and photo: Nina Edge.

Rise Up Anfield hoarding Liverpool Football Club. Liverpool, 2012. Photo courtesy of Homebaked.

RSVP

The regeneration agents lost control of their housing narrative, and with it, eventually, control of the housing policy. The tale was retold by community campaigners and their allies. Cultural production played a part in this too. It boosted morale, linked campaigns, created spaces for exchange, challenged the authorities and bore witness. But whilst culture realigned what people believed was possible, and how communities felt about their predicament, it provided no bankable fire power. That takes political, legal and financial control. Those are the heavy guns. The creativity and independence of an artist-lead community group opened the way to realigning control. The triggers that catalysed political, economic and cultural change eventually freeing the Welsh Streets from the threat of demolition were varied. Our production of community design research, attraction of investors large and small, consideration of tenure options and archiving of consultation evidence meant we could articulate multiple voices simultaneously. Eventually quite a lot of people were listening.

Select Committee evidence documents. Nina Edge for Welsh Streets Home Group. Liverpool 2005-07. Photo: Nina Edge.



Design Diplomacy Handbook, Drawing Terry Lau, Design Jessy Edgar, (Welsh Streets Home Group: Liverpool, 2012).

Design Diplomacy Final Report, Constructive Thinking Architects, 2012. Image courtesy of Nina Edge. For further information visit Do It Yourself City Liverpool University.

What had started in 2004 as collecting local feedback led to the production of Select Committee

Evidence, which in turn lead to National Press coverage. Eventually we met government departments, senior politicians, heritage organisations and empty homes charities that between them had enough leverage to go to court and challenge the clearances. Government support for demolition was withdrawn in 2011 and replaced with financial incentives for refurbishment. The challenges to the idea that demolition is cheaper, better, or more desirable were assembled from painstakingly gathered community feedback. The plan to demolish the Welsh Streets has gone back to the drawing board. It will be redrawn as a plan to repair as many houses as possible following a ruling from the Secretary of State in December 2015. We imagine it will look like our WSHG drawings in which refurbishment is an option. The triggers, which enabled such monumental changes may have been creative, clever and artist lead - but none of them were art.

Dancing with the bouncers

There was art though. There was Homebaked, born of Jeanne Heeswijk's project with Liverpool Biennial, there was Assemble's work, commissioned by Granby community, whose street planters, market and window painting had already put them on the map. The Granby Market had hosted Izzy O'Rourke's painting, and musicians such as Bolshy, Beatlife, Mick Head and Carla Ambrosius. There were poems from WOWfest, Curtis Watt, Hazel Tilley and Tom Calderbank. There was Janet Brandon's animation in the Welsh Streets and her co-production with Jaye Lawless in Anfield, along with The Anonymous Poet, who has flyposted poetry on the tins on and off for eight years. There were many more anonymous interventions too. My favorites include 'Capital of Culture?' written large on a wall in Gwydir Street and 'We only asked for carpets' – both anonymous and sadly now removed by the authorities. There was Moira Kenny's 2006 residency, funded by regeneration giants Plus Dane and New Heartlands, under the Government's HMR scheme. There were performances about Welsh Streets from Dingle Community Theatre and Liverpool JMU, mohair sewn into the tin sheet by Varvara Guljajeva and ruffs crocheted on the railings by Beverly Dale. The HMR scheme that catalysed so much unsolicited and creative feedback, left the city itself very much a work in progress, with significant areas either ghosted and tinned or flattened and binned. The early independent cultural interventions around HMR are detailed in Cultural Hi-Jack [1] and will be discussed by their makers as part of at Metal's Future Stations series in October 2016.

The achievement of the self-started cultural campaigns probably needs recording. If recorded it would show the survival of otherwise whitewashed or art washed narratives, the tattooing of the multiple view points onto development portfolios, the boosting of morale and the catalysing of self-belief for beleaguered communities. The development of alternative regeneration approaches has happened in three areas of Liverpool where artists bedded in, or in many case were already embedded because that's where their beds are. It did not happen as far as we know in any of the other nine cities affected by a government scheme that, at one time, had earmarked 400,000 houses for demolition.

Art is not always actually a great tool with which to tackle power. But in the HMR clearance zones it has clearly been a means of refusing powerlessness, which is a start. Creative action has calmed troubled waters, troubled calm waters, made us laugh, provided platforms to exchange, communicated outwardly, and ultimately, against all the odds, seeded deliverable alternative regeneration schemes where once only bulldozers and bullshit reigned. It is at art events that irreversible loss and grief and anger has been approached. It seems crass to say it but in the face of asset-stripping and forced clearances, sometimes the art events have even been cathartic. I'm thinking of the Liverpool Biennial bus tour to Anfield. I'm holding a 30 pence brick and crying, we are both crying. I'm with the Welsh Streets Invisible Poet and we have Liverpool Biennial 2012 to thank. Taking out trauma on tour.

The expanding Welsh Streets cultural portfolio includes Design Diplomacy, a 2012 collaboration with Constructive Thinking Architects, commissioned by Welsh Streets Home Group. The project, which sought to reconcile opposing viewpoints, was written, briefed, and overseen by myself following mediation and conflict resolution training. It is a community design project, endorsed by the then Housing

Minister Grant Shapps and seen by the DCLG as a good idea. Design Diplomacy placed costed designs for refurbishing part of the Welsh Streets in the public domain for discussion. The area although earmarked for demolition is now going to be refurbished – not by our funders and not to our design, but nevertheless refurbished. So perhaps the role of culture is not only to imagine things differently, but to make them different.

In 2006, when I made *Nothing Is Private*, the schiffli embroidered net curtain for my front window, the demolition of my home and studio seemed inevitable. Now that decision has been reversed and my home is saved along with the whole Welsh Streets site. It seems the perfect time to make new work for the same windows, in an area where most houses have had their windows sealed up for twelve years. The work Contravision opened as part of the Biennial Fringe 2016 and will show into 2017: first on the windows of 40 Kelvin Grove, and then at Bluecoat Gallery for their 300 year anniversary Alumni exhibition. The new work is a series of printed wallpaper style patterns that completely cover the window panes. The prints recall both the tin-sheet and breeze blocks of the empty streets, as well as the rudely exposed interiors that are exposed as homes are demolished. The wallpaper patterns reference William Morris (for his doomed ideas of a socialist utopia) and Tipu Sultan (for his doomed resistance to colonisation by the British East India Company). My *Contravision* piece is a couple of streets away from Lara Favaretto's *Momentary Monument - The Stone, 2016,* commissioned by Liverpool Biennial for the main programme, in Rhiwlas St. Both pieces exploit the aesthetic of the deserted streets and draw audiences to the consideration of art, architecture regeneration and community. Audiences visit both pieces, and others located in Toxteth around the Granby cultural cluster. They can enjoy the work with or without knowledge of the struggles and triumphs that lead to the sites appearing in the way they do, and the stories the walls would tell if they could talk. The work - whether or not defined as socially engaged - sits amongst communities who can value or deride it as they please.

The music stops and the parcel stops with it. The accepted convention is that when the next layer of paper is removed a gift may fall into the hands of the player - or it may not. People will usually play again regardless.

Contravision: repeat patterns for condemned housing. Phase 1: Wallpapers for the Dispossessed. Nina Edge, Liverpool Biennial Fringe 2016. Photo: Tom Lox.

Nina Edge discusses the window works in her home at 'Curtains For the Welsh Streets' at Bluecoat gallery on 21st September 2016.

A public debate with other artists who delivered self started independent art projects in the Welsh Streets is hosted by Metal on 15th October 2016.

A series of new works and performative action for the windows of 40 Kelvin Grove and the Welsh Streets is currently in development and will show as part of the Nothing project from September until April 2017.

[1] *Cultural Hi-Jack* (Liverpool University Press: Liverpool, 2011), p126.

Nina Edge

Nina Edge is an artist. Her work in communities began in the 1980s when residents in Cardiff Docks established control over artist selection, insisting that their established relationship with Edge be recognised in the commissioning of West Close environmental improvements.Emboldened by the insight

such networks engender, she went on to produce similarly inclusive works using strategies such as street performance, games or hoardings to extend audiences outside gallery environments.She was a protagonist of the Black British arts movement and is known for her interrogation of the status of production methods and materials.Although sometimes working outside the context of socially engaged practice her interest in interface makes her work widely accessible.A demolition order on Edge's home and studio in The Welsh Streets area of Toxteth lead to eleven years of housing activism in which she has exploited culture as a political tool.

What is at Stake in Community Practice? What Have We Learned?

Jason E. Bowman

In this writing I seek to detect a few precursory concerns that may inform an initial response to the question, 'What is at Stake in Community Practice? What Have We Learned? My text is guided, in part, from previous experience and otherwise by reflective thought inculcated by the 'Community Arts? Learning from the Legacy of Artists' Social Initiatives' conference, convened by Liverpool Biennial and Andrea Phillips. The title of the conference itself has been a useful informant. It evades a simplified demand for a reprisal on behalf of an increasingly obscured field of practice, it usefully points towards possible entanglements.

What I hope to do here, firstly using Glasgow as an example, is entangle by tethering marginalised Community Arts legacies back to a preponderant narrative being offered of the city. I move to a broader questioning of how we produce strategies for the production of history-making amidst the punitive restrictiveness and conventionalities inherent to neoliberalism, taking into consideration the broader genealogical possibilities of re-constituting artists' commitment to social initiation as identified in the conference title. I then shift towards a description of the neoliberal project's attack on communitarianism and begin to suggest that it may be relevant to unravel some of the rhetoric regarding the commons being applied between Community Arts and arts' institutional practices in order to consider some distinctions of vulnerability. I then question aspects of the impulses of alternative pedagogical strategies as applied in the social turn within arts programmes and suggest some initial examples of precedents that are being ignored, but which are potent with the history of radical imagination. I begin to touch on the question of organisation, suggesting that perhaps we are so busy in the re-purposing of institutions, amidst their existing structures, that we have not sufficiently identified what we can learn from the generative organisational practices being instituted by artists, beyond legally-constituted organisations, and for which antecedents may exist in the legacies of the Community Arts movement and furthered stratagem in contemporary formations of social practices.

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To address the notions of legacy and entanglement, I want to mention the influence of David Harding. Following his time as a tutor on the Art and Social Context course at Dartington, David then founded and led the influential Department of Sculpture and Environmental Art at Glasgow School of Art in the late 1980s for over a decade. A key premise of this course was that "context was 50% of the work", an influence of the work of the Artists Placement Group, which had been active in Scotland. Harding was previously Town Artist for the new town of Glenrothes between 1968-78, paving the way for community engagement via art processes in issues of planning, social housing, architecture and the conception of how to live in built 'newness'.

After graduating in the mid 1980s, I worked as an arts educationalist for deaf-blind youths whilst supporting a practice that was initially performance based, but beginning to seek strategies to address issues that were effecting Glasgow at that time, with its mercantile history, but then current finalised decimation of the ship-building industry via Thatcher and the social exclusion and economic impoverishment of many of its communities, including that from which I come – the working class.

At the same time, many of my peers in the city were beginning to develop processes towards artworld visibility and the potential for the commercialisation of their art, what Hans Ulrich Obrist (in 1996 when Douglas Gordon was awarded the Turner Prize) referred to as "The Glasgow Miracle". There was no miracle, only hard work conducted by artists and artists-organisations combined with institutional support. Curators such as Andrew Nairne and Nicola White offered exhibition platforms to recent graduates, mostly those engaged with neo-conceptualism, which followed pretty immediately after Glasgow School of Art's then Head of Painting Sandy Moffat's re-championing of figuration by those named the New Glasgow Boys. On reflection, this 'miracle' we may now consider as a filtering system that has created a domineering historiography, chronicled in publications such as Sarah Lowdnes' book Social Sculpture: The Rise of the Glasgow Art Scene (Luath Press, 2010) and reflected in the 2014 Generation [1]

exhibition project which surveyed 25 years of Scottish Art, in both of which the many histories of Community Arts practices in Glasgow and Scotland are rendered into obscurity.

Knowing something of what I was up to as an artist, producing works with a queer bent that examined the coercion of vulnerable publics, but also understanding that the post I held as an arts educationalist for the deaf-blind was potentially itself a radical appointment in the history of disability, arts education, Harding invited me to begin what became an almost ten year-long, but intermittent, relationship with the Environmental Art course as a recurring visiting educator. In a sense I can say I went to college in the '80s but actually trained in the '90s with Harding and others then working in the department including Peter McCaughey, Ross Sinclair, Bryndis Snaejbjornsdottir and Ruth R. Stirling. The reason I refer to Harding is not so much about David himself, despite my assertion that he is an acknowledged key figure, though perhaps this is problematic in his significance being defined in the measurement of how many Turner prize nominees and winners were educated by him and in the department. Rather, Harding is a practitioner whose narrative shifts from his early work in art education in Nigeria, to 10 years in Glenrothes, to the distribution and fostering of debate on art and social purpose in British art education.

It was at Glasgow School of Art that the work of (to give some examples): muralists on the Tijuana border and Derry's Bogside; Joyce Laing's work at the Barlinnie Prison Special Unit; the Artists Placement Group; the Tape-Slide and Radical Print workshop movements including Edinburgh's Tape Slide Workshop; American activist practices amidst the AIDS epidemic; revolutionary art from Nicaragua and Venezuela; the politics of indigeneity and activism of First Nations peoples and artists; literature by Suzi Gablik, Carol Becker, Mary Jane Jacob, Suzanne Lacy and the pedagogical precedents of W. E. B. Du Bois, Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal and many others really entered my frames of reference. Students were navigating the history of site-specificity and developing strategies for its development, through a simple pedagogical model, The Public Art Project, by which students had to select, negotiate and navigate a site, its stakeholders and communities in order to think through their positions, responsibilities and agency as artists, amidst the blighting of Scotland through Thatcherism. Many of those who have become prominent as being educated in this department then applied these negotiation skills to entering existing art world paradigms as opposed to imagining alternatives. Despite this there are many other graduates from there who have sustained communitarian practices but are less lauded than their Turner-prized peers.

Whilst Glasgow reached towards its 1990 European City of Culture status, deeply criticised in the city and lauded simultaneously, we were encountering the beginning of a regeneration process, in which art is often cited as a role-player. The narrativisation of the art of Glasgow has often been filtered through exemplars such as Transmission Gallery, which offered visibility and internationalisation for artists. Consequent logic has argued a promotion of Glasgow as a city in which artists could be domiciled yet capable of developing international reputation at 'blue-chip' level in terms of commercial gallery representation, and within the circuits of high-end institutions whilst being sustained by a highly networked community of artists, often written about now as if it were an urban artists' colony.

However, these factors and their dependence on the individualisation of specific artists' career trajectories can only be seen as one mode of valuation, and pervasive to a particular reading that diminishes our consideration of the rich picture of communitarian practices, which existed previously or ran in parallel to 'the miracle'. There were numerous local initiatives such as: the Gorbals Art Project, the work of the Garnethill Muralists later re-developed in 1990, Castlemilk's Fringe Gallery in its shopping centre, the Scottish Mask and Puppet Centre, Glasgow Film and Video Workshop, Art Link in Edinburgh, Stella Quines, Project-Ability, Art in Hospitals, theatre in education companies such as Birds of Paradise Theatre Company, the children and youth focussed work of Giant Productions and the provision to communities and artists alike by places such as the Dolphin Arts Centre, which ran alongside the city centre's Third Eye Centre, as two exemplars of the post-war Arts Centre movement, which was as much

about community as it was about art forms.

It is important to note that that Glasgow City Council had arts officers in place across neighbourhoods throughout the city, with a mission to embed arts and culture with communities and were thus providing activities in libraries, schools, community centres and youth clubs but also financially supporting artist-initiated projects in communities, including the three-year long Arts is Magic experiment on developing art-informed curricula at Chirnsyde Primary School in Glasgow's Milton. Glasgow Sculpture Studios' resident artists often developed social and community projects throughout the city, including those by a generation of women artists trained by Wimbledon School of Art to have professional welding qualifications who were then able to pick up work in the dying shipbuilding industry, which influenced the politics of such community projects.

The Zero Tolerance campaign against domestic abuse and violence, the Glasgow Women's Library and Castlemilk Woman house debated inequality and exclusion in communities. The feminist drumming initiative She-Bang marched the city. The advent of HIV/AIDS brought initiatives by health, advocacy and lobbying groups, which coincided with programming by then Tramway curator Nicola White, who paid attention to art addressing AIDS from the USA and mounted large-scale exhibitions and symposia in a city in which Deaf people were contracting HIV with higher percentages than the hearing populous owing to most health literature being text-based and inaccessible to sign-users.

Nikki Milligan drove access to radical international, activist and queer performance practices through the National Review of Live Artand her programming at Third Eye Centre and then its incarnation as C.C.A. Artists committed to advancing the city's important social photography histories founded Street Level Gallery, its own importance often marginalised by the fetishisation of Transmission. Publications such as Variant Magazine interrogated the capitalisation of culture and its relations to the public sector, whilst other publishing initiatives with welfarist, anarchist and workerist politics came out of community activism in neighbourhoods such as Clydebank. Art and artists' organisational practices also related with campaigns for LGBT, womens', race and disability rights and with the peace and anti-nuclear movements in Scotland. These all rest in relation to a Community Arts movement which we struggle to see any real comprehension of in contemporary writing of Scotland's recent art histories, and which on a UK-wide basis, we still await a major 'exhibitionary' survey or comprehensive publication to catalyse further debate.

Overall, as a legacy, I am talking firstly of less than 25 years of history that is already being erased; and secondly as if people are still not working in Community Arts, but they are. I think we also have to acknowledge that, in the UK at least, we are poor at writing our radical histories. A lack of resourcing intensifies amnesia, and for those of us in this history, we can assert that our experiences are meaningful, our knowledge vast, but our resources to make our struggles chronicles and dissemination possibilities are weak. Perhaps we need to strategise more broadly on the question of how we re-constitute legacy?

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In a 2012 curatorial initiative entitled A Rally of Speeches, moderated by Andrea Phillips and organised by New Work Network, I sought to bring together speakers whose work I believed was significant but obscured, possibly purposefully. These included Marlene Smith, co-founder of the BLK Art Group, speaking to its importance in catalysing a commons. Simon Watney spoke for the first time ever publicly (he'd never previously been invited to) on the creative strategies of OutRage; Kate Hudson, Chair of C.N.D. addressed the campaign's relations to art, direct action and the graphic histories of Nuclear disarmament materials; Ilona Halberstadt and other members of the Scratch Orchestra demonstrated modes of collaboration and democratisation of art beyond technical accomplishment. Jess Bainesaddressed the histories of the UK's radical feminist print workshops. Many of these people had never been invited to speak publicly about these manifestations.

I think that it is important to also recognise that when we begin to look at these histories we should

potentially view them with respect for the specificities in their ideologies but also through an intersectional prism. The term 'community' should not solely be read as like minded people positioning themselves in identitarian terms, but should be read in relation to our capacity to position ourselves in proximity to alterity and difference, to be together, whilst recognising the necessity to lean towards and incline towards difference, confrontation and conflict.

We need to consider how to understand a larger-scale history of practices that have developed sanctioned and unsanctioned strategies for political imagination during intensified, or indeed systematised, converse strategies for inculcating de-imagination such as our moment now. In doing so we need to consider what we mean by legacies, periodisation, heritages and genealogies. Are we sustaining disavowal through particularised modes of discrimination of artistic practices and supporting continued amnesia by ignoring antecedents that may matter to our cause?

It may be useful to re-navigate to shift view and provide an alternative genealogic proposition on the social practices of artists within which specificities of the Community Arts movement can become entangled. This may include those, for example, who are not only facilitating the creativity of others, but artists who were at the forefront of other societal formations via the manifestation of progressive art in the developmental histories of our public goods. Perhaps there are arguments by which we could extend the reach of what we may mean by the coalition of art and community, through consideration of the role of artists in the framework of the advent of the Welfare State and pillars such as the N.H.S. or Education with examples such as Barbara Hepworth's Hospital Operating Drawings of 1946-8, or via design by Norman Hartnell's nurses' uniform for the new N.H.S., or the Schools Print series of auto-lithographs commissioned internationally by Brenda Rawnsley and distributed throughout state schools. There are countless further examples that offer us ways to think about community, art, and organisation into which the histories of Community Arts may be woven.

Conversations such as the one that underpinned the Community Arts? conference are only beginnings, and here we may have some prefatory work from which to develop.

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An argument that informs some of what I want to raise is that we are currently living in a deeply politicised and economised fundamental problematic that results in what Henry A. Giroux [2] and others describe as 'de-imagining'. By which I mean that consistent demands to conventionality are supressing and de-legitimising potentials for alterity and actively limiting how we envisage the ways in which we can be together, what we can do together and what community-centric methods and models are to be made possible. This may lead less, perhaps, to the question of what types of organisations we should have, but could open more to what types of organisational practices can we imagine?

The potential for imagination is being controlled through the privatisation, commercialisation and capitalisation of many elements of our democracy. It is occurring in gentrification and the diminishment of social housing; economically controlled access to employment, childcare and to all levels of education, including informal education, itself a very important factor in the Community Arts movement. Military, police and prevailing media outlets control the capacity to protest and dissent, and regulate direct action and its representation. The consistent privileging of the wealthy, decision-makers with vested interests, allows them to effect policy and strategy negotiations and implementation. Favouritism for white knowledge assumes that its practices should be maintained and unquestioned. The curtailment of workers' rights and access to the resources for an intellectual life are conducted through de-unionisation and impoverished working conditions. The inhibition of human rights and the dismantling of benefits and welfare provision produce panic and a constant sense of living precariously close to the hole that's been purposefully dug. These strategies run in tandem with an increased commercialisation of art and its institutions including the unregulated global force of the art-market to which marginalised, at risk, vulnerable and disadvantaged people are of little concern.

These factors are engaged to generate fear, exclusion and complacency and make us financially and time impoverished in ways that actively attempt to constantly disengage us from critical thought and action, and from each other. They generate and foster an erosion of our belief, commitment, access to, or even awareness of our rights to public goods such as education, health services and aspects of law support. Our collective ownership of public institutions is being reduced and our roles not only as consumers but also as formers and reformers; as producers, co-producers and co-participants; as organisers, mediators, facilitators and gatherers being constantly arbitrated through value systems that allow only for metrication and financialisation. The potentials that exist in the notion of community are thus being eroded, and de-imagining is a neo-liberal strategy, by which we are being encouraged to turn away from radical potentialities, or placed in fear of them, or made to de-prioritise them through struggle being replaced with survivalism.

I want to posit that whilst we think about the potentialities of publics within Community Arts, we should also be considering that participation could be oppressive as well as liberating and emancipatory. I think that we need to caution ourselves in the way that we currently construct the notion of participation, its languages, methods, rhetoric and applications that may allow us to call into question what we are participating in, for whom and in what direction; and in doing so what we are discriminating against.

I believe that the capacity of communities to focus on their conditions is essential to sustaining imagination as a political project. I think it contributes to the right to ask vital questions about work and labour, about the diversity of our people and cultures and about heritage-criticality in legacy-formation. Such capacity informs how to progress through challenging the frameworks of our art institutions, our ownership of them and abilities to be present to, and within them.

It allows us to identify and address the multiple layers of filtering and sifting systems at play in education. Fundamental to the project of de-imagining is, as I have alluded, access to education, not in individualistic but communal terms and thus toward the fundamental premise of having rights to become educated, to experience co-education, to share access to educational resources and to replenish its systems by which to educate critical citizens through difference and disagreement and not further incubating a culture of confirmation-bias through similarity and privilege.

I want to ask the following question: As potential inheritors of aspects of the legacies of Community Arts, why have art institutions decided to change their rhetoric - and in some cases their organisation frameworks and job roles - from ‘education’ (meaning collective educative projects) to ‘learning’? We can define the latter as highly individualised with ‘learnification’ [3] discussed as a subjugation of being collectively involved in the project of education itself and instead implementing a mode of individuality that can carry forward aspects of the divisionary strategies implemented by neoliberalism.

I also want to potentially question the viability of fetishising ‘alternative’ pedagogies within art and education, at this moment, and to acknowledge the fact that within the social and curatorial turn around education within art’s social practices, we are witnessing a preponderance of so-called alternative art school models, including as temporary insertions into art programmes. For me, the consequent impact should be considered, not on the potentiality of these as alternatives to a squeezed state education, despite the histories they claim to re-present, but whether those responsible for the replication or recall of such radical routes are actually engaged in a mode of conservatism by turning their back on the fight for state education, and class access to it, including at H.E. level, by creating a parallelised as opposed to entangled system.

What actually are these alternative art schools – whether ‘independent’ or as tropes in contemporary social turn curating, including inside art institutions – doing politically to the concept of state education at a moment of constant erosion of access to the most basic premise of education as a public good? Why do examples such as Black Mountain College re-iterate?

I want to suggest that there are other considerations beyond the histories of Black Mountain,

Dartington, Summerhill and Kilquhanity Schools and the predominant discussion of male education reformers that need to be considered when invoking radical education models and their histories, about which the social turn can also be thought to be in a state of amnesia. Why are women like Dora Russell who founded Beacon Hill School not discussed? Why are we not discussing the work undertaken to reform the oralist tradition in deaf education in the UK? Why are we not talking about the Appalachian Highlander School that educated civil rights activists Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer in direct action strategies via its Citizenship School Programme? Why are we not paying attention to the Burston Strike School, the site of the longest strike in the UK, conducted by children in support of their leftist teachers, the survival of which and actual premises were built on union and leftist support? Why are the stratagems of Canadian aboriginal activists and their colleagues engaged in demanding and contributing to the 2015 Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and similar processes in Australia, not informing us more when we think of radical pedagogy and its assumption in art institutions and their public programmes? Why are we resistant to learning from the struggles conducted by and models originated in the Black Education Movement [4] in the UK, by which people were developing supplementary education to address institutional racism and whitewashing within our education structures. Why aren't we being informed by our histories of cross-cultural programming strategies in community spaces such as Hackney's long-term, but now closed, space for community action, Centreprise. I believe that the need to interrogate institutional racism and whitewashing in education has not ended, and that it is still deeply at work in our schools, colleges and universities. These movements for reform and their communitarian routes and the struggles fought are, as I far as I am aware from the literature on art and the educational turn, not being considered as valid to its discourses in the need to debate the persistent of violence towards state education.

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The art institution in its shift to the social turn has moved towards modes of participation that, perhaps, are more easily consumable within the logic of a capitalising culture and often sustains the heroisms of individualised authorship.

Since the late 1990s attributes of being enquiry-driven, co-productive, participatory and pedagogical, and politicised have influenced the advent of discourse on what has been determined as 'the curatorial', not necessarily distinct from exhibitionary formats but also not necessarily inclusive of it, and comprising of evental actions such as reading groups in reading rooms; seminars, colloquy and caucuses as forms of assembly and generators of discursivity; socialities implemented through collective work; and the assimilation and re-occurrence of strategies and ideologies relating to radical education histories and civil rights movements. The 'curatorial' to date has paid scant attention to any pre-figurative concepts generated by the Community Arts movement, despite its strategies being circumscribed towards a re-purposing of art institutions and their constituents.

Through a research project at the Valand Academy [5], where I work, with Mick Wilson and Julie Crawshaw, I am interrogating the concept of artist-organisation. An initial observation, on which I have future work to do, is that in the ideological, theoretical and speculative nature of the literature of 'the curatorial' limited representation is given to the grass-roots organisational work undertaken by artists and communities. I would argue that the methodologies by which 'the curatorial' suggest expansion of art via durational, longitudinal, pedagogical and embedded means have been generated both within Community Arts movement and the broader work of artists-organisation for a long period of time, but this is not being sufficiently acknowledged as a line is being drawn that disentangles antecedents within the Community Arts movement from its discourse. What I am concerned by is the attention paid to the impact and potentialities of artist-organisation within the literature of 'the curatorial', in which the artist's role is expansive in institutional terms but reductive towards the types of experiences many of us share here today as those with roots in social arts that operate in community contexts, which may include the

institution but is not always dependent on its validation or its resources.

Community Arts has been concerned with the joint capacity and potential of communities to make art that activates its members to collectively gather to identify, describe, share, discuss and dissent against its challenges and conditionings and often within the physical localities of their lives. It challenges modes of aesthetic validation through enmeshment of professional and non-professional makers and thus is multiply authored though occassionaly anonymous. Via processual, grass-roots and horizontalised communal dynamics the problematics and discontents of attempting to parameterise or extend the cultures of community-making - via arts practice - run alongside changes being implemented in the lives and circumstances of these communities, their socio-economic order determined by the logics of policy, strategy and forms of governance that also effect their cultural, social, political and economic lives via systemisation.

A concern, that may need further interrogation - between Community Arts and the social turn in the programming of arts institutions - lies in the barriers that exist in the concept of the commons. It may be worth reminding us that the commons is not necessarily about shared community ownership of land or resources, but of communal access and dependent on the implementation and upholding of legislation and custom and practice for access to be sustained. Therefore, with a history in feudalist economies, the commons as indicative of rights of way to space and supply is predicated on a contingent and vulnerable confluence of ownership and the allowance of access. A custom that is susceptible to disenfranchisement and capable of being revoked through intensified commercialisation through the privileging of private ownership and capitalisation. This may include Arts Council England's various schemes to incubate and encourage philanthropy and commercialisation resulting in art's institutions and their programmes being further contoured through the influence of the art market, private donation and corporate sponsorship, which also effect the delimiting of the commons. Whilst we need to debate how we protect the potential of art's institutions, also under threat to conventionalise, homogenise and commercialise (amidst which 'the curatorial' and its speculative characteristics are seen to have the potential for a form of repurposing) we may also need to assess particular ideological logics in order to further understand some differentiations of vulnerability between Community Arts and art's institutions in relation to the concept of the commons.

Pascal Gielen [6] has identified, Community Arts is built upon the facility of a pre-existing and comprehensible commons. He claims Community Arts exist, in part, owing to the commons but insufficiently addresses the dynamics and vulnerabilities of access. A similar claim is also made via 'the curatorial', though a slight yet significant differentiation exists in that aspects of its rhetoric. A claim seems to be being made that in the re-purposing of art's institutions, 'the curatorial' is able to stretch the dialectics of ownership and access and foster a process through which they become propagative of a new shared commons, one in which their own increased commercialisation is disguised and diffused. Thereby, to a degree, a line is being drawn between Community Arts and their access to resources and their manifestation in now-vulnerable locations, such as community centres, libraries, youth clubs, working people's clubs, health centres. Socially engaged and participatory arts practices, are being brought into the stewardship, mediation procedures and value systems of the art institution, and its increasing relations with capital, whilst claiming to be commons-generative whilst Community Arts is being evicted from its spaces, ideological and physical. I think we require future discussion of what is being protected and what is being seen to be superfluous in the fight for the commons; and whether, as Andrea Phillips has pointed out to me, current fixation on the concept of the commons is itself founded on a flawed idea of egalitarianism, and potentially responsible for the erasure of struggle.

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I would like us to also consider that, when we talk about the nature of participation and Community Arts, we often talk about dialogue, confidence raising and trust; but we rarely talk with detailed consideration, of how trustworthiness is actualised. I'd like to suggest today, as I did in my 2013

publication on the inter-generative potentialities of trust and dialogue [7] that trustworthiness is made manifest through the mediation of uncertainty and not necessarily through the adherence to predetermined pact and promise.

It may be more trusting to allow ourselves to formatively scope and parameterise how to navigate uncertainties and variables together when new knowledge and experience arises, to legitimise the changing of our minds as impacts are provoked, and to collectively re-purpose our strategies as we incrementally assess their efficacy than it is to steer towards an unknown but hopefully reachable future by clinging to pre-determined contracts made inside the outset of the problematic that is to be challenged. If that is the case, then how shall we generate the imagination of trust between us? What new rules and parameters can we determine to work and live together in trust-centric as opposed to risk-averse ways? What principles shall we bring forward as our conditions for doubt? And, what existing values can we eschew?

As an example of what I mean, let me introduce a project that I worked with for several years, Anniversary - Acts of Memory [8] when the late Monica Ross committed, or more correctly attempted (it is very important that it is an attempt) to commit to memory and publicly recite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights via performances across multiple sites and contexts, cultures, countries and languages with individuals, social action groups and multiple communities – taking forward many of the legacies but upholding and recalling to use many of the priorities of the Community Arts movement. Monica very sadly is no longer with us but I wanted to make her present in this context. On the day she died, Monica completed the cycle, and her commitment to iterating this project 60 times in 60 different sites. Ross was a leading feminist artist and this work, undertaken late in her career, is complex: she advocates on one hand for a universal, but on the other then particularises it in many ways, via language, site, organisation and community. The U.D.H.R. states that we are born with these rights, and whilst they may be intervened in, they cannot be lost or removed: from birth to death we own the right to them, at all moments, and in all circumstances. Thus, a factor to consider is that, each and every time she negotiated the means of production, Ross was transacting via the perceived significance of a document that actually seeks to lay out the way that our Human Rights are extant, cannot be taken from us, and thus every person engaged in that transaction with her was already in possession. Acts of Memory, I believe, is significant in that it is suggestive of organisational practices, initiated and led by an artist, that were not an organisation in the usual formal or constitutive terms – but one productive of trustworthiness, whilst many other forms of legitimised organisations fail to achieve this.

Let's move forward.

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Jason E. Bowman

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arts educationalists for the Deaf-Blind in the UK and has worked with communities his whole career, through participatory methods, to interrogate the coercion and violation of publics. He recently completed a role as a co-researcher interrogating the co-generative potential of trust and dialogue via the practices of Esther Shalev-Gerz, and is now at work on a three-year long enquiry, via the curatorial, into artist-led cultures. Previous curatorial activities include the official presentation from Scotland at the Venice Biennale (2005), the inaugural European career survey of Yvonne Rainer and Monica Ross' *Anniversary – an Act of Memory*. His artworks have been commissioned by Franklin Furnace (NYC), ICA (London), Tramway (Glasgow) and Whitworth Art Gallery (Manchester) amidst many others.

Navigating Community Arts and Social Practice: a Conversation about Tensions and Strategies

Laura Raicovich and Prerana Reddy

Immigrant Movement International (2010-ongoing). IMI council members outside IMI Corona office, Queens, New York, 2014. Photograph courtesy of the Queens Museum.

Laura Raicovich: Prompted in part by the conversation held at the Queens Museum recently by the Social Practice Queens (SPQ) programme at Queens College, I thought it would be interesting to discuss the tension between social practice, institutions, and Community Arts in the traditional way of imagining community engagement and art endeavours. Perhaps it would be useful to discuss this in the context of Immigrant Movement International (IMI) Corona, from its first phases of being driven by the artist Tania Bruguera, who instigated the project, through to the shift that followed her lessening engagement, to looking to the future.

Preeana Reddy: I'd also like to add another tension to the conversation between social practice, MFA students, and Community Art spaces and artists that work in that context. I think that there is an assumption about who social practice students are that isn't necessarily true for all programmes and as programmes have gotten bigger and diversified that is even less true. The original social practice programmes mostly on the West Coast were very much traditional MFA students and the new programmes that are coming out of the East Coast, of which SPQ is one but also at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). The latter have a Community Arts programme with the added twist.

LR: Yes, a lot of those students are coming to these programmes from other fields of study. It isn't like they are coming out of it from traditional MFA programme and finding the route that way. It is more that they have a different set of skills.

PR: These students also have a lot of experience between undergrad and graduate school. They are already professionals or have some kind of other formation before they come to this, and so I think the tension is a different tension than the one that is often talked about.

LR: Right – as opposed to the more often-referenced question of where the art resides and issues of authorship. In this context, these questions begin to fade.

PR: Exactly, and I think that some of the projects, like the people coming out of SPQ, like Sol Aramendi – yes she is an artist in her own right, a photographer, and she is using a traditional art medium – however, SPQ has provided an opportunity to think beyond 'I'm a teaching artist, or my only

way of engaging the public is engaging through sharing my primary artistic medium'. Rather, there is a mandate to push artistic practice further and to really think about cultural organising tools and how an artist can be involved in creating a connection with the community based on organisation, and having that project actually come out of the direct ideas in relationship building with members of an organisation alongside aggregating other creative professionals, like bringing application developers into the mix. For example, Sol is not an app developer herself but she did have the skills and social networks to be able to get arts funding and to be able to pull a team together from Cornell and MIT to be bridge builders between traditional worker centres, worker organisations and academia, designers and so on – and that is very different to thinking about what a Community Arts person might do.

Immigrant Movement International (2010-ongoing). IMI community council members at work at the Corona office, 2014. Photo courtesy of the Queens Museum.

LR: Also, I think that Sol is coming out of the arc of exactly what artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles discussed recently. She stressed a kind of silent sitting with sanitation workers over long periods, wanting them to offer up a way to create a Work Ballet with their vehicles, because they are the ones with the skills that would be used, and inviting that by stepping back, without forcing it to happen: because she didn't want it to be just part of their job. Since their superiors always tell them what to do, this was a space where they could enact their own creativity within the framework of this co-created artwork. I feel like there is that kind of lineage and that is actually – even though Mierle has had a sustained engagement with the universe of sanitation for a very long time – it is fundamentally a bureaucratic engagement. Yes, it is about the specific people, and she knows all the players, but it is really different from saying 'I am going to embed myself in this community or this network of community members and evolve a project'. A project like Rick Lowe's Project Row Housing is really fundamentally different from what Mierle's is doing.

At the outset Tania's engagement with place and community was very particular and tied into some specific ideas that she had about how community engagement in a very grassroots way would end up speaking to a larger movement that she was interested in instigating. She was also interested in that letting go process between then and now in terms of her involvement, but also in the build-up of the community momentum around their own engagement. This transition is interesting because it has often happened that an artist is engaged with an existing Community Arts framework – that was the tradition in a

way, and so IMI Corona represents a shift because the engagement that Tania, I believe, was proposing from the outset was intentionally political.

PR: I think that Tania was working out something new. She wasn't trying to recreate her existing practice but wanted to act as a kind of provocateur of power relationships - whether as a performance artist or as an installation artist or as an educator or aggregator of creative people. She had done long term projects before, and so I think that aspect wasn't scary to her. However, I think the embeddedness within a particular community was in perhaps some kind of tension with the concept of what a migrant is to begin with. Often times Community Arts, or community centres, come out of a historical neighbourhood context, and IMI Corona didn't come out of that. It wasn't talking about long-term residence, it wasn't talking about strictly neighbourhood issues and dynamics. It was really looking at the very big picture. Ideas about migration as the human rights question of the 21st century, in relation to something local that involves migrants of various sorts, with the artist being a type of migrant (and Tania very much identifying with that status), as well as questions of the economic migrant and the political migrant, as it were. That all these different migrants are in some senses within this project is a conceptual challenge posed to the democratic nation-state narrative, i.e. that our rights as individuals and human beings are given to us by belonging to a state. That ideal is being challenged both by citizens and the failure of very many nation-states to provide that for their own citizens and therefore the push towards migration for those people to find these rights – only to arrive somewhere else and then be second-class citizens without those types of rights.

Immigrant Movement International (2010-Ongoing). IMI leaders' retreat at the Queens Museum, 2014. Photo courtesy of the Queens Museum.

LR: And I think also in the context, these questions were hugely relevant five years, six years ago when this project started but are increasingly so now with the situation in Europe and the mass exodus from Syria. We are bearing witness to the reality that borders, while seemingly impenetrable on one hand and really dangerous and precarious to cross, are on another level actually totally invisible and not real. People are arriving because they are so desperate to leave the circumstances they are in.

PR: Similarly, in Central America, violence has precipitated a wave of unaccompanied minors

migrating over vast distances. IMI Corona was prescient around this challenge that we are facing globally now, beyond just the US-Mexico border and those ways in which the immigration battle in the United States had been pitched and framed. The challenge for the project at its outset was: here are the big picture questions that we wanted considered by intellectuals of various sorts, as well as home-grown intellectuals who are speaking from their experiences as well as academics and thinkers throughout the world. We asked, 'How do we bring these different registers together and conversation?'. This was important at the outset. So when we were developing the manifesto, for example, it was really important to Tania to have the local folks, the arts community, and people from around the country brought together to join that conversation.

LR: Perhaps it is this interconnection point that the artists forces on the situation. Which is an important distinction from the way that things are operating now, but in that initial phase this was essential to create a platform for action. The development of the manifesto was important on many levels, it may have had more significance to some of the people who were involved in crafting it than others but I think that is always going to be the case. I just wonder if – is that a document that has been revisited at all?

PR: Yes, it has been re-done actually. We don't call it the manifesto anymore, it's just our values. But just to go back a bit: everybody saw the manifesto, and even though it was translated into multiple languages it wasn't clear necessarily to people who weren't within that process but who were part of the IMI Corona community where it came from and why and how did it to connect to them as participants of IMI Corona and so one of the first things that we did as we were developing the council – the community council of users after Tania's departure - was to revisit the manifesto for immigrant movement but also other manifestos like the Black Panther manifesto etc. because a manifesto itself is part of a tradition and for them to understand the tradition of why people create them, why are they called manifestos – to have that bigger context.

LR: And to explore what their political value might be, what is the relationship between the manifesto and the dynamics of power.

PR: Right. So the Council rephrased and rewrote the original manifesto as a statement of values, including what they felt was missing in terms of the specific space that we are creating at IMI Corona, as opposed to just a general manifesto for the migrant. What does it mean at IMI Corona today, and how we do our day-to-day work, and how does that translate, and what are the values that we have as community members, educators and so on. I think a lot of it had to do with notions of who can teach and issues of power around that – the kind of learning environment space that people wanted to be in.

LR: In fact, the site of IMI Corona is a site of learning through the many workshops held at the space.

PR: Yes, and this brought out the fact that the most locally relevant of all the activities that was happening at IMI Corona was its function as a location for individual education and empowerment etc., because a lot of the people who were utilising the space didn't have formal education, or extended formal education, and weren't in positions of leadership or power. A lot of them were housewives or full-time mothers who might only have been working occasionally. I'm not saying they had never undertaken paid labour, but they often feelt very limited in terms of the realms that they could access beyond domestic space. The powerful idea emerged that at IMI Corona, they could not only access a different kind of learning, but that they also had things that they could share. They could develop themselves as teachers.

LR: …and so provided the space for their own agency.

PR: Exactly. So how do you transform this manifesto for immigrants in the 21st century to what this space is about? I am an immigrant in Queens and a leader in this space – how do these two things reconcile?

LR: So maybe just to go back a little bit and talk about how the space was actually, literally, functioning from the outset – and then maybe how it transformed over time.

PR: The Queens Museum had been organising in the community, and had relationships with various

community based organisations. And, we had access to a physical space on Roosevelt Avenue. We were also commissioning artists interested in community dynamics to make projects, and had teaching artists that were with us through the New New Yorkers programme (a project that teaches art skills to recent immigrants in their native tongues) who already had an interest in working with immigrants. We had an empty space that we wanted to populate and create community around, so we imported programmes like the New New Yorker style workshops as well as workshops from other organisations that didn't have a big enough space. So we invited New Immigrant Community Empowerment, who have a tiny office, to do their workers' rights workshops there, and brought in the Dreamers of New York State Youth Leadership Council to do their Queens-based work with undocumented youth there, too.

And that was also a model that we used at the Queens Museum. We asked ourselves and others, 'We have space, who wants to use it, how do we activate it?'

So this was one way that we could easily populate a local audience in this space outside the Museum. We then invited Tania to engage with the space, and conceived of her first year being there and living there as research to really understand the local context, which was really important because she wasn't from the community. She had conceived of Immigrant Movement International when she was in Paris, and there were the riots in the suburbs – that is a very different milieu than Corona. This was also a way for her to get to know and understand the local needs, and how the local community may or may not be involved in the larger project. So there was that, there was also an initiative with Creative Time during that first year. The idea was to speak to a broader arts community – Tania had developed Arte Útil as a new genre of art, and we were asking questions of how we define the work, and so there were several Arte Útil gatherings. They weren't specifically meant to address local concerns, but more meta-level questions around how can art be useful not in just a conceptual way or representational way, but rather to make it about something and so the criteria of it being time-specific and that it actually does solve some problem as opposed to…

LR: …addressing something very directly.

PR: Exactly, and so there was the sense of figuring out how this is different from previous practice, and what Tania was hoping to accomplish through Arte Útil. This isn't to say that that is the only type of socially engaged artwork to be made or worth being made, but to distinguish it as a new type of artwork that has a particular set of demands on itself.

Immigrant Movement International (2010-ongoing). La Escuelita de Pensamiento Comunitario Tránsito Amaguaña at IMI Corona. Photos courtesy of the Queens Museum.

LR: Right. And I think that this is where Tania's artistic practice diverges from somebody like Mierle's. In Mierle's work, the art happens in that moment of interaction. That moment may be sustained for a long period of time, and there certainly is potential for change and shift there, but it is not nearly as direct. Her

manifesto is much broader and hits so many different issues like feminism, environmental justice and labour rights, whereas the IMI Corona manifesto was specific on a particular issue, hammering away at some very particular political and economic and social needs around the ideas of migration and nationality and what that means today.

Then, there is a key transition where Tania becomes less involved in the project which is built into the plan from the outset. And so the Council or Consejo comes together in a really robust way, and the work that has been happening over the last two or three years now, not only building the popular education structure for their own self-learning or self-education, but also considering how that has impacted both the structure of immigrant movement and Corona and it's goals going forward.

PR: This transition was multifaceted. As a museum we needed to figure out what we could commit to in terms of keeping the process going. We can't take the place of an artist like Tania. However, there are other artists who have flourished within the platform of IMI Corona, and we had to understand what their role would be in the project going forward. What do they want to achieve? How do we support them? There is a community utilising this space on a regular basis who find everyday value there, and so when we get to who those people are and the real value that they see, and what they feel they need in terms of support to take on the project, and make decisions about the project, this is where we as community organisers and Queens Museum try to come in and fill in some of the institutional void.

We as a staff had to think about what are our assets were. If we were committing to it as a staff, then we were committing to it as members of the community and not just as Museum staff. How were we creating art, as well as a world, as well as a local community that we wanted to be a part of shaping. It was a soul searching for us at the Queens Museum because we knew at some level there was a next level commitment. To be honest, the team assembled at the Museum came out of a popular education methodology: a community organising methodology that gave us a particular perspective. Within the Council at IMI Corona, we had structural issues that we had to solve. Some people who had never been involved in either a non-profit or any type of other organisation as a leader, so how did we want to make decisions? What were their roles? What decisions did they want to actually make, and what decisions did they want to leave to us. Those were things that took a long time to explore and resolve.

LR: Having only been at the Queens Museum for a year, and having only seen IMI Corona up close during this time period, one of the super striking things to me is how this project might embody a question like: 'What is the institutional role of a museum in relationship to a social project like this?' because at the end of the day it is a social project. There were questions about the transparency of our finances in relationship to the project. Many of the questions that the Council members have had for me since I stared really speak to questions about how structures work, and the implicit power dynamics that surround them. I feel the tensions and power relations intensely, but I also think it is important for us to lend that institutional view to the complexities and idiosyncrasies of non-profit structural life, which is depressing on one level and fascinating on another. But also so that the Council can determine what relationship they want to have with the Museum, and in this respect, I feel very much like Tania: that as long as the Consejo wants to continue this project, the Queens Museum should support it in whatever way we co-determine, and I think that this is a constant renegotiation that has to happen because as the Consejo evolves and shifts. As new members join and past members leave, the face of this relationship is going to change.

Immigrant Movement International (2010-ongoing). IMI Women's Health group Mujeres en Movimientoexercise classes in Corona Plaza, led by Veronica Ramirez, 2014 Photo courtesy of the Queens Museum.

PR: The relationship between Tania and the new people is very different than three years ago when a lot of people had a much more direct relationship to Tania. Many people who use this space now have a very hazy, loose understanding of who Tania is and what her relationship to the project. And there is a difference between Tania doing an art project in the name of IMI Corona (such as when IMI Corona joined Occupy Wall St, which Tania was very much involved in - an intervention in Occupy as well as a public intervention) and the Museum bringing another artist in to the project, with whatever they want to do. They don't have the same relationship to Immigrant Movement as Tania does, and so there is this question of who can do what in IMI Corona's name. One of the few decisions that we made consciously was that Immigrant Movement International was something that could be continued by Tania under the IMI banner, even when her role in Queens came to an end. In turn, the decision was that the project here in Corona could also be somewhat independent.

LR: Essentially, Tania Bruguera initiated IMI Corona, which then evolved and spun off from the Immigrant Movement International project. Her instigation created a platform that the museum supported and continues to support, even though it may change its form from time to time, as the community sees fit. And of course, here enters the cloudy, sometimes uncomfortable space of co-authorship.

PR: Yes, there has been some confusion about how to connect with IMI Corona. There are many proposals from artists and organisations asking if they can bring a specific initiative to IMI Corona. We

have to acknowledge that when a project happens at IMI Corona, it is not just a Museum process, because it involves community members' time. There has to be something more in it than, ' this is a cool art project', and of course it takes time to develop relationships. So we have said no to a lot of these things even when they are artists that we think are really doing good work, because they have to be willing to invest in this process and to leave behind a residue or skill.

LR: But it goes even further than this because I think now there is an agenda that is coming directly from the Consejo that wants to be addressed as the primary function of IMI, and so as it evolves it may still be the case that people come out of the woodwork saying 'hey, I have this idea' and the Consejo is responds 'yes that dovetails beautifully, lets figure it out' or 'well, no, we have other priorities.'

PR: The key is that no staff member at the Queens Museum can impose such a project.

LR: Right. You can make an introduction and see if they think it works within the priorities the Consejo has set out. I just want to point out that I don't think that this project would have been possible had the Queens Museum not had a long history of organising in the community around the Museum. When you talk about Tania's year of research, it speaks to that because the only way that there would have been a surround of people to engage with to begin with was due to the community organising process that had been underway for years.

PR: One of the uncomfortable processes has been the necessity to address the way in which a lot of the workshops that happened there (which started organically or have a real relationship with the space) may not necessarily all align with the values and goals as stated by the Council that developed over time. So we had to actually have someone go and visit every workshop and explain the values and how they came about, and how there might be some conflicts between some of the values here and the values that individuals, teachers or groups using the space have. How do we reconcile that? There might be interest in incorporating these values but not a knowledge of how to do that: like, 'I'm a Peruvian dance group using the space... How am I supposed to address LGBT issues in my class, in a way that is not forced? I don't feel comfortable with the fact that I don't have the training or vocabulary to do it.' So right now we need to provide support to all our educators. In the case of a couple of people, a couple of groups, we had to ask them to find another space because it is not aligning with where the space is. That is really uncomfortable.

Immigrant Movement International, (2010-Ongoing). Useful Art Association event, in association with the Queens Museum and Creative Time, 2011. Photograph courtesy of Studio Tania Bruguera

This process can be very awkward because there are people long-affiliated and have relationships with people on the Council. Sometimes they are even family members, so it can get very hairy: but we had to make the decision that if we are going to go through this process we had to have an ethos that we can apply across the board. There are only so many hours of the day that we can use this space, so how are we going to spend our time?

LR: What are the priorities? It is a question of setting priorities.

PR: Right: what are the ways in which one must be responsible and accountable, as part of a community. IMI Corona isn't just a rental space for rehearsals.

LR: And there is a fundamental agenda: there always has been. So how are you seeing the relationship between the early days, when the international, global questions were front and centre, and the evolution of the space to incorporate the values and criteria being used by the Consejo currently. Globalisation is not news, but the international or cross-border relationships that people have in Queens are of a different quality. I have been searching for the right term for this because it is not global or international it is something else that encompasses very personal connections to other locations, via family and friends and history. In this context, the international relationship isn't based on capital and the exchange of capital, and so that is sort of a unique flavour that I think predicts also the way that people interact with the big picture question. It is very personal, which makes it not just a political issue.

PR: There is a connection to the places that migrants come from that is very direct manifested in direct support to families or communities elsewhere, for instance. They are building projects abroad, they are starting organisations here. Then I think the interesting thing about connecting to a place like IMI Corona for them is that there is something else beyond this little circuit that is coming in as information or resource or just expanding their thinking, like proposing, 'oh okay well I might be from this little town in

Ecuador and this person might be from a little town in Puebla but we have some similarities, we have some differences, we have ways in which we are trying to preserve our culture here that need to be challenged'. And so there are similarities about the things that they are confronting, but also great differences. I think there is an interesting way in which we are trying to figure out how to support the way that they are thinking about or approach these circuits.

So, for example, if you have built up an Ecuadorian folk dance tradition that is very much about transmission of this information and learning it from a particular source, how do we challenge some of the more patriarchal elements of that tradition without not throwing the baby out with the bathwater, acknowledging the fact that there is a lot of knowledge and wisdom there? One of the ways that we are addressing this is by doing a dance residency with the Peruvian, Mexican, and Ecuadorian groups who are all working with the same dancer. This dancer is second generation Peruvian, who studied traditional Peruvian dance, is also half Puerto Rican - with that Caribbean history - and is a contemporary dancer working in New York. Together they are thinking through questions of identity, generation, and style.

LR: And they are doing this through their own culturally specific lens, looking at where the intersections might be as migrants…

PR: ...and together in the sense of what are they facing as immigrants, and the limitations and politics and competition amongst the various folk groups, and how each stand out, and how their values differ or run parallel.

Immigrant Movement International (2010-ongoing). The monument quilt project to fight rape culture: IMI members in collaboration with FORCE artists and the Queens Museum, 2014. Photo courtesy of the Queens Museum.

The other dynamic is an acknowledgement that there is a lot of political context in the United States or internationally that they don't really feel like they have access to or understand. In fact, as the Black Lives Matter movement emerged here in the United States, a lot of folks at IMI Corona were asking about the meaning of this movement. What they were getting via Spanish lanugage media (some of which is quite conservative) was incomplete, and whilst racism (and its history) within their own countries exists, it is very different to African-American racism. So really understanding where this trauma was located, how relationships with the police is also fraught, but different. The Consejo decided that they wanted to spend a year really understanding its context and what it might mean to be in solidarity with it. So: how do we as a Museum become the conduit for them to do that, through working with artists that are either Afra-Latino or African-American. Understanding is happening through art-making, collaboration and meeting other organisations: getting a sense of what Black Lives Matter means and in what way IMI Corona might be part of that.

So both of those things are interesting to me, and feel very much like they are international but in a

very different way than Tania would propose to be thinking about the immigrant crisis as an international crisis. It had very much to do with IMI Corona as individuals.

LR: It is very personal. This is what I was trying to get at: there is something about this hyper-localism that is extremely personal but also profoundly related to these really big questions and issues, that is - for example - a very different approach to sending a message to the United Nations. These are very different strategies, but I think what is interesting about the way that IMI Corona is evolving is that I could foresee a moment where there is a desire to have an impact in this 'international' space. In fact, we have been talking more and more about language justice and engagement, and how to use the Museum as a platform for civic engagement that can reach a larger community of people.

There are all kinds of different registers that people need to be working on if the change goals are to be realised. This one is very fundamental. IMI Corona is made up of self-selected members of a community who have identified themselves by saying ‘hey I want to be involved in this quite radical project’. This group, while members change along the way, move through several years of work, coming out a couple of years later with not only the popular education model of thinking but also asking what Black Lives Matter means, and how it might be responded to, seems to be a very important political-cultural moment.

PR: Another priority the Consejo has focused on relates to the diversity of Queens. While there are very many different immigrant groups in Queens, IMI Corona is very focused on is Spanish speaking immigrants in our neighbourhood. So another thing this year has been to ask: how do we create relationships with other immigrant groups who speak different languages? How can we learn from them? So we have embarked on a collaboration with another local organisation called Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), who organise South Asian immigrants who are already multi-lingual and multinational themselves. We have also been working with Caracol, which is an interpretation and translation co-operative. Underpinning these collaborations is the attempt to stage series of encounters between members of these various organisation, because often times what happens is that their multilingual leaders talk to each other to work on strategy, but the members never actually connect. So it was really interesting to bring a group of folks from IMI Corona over to DRUM - which is 14 years old now - to have the members chairing a meeting about where their organisation is at, and how they came to it, and to see some of the similarities but also to see that IMI Corona could potentially take this form: if it wants to, which is also a question.

LR: So it sounds like IMI Corona is beginning to work outside the network of its own specific set of skills. And to go back to the point you were making much earlier about social practice and the way that social practice programmes within MFA departments are shifting a bit, I think that is a really interesting piece of the equation. If you are getting social practice students coming from these various fields and they are the ones that are going to become embedded in communities in various ways, their inherent understanding of skills sharing that is needed, and the bridge building you can create by linking different communities that are working towards similar goals but maybe have different contexts.

Global Action on International Migrants Day. D18 march organised by Tania Brugera for first International Migrants Day. December 18, 2011 in Lower Manhattan, where the Migrant Manifesto was read.

PR: For me, it has been interesting that the artists that we have started investing in are now thinking through what more can we do with them. That relationship is a relationship above and beyond an art commission, it is time spent relationship building, and so on. We don't necessarily know what the next step is but we are always thinking, both the artist and the Consejo, thinking about how can we build on what we have done before.

LR: And I think that speaks to the embeddedness of the project. It is not just about swooping in and swooping out. These are long-term engagements, they are very particular circumstances, there is a lot of trust-building that needs to happen. I think that the depth of that needs to evolve over time, and once you have that kind of relationship you want to keep on building it. As important as it is to also diversify it, there has to be a balance there, and when it is a community effort that is as strong as this one is, it is going to be very clear about who is going to fit and who is not going to fit. There is always that anxiety about introducing something new into the equation and how that is going to play out: because at the end of the day this is a very delicate ecology, even just with the Consejo, never mind the much larger community of folks that use the space and come to the workshops. There is a lot of precarity as well because the Consejo and the community members involved participate in their really precious spare time. They make a space for this in their lives. That brings further pressure on the Queens Museum to respect the process, and nuture it in the tradition of community engagement that we have had here, and to the extent that it is desired. This is always the balance.

PR: The other thing is there is a real connection between the language justice piece and the Consejo's understandings of themselves as people who can teach and people who are artists. Which is interesting there has always been a kernel of that, that everyone has a kernel of the Gramscian ideal of the intellectual and that everyone is an intellectual and that everyone could be an artist not necessarily all in the same way. But it is interesting to see how many of those people perceive their own work as artistic work. So then there

is this other piece that is not social practice students and is not community artists, it is the community as artists themselves who perceive having arts experiences and participating, having art woven through their activism and their everyday lives as a right. The same way that language interpretation is a right. It is actually kind of radical in a way. These aren't things that people have been taught to say they deserved and expected and could demand.

So to me, I feel like if I could point to a success or something about what this process has done for the community in which the project is situated, it is that is has seated this value system that exceeds the space of IMI Corona or the Queens Museum. It creates a space for community members to say, 'I am going to go to school Parent Teacher Association and ask why is this piece of text is not translated'. This creates an environment around themselves. Or some organisation might invite them to go to a rally or a demonstration and they will have a list of questions around interpretation and what are the terms, what are the objectives – having that sense of agency around the idea that their participation is going to be framed and respected in a particular way. That is really encouraging to me, and it is something that teaches us about the difference between our initial attempts at providing translation and interpretation to what really happen when you invest more in developing dialogues or spaces for dialogues that are more seamless – spaces where people can really participate.

LR: These are questions of radical participation. I see this in the questions the Consejo asked me – particularly the complex questions about the Queens Museum's relationship to IMI Cornoa, because it is important not only to be transparent about it but it is also essential for our relationship that this be part of the dialogue.

PR: Yes, and every step is challenging. Thinking about principles of inclusion and making them real is a long, long process that an institution engages in because it's the right thing to do and is never going to be perfect.

LR: The key is that there must be intention put towards actually making it work, and making it work better. It's not going to be perfect but it has to be improving all the time: because if are not maintaining those values of inclusion in a bigger sense then you are not walking the walk, especially for a place like Queens Museum.

PR: The interesting thing is what are we learning from each other and how are our activities build upon each other. We are building towards something.

Laura Raicovich and Prerana Reddy

Laura Raicovich is President and Executive Director of the Queens Museum, New York, where she directs all aspects of the Museum's activities and is charged with envisioning its future. She is a champion of socially engaged art practices that address the most pressing social, political and ecological issues of our times, and has defined her career with artist-driven projects and programmes. Prior to the Queens Museum, Raicovich launched Creative Time's Global Initiatives, expanding the institution's international reach. She came to Creative Time following a decade at Dia Art Foundation, where she served as Deputy Director. Previously she worked at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Public Art Fund. She lectures internationally and has contributed regularly to The Brooklyn Rail, and is the author of A Diary of Mysterious Difficulties, a book based on Viagra and Cialis spam, recently published by Publication Studio.
Prerana Reddy is currently the Director of Public Events at the Queens Museum of Art, where in addition to organizing their screenings, performances, discussions, and community-based collaborative programs and exhibits both on- and offsite, she developed an intensive arts and; social justice program for immigrant youth as well as a community development initiative for Corona, Queens residents, many of whom are new immigrants with mixed status families and limited English language proficiency. She has also curated "Fatal Love", an exhibition of South Asian American Contemporary Art as well commissioned

two editions of Corona Plaza: Center of Everywhere," Queens Museum's socially-interactive public art projects.

Lay Theatre and the Eruption of the Audience

Alan Read

Rotherhithe Theatre Workshop at Hope Wharf, 2001. Photo: Alan Read

I worked in a small pedagogic project during the 1980s called Rotherhithe Theatre Workshop, in south east London, alongside a remarkable theatre-maker named David Slater, who has since then been committed to the work of Entelechy Arts in the Lewisham area nearby, in what must count as one of the most inspiring durational performances one might imagine, should duration ever mean what it really says: that is keeping on keeping on. In Rotherhithe I was working amongst a vivacious local dock-side neighbourhood, and a no less vital peer group of theatre and choreographic students from Dartington College of Arts in Devon, who funded the project from its inception in the mid 1970s to its closure in 1991 [1]. We were certainly not alone, Loraine Leeson and others were doing exceptional work in the very same contested area at the time.

London Docklands Development Corporation and Incoming Capital, 1983-2015. Photo: Alan Read

This period spans, almost exactly during the 1980's, the flooding of the Docklands area of South East London where the Workshop was located, with free-market capital driven by the unelected quango, the London Docklands Development Corporation formed in 1981. The LDDC was free from the constraints of democratically empowered local-planning and incentivised by offering massive tax breaks to those multi corporations that were willing to decamp to what was, at the beginning of all this at least, a much-loved yet rather isolated neighbourhood in the bow of the Thames between Tower Bridge and the Royal Docks.

Plant Science, Forster & Heighes, 2013. Photo: Alan Read

Amongst those groups, that numbered more than 200 students in all, was Andrea Phillips, (who happened to be one of the convenors of the panel this writing was for), Kevin Finnan, the now Director of Motionhouse who choreographed the opening of the Para-Olympic Games in London, the theatre makers Forster & Heighes whose work features in this quarter's *20th Century Magazine*, Sadie Hennessy the artist and founder of Hutstock, the Booker Prize short-listed novelist Deborah Levy, the curator and previous director of the Green Room, Bush Hartshorn, the performance and award winning filmmakers Desperate Optimists, Michael Hulls the lighting designer, amongst many others. Communitarians all you could say with no presumption as to what kind of community might be at stake.

The Grave of Prince Lee Boo, St Mary's Church, Rotherhithe, 1995. Photo: Alan Read.

And the point was not *them* of course (though their own pedagogic development was almost by way of a side-bar our responsibility) but those with whom they worked, in their hundreds, making performances, theatre, dance on the street, in schools, in older people's homes, in council accommodation, in centres for those with disabilities, in the city farm, in the Peak Freans factory site, in the launderette, the hairdressers, the Café Gallery and the park itself. A community of those with nothing, really, but location and some sort of 'spare time' in common. And sometimes, over that 16 years, we got to work in our theatre, in a dilapidated warehouse on the river, now split into four 'luxury' apartments, the most recent having sold for several million pounds just last year. Well, it does have a splendid river view.

Warehouse Crane, Rotherhithe Theatre Workshop, 1983. Photo: Alan Read

I am not sure that this kind of commitment is unthinkable today by pedagogic institutions, I am sure there are positive examples represented throughout the UK and beyond, but I think institutions with their beady eye to the bottom line of profit and loss, and both their other eyes trained remorselessly on the consequences of student feedback, might now baulk at the opportunity to unleash their finely tuned cohort onto the vagaries of such untested locations, such erratic publics, such potential for *loss* as well as gain, such potential for 'getting lost' as finding ones way, such potential for disappearances of the unmarked, as distinct to the viable and the visible, such opportunity for laziness in resistance to a work ethic as capitalisable productivity.

*Theatre & Everyday Life (Routledge: London, 1*995). Cover Image: Marketa Luskacova.

There were of course far more of those who we *never* worked with than we reached, and reflecting now on the gatekeeping of the theatre and its resources by a predominantly white, disenfranchised working class community, I shudder to think how our work made so few inroads towards exploring the largely marginalised and embattled ethnic diversities of the area. I flinch on reading my own prose on this matter in the book Theatre & Everyday Life that I wrote in the years immediately after the closure of Rotherhithe Theatre Workshop, where I came up with a counter intuitive concept, Lay Theatre, to describe all those in the commons at odds with professionalism, that I am happy to say was so counter intuitive it was barely ever mentioned again by anyone else, anywhere.

I wrote the book as a 'less than rapid rebuttal' to Peter Brook's romantic work, The Empty Space of 1968, that had started with that resolutely expansionist, if not imperialist line: 'I can take any space and call it a bare stage'. And I followed up with my own ludicrously portentous line: 'That is not in question any more than rulers throughout centuries have said, I can take this space and call it my country'. A sentiment that I rather regretted when, some years later, Peter Brook quoted it back to me after a Platform event on the stage of the National Theatre where his space-finder general, Jean Guy Lecat, and I had been musing on the significance of space for theatrical acts. I wasn't put off writing though as I felt there was some writing to do on these very matters. The question of community that is, which appeared in large measure at the time to have been immune to theory.

There *were* books available, amongst them Steve Gooch's useful but slender All Together Now: Community Theatre – An Alternative View (1984), but the vitality of theoretical speculation passed this writing by on the other side as though questions of community were ones best conducted in languages that were as accessible as the principled commitment to access in the arts raging at the time under the broad front of a soft socialism. I thought this a mistake with the whiff of patronage about it as though the avant garde in its minimalist intelligence had the sole right to critical scrutiny while those publicly accessible forms would be necessity consigned to the bin marked utilitarian, 'welfarian' you could say. Honourable exceptions here would include Sonja Kuftinek's later incisive work, *S*taging America (2005) on such problems in community inflected writing, with particular attention being paid to the work of US company Cornerstone Theatre.

But as the big-gun battalions of socialised theory took off through the 1980s and 1990s (leaping to the social aesthetics of the 2000s) it was as though this community 'movement' had never existed so weak its claim to anyone's theoretical, by which I mean reasoned, critical attention. Despite the fact that Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Judith Butler, through to Nicholas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop and Shannon Jackson were centrally concerned with questions of democracy, precarity, participation and assembly, the kinds of practice gathered and discussed at the Liverpool Biennial event were peculiarly absent as though either precluded from discussion by their plain, banal and often minimal outcomes, or somehow considered off-limits for their pre-intersectional commitments (despite the obvious fact that many of these movements were always and already the inspiring forerunners of everything intersectionality later claimed in attempts to reacquaint identity groupings that theory had worked actively to separate in the first place).

Theatre, Intimacy & Engagement, (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2008). Cover Image: Helen Levitt.

A few years later, Theatre Intimacy and Engagement (2008) was my response to Jerzy Grotowski's Towards A Poor Theatre, wondering why we aestheticise the minimalist purveyors of *poor* in art, often practicing their minimalism with the support of a healthy trust fund, when there are quite enough 'poor' to be getting on with more materially outside this charmed circle. And, then, more recently, with many of those early experiences still in mind, Theatre in the Expanded Field (2014) is a response to Richard

Southern's magisterial book of 1962, Seven Ages of the Theatre*,* in which I make some arguments about what 'radical inclusion' might look like if we stopped legislating against the inclusion of infants, animals and inorganic things in a largely ego-ridden humanistic theatre. A theatre that, the company at the Liverpool Biennial conference excepted, has largely failed to notice *both* Goya's protagonists in his magnificent painting Men Fighting with Sticks, hanging in the Prado Museum in Madrid, are drowning, equally quickly, as they simultaneously sink into the sands being swallowed up by the environment that they presume to be the stage of their conflictual angst.

So, there were in these recent years some people, some practices, and there were some concepts, in the form of books. But what have I *learnt*?

Before

Well, *before* intersectionality was given a name, when it was just the very complicated and time-consuming thing that people like David Slater *did* with each of their days, everyday, before relational aesthetics really got cooked, before participation became the key to engage the precariat, before publics and counter publics were discovered, before criticality, the quotidian, pedestrianism, and immersivity became the watchwords, then something, with some if not all features of these variously described things, was going down, seven days a week, alongside Frances Rifkin at Recreation Ground in the 1970's and then *Banner* in the 80's, alongside groups like our neighbours London Bubble and further afield Augusto Boal, Monstrous Regiment and Joint Stock, Freeform and Cultural Partnerships Limited. It was, I think, always considered a 'broad front', like the glowering weather, like a meteorology of practices that eddied and flowed alongside others without having, *necessarily*, to take account of others. Though it was always nice when we did, take account that is. And Francis Rifkin and others were especially good at such accounting. And pre-digital as it all was, it was released from the anxiety of the archive, the fetishisation of the Facebook Time-Line that binds.

From this congruence of practices I have learnt that *before* can be such a stupid word, and it is obvious as I intone that litany: 'before relationality', etc. etc. With all respect to my (ex) historian friends: who really cares what went *before*? I mean really, when there are pressing social commitments at stake. And those terms are just the death rattle of stupid security, our investment in conceptualisations of things that we know deserve better than words that fail the complexity of passions that we have shared and the passions of others now gone. Albert Hunt was one fondly remembered here in Liverpool on a weekend when his spirit floats over the proceedings like a benign force of nature.

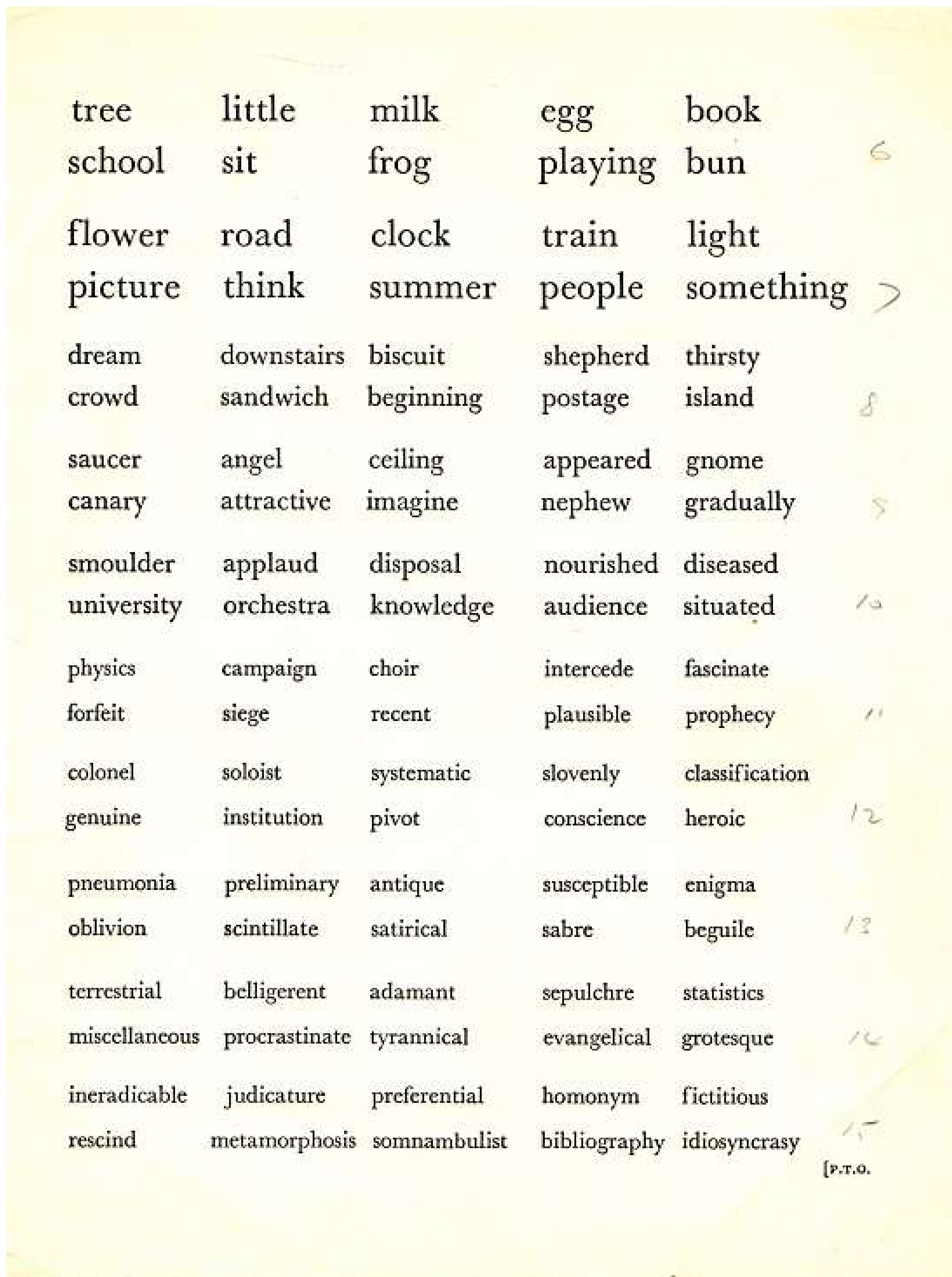
After

Before might be a stupid word, but without a fuller sense of the past, the word *after* can expose stupidity equally well. The theatre history that I have been sketching in here has, as the excellent Liverpool Biennial seeks to problematise, been at best occluded and sometimes elided by more recent histories of apparently related and relational things, that might benefit precisely from tapping this longer history of the *coeval,* what it means 'to be' *during* others.

During

There is certainly a gaping, yawning, Community Theatre shaped hole right at the heart of Nicolas Bourriaud, Clare Bishop and Shannon Jackson's excellent work, where it might do some serious irritating of their well-held convictions. To have come about and done one's work *during* these things that are recovered, recorded and celebrated in events such as the Liverpool Biennial, *relationality* and its various bastard brethren, siblings and offspring, might if concepts had any agency, offer us pause for thought.

Although I am not at all sure what direction such thought might take given that no one ever anyway deployed the term **'**community**'** without the scariest of emboldened scare quotes attached to it.



tree	little	milk	egg	book
school	sit	frog	playing	bun
flower	road	clock	train	light
picture	think	summer	people	something
dream	downstairs	biscuit	shepherd	thirsty
crowd	sandwich	beginning	postage	island
saucer	angel	ceiling	appeared	gnome
canary	attractive	imagine	nephew	gradually
smoulder	applaud	disposal	nourished	diseased
university	orchestra	knowledge	audience	situated
physics	campaign	choir	intercede	fascinate
forfeit	siege	recent	plausible	prophecy
colonel	soloist	systematic	slovenly	classification
genuine	institution	pivot	conscience	heroic
pneumonia	preliminary	antique	susceptible	enigma
oblivion	scintillate	satirical	sabre	beguile
terrestrial	belligerent	adamant	sepulchre	statistics
miscellaneous	procrastinate	tyrannical	evangelical	grotesque
ineradicable	judicature	preferential	homonym	fictitious
rescind	metamorphosis	somnambulist	bibliography	idiosyncrasy

[P.T.O.

Schonell Reading Test, Alan Read's School Copy, 1965. Courtesy: Alan Read

But concepts don't, have agency that is, as I said they are more often than not stupid, and we get what we deserve from them. But unlike the philosopher John Ó Maoilearca who proposes *All Thoughts are Equal* (2015) in his lovely new book, I do *not* think all concepts are equally stupid. Unlike terms like '*In Yer Face Theatre*' that you know (and the fine author knows) is redundant before it has even left your tongue, or Political Theatre, or Community Theatre that fall hopelessly short of our hopes, some concepts strike us,

now and again, as prescient, persuasive and even sustainable for more than the few examples offered, before we realise that all exemplary cases are exceptional by their very nature. My examples are not yours but this does not mean we cannot share and expand our vocabularies of that keeping keeping on, and the absolute necessity to *stop* whenever continuous *delivery* begins to do the damage that it does.

Los Angeles River from the Air, 2014. Photo: Lee Barden

And, we need to remain vigilant to the lessons of that 'keeping on' wherever we notice it, for those for whom stopping is unthinkable. While I am talking over, enjoying talking yes, but falling prey to that disease of the occasion (such as the platform of a Liverpool Biennial), *delivery*, I am talking over those such as David Slater who is keeping, keeping-on. And he is not alone, as that 'keeping, keeping on' is everywhere we look. I was writing these notes in late 2015 for delivery in December 2015, and *The Guardian* I was scanning to avoid doing what I was supposed to be doing, carried this picture of the 51 mile-long Los Angeles River. The feature is headlined in such a way as to catch the culturalists' eye, referencing Frank Gehry and a job to be done, that only Starchitects with their super-powers can apparently do.

But embedded in the feature itself is the modest figure of Lewis MacAdams, a seventy-year-old poet and activist who founded the Friends of Los Angeles River in *1985*. So, he has been going at it, as long as I have *not.* He, that is Lewis MacAdams, has been going at it some time longer than Theaster Gates, whose work seems increasingly problematic at one level of peripatetic cosmopolitan mobility, yet I very much admire it on its more settled and sustained occasions. And Lewis is not best happy. He reminds me of David Slater in some ways when he was at his very best quizzing in continuously critical care those who came and went with the fashion. He is not best happy at the sudden announcement that after forty years of his own activism Frank Gehry has just been put into 'total control of the development of the river with $1.4billion of federal and city funding'. Sounds like us in 1983 when the LDDC started to insist they knew what was best for us in Rotherhithe. And it is not just the years of activism that hurts, as he puts it, this has been: "… a 40 year *Performance Artwork* aimed at raising awareness of the plight of the river'. A Performance Artwork no less, and certainly no more as Lewis is not about to conceptualise this art work for us given what he now has to do with Frank coming into town and all.

Well, of course Lewis is not alone, for way back when in 1992, I remember Andrea Phillips working with the London-based artists and activists Platform on the Lost Rivers of London project and the 'Effra

Redevelopment Agency', a lovely spin on the LDDC. A congruent, coeval and critically adjacent spin that reminds us of the circularity of our practices, the shared influences of our small wins and devastating losses, our coeval creations and critical disagreements, our 'our', always having been at stake and always will in an ongoing association of social justice and commitment to communality.

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[1] 'Lay Theatre', *Theatre & Everyday Life (Routledge: London, 1*995).

Alan Read

Alan Read is Director of *Performance Foundation* and Professor of Theatre at King's College, London. He was co-ordinator of The Council of Europe Workshop on Theatre and Communities for Dartington College of Arts between 1981-83. He went on to work alongside David Slater, Director of Rotherhithe Theatre Workshop in the Docklands area of South East London through the 1980s. In the 1990s he was Director of Talks at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. He was appointed Professor of Theatre at Roehampton University in 1997 and King's College London in 2006. Read is the author of *Theatre & Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance* (1993), *Theatre, Intimacy & Engagement: The Last Human Venue* (2008), *Theatre in the Expanded Field: Seven Approaches to Performance* (2013) and *Theatre & Law* (2015). He worked with Andrea Phillips as the editor of *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation* (1996). Read's most recent work has included writing for radio, *Plato's Cave* (BBC Radio 4, 2013,) and *Dreadful Trade* (BBC Radio 4, 2015). His most recent research concerns the fate of the dramatically insignificant for a book entitled *The Theatre & its Poor: Performance, Power and Politics*, due in 2017, and *All the Home's a Stage: From Oikos to Auditorium,* to be published in 2018.

Drawing Lines across History: Reactivation and Annotation

Ed Webb-Ingall

Close up of Oliver Plender annotations on Ed Webb-Ingall Looking Backwards in the Present Document, 2016.

The instigation of artistic projects in neighbourhoods and for community groups, motivated by the potential for social change through increased access to modes of self expression, was what came to define the Community Arts movement in the 1970s. This is not simply something that happened in the past to look back at nostalgically, instead it continues to provide strategies and a language that can be reactivated, built on and learnt from in the present. I am interested in reactivating the ways in which Community Arts projects were originally developed in order to more fully understand and critique them and to ask: what can we learn about the current moment when we attempt this process of reactivation? The methods developed in the 1970s to initiate and evaluate Community Arts projects continue to provide a means to facilitate new Community Arts projects. These past processes, and the materials that emerged as a result of them (videos, pamphlets, newsletters, articles), create a critical and productive utopian impulse; they provide multiple models of resistance, offering a means to understand how individuals might engage in collective acts of representation, providing a framework to explore the role and definition of the word community in new contexts.

Writing on the re-appropriation of archival materials, art historian Paolo Magagnoli suggests that such works provide 'a resource and strategy central to struggles of all subaltern cultural and social groups… and show possibilities which are still valid in the present' [1]. The development of contemporary Community Arts projects, triggered by the reactivation of materials and processes produced and developed the 1970s, allows me to draw lines across history. This process of reactivation creates what American artist Sharon Hayes, describes as 'transhistoric relations': using historical materials to speak from or through particular historical moments. These materials help 'to uncover, in the present moment, a given historic genealogy that was wilfully obscured or erased, or to unspool a historic trajectory so that another present or future moment might have been, or might be possible'[2]. Film theorist and historian Thomas Waugh suggests a similar approach to the reactivation of political films 'whose original political context and thus 'use-value' have lapsed, but which may find new uses and engage new aesthetics in new contexts'[3]. I have been developing a number of projects that draw on the history of community video, which makes up part of the wider Community Arts movement. As Waugh proposes, this has involved recovering community videos from the 1970s in order to produce and facilitate new community video projects through meetings, screenings and workshops[4]. Screenings of the original videos to relevant community groups, based on interest, identity or locality, combined with the reactivation of the techniques and approaches carried out in the production of them has triggered the creation of new video projects. The collective experience of making and screening these videos has established a shared language to understand, reflect on and critique the history, processes and aims of community video making.

As a result of these processes of historical research and reactivation I have produced a list or set of instructions that set out to explain how one might initiate and facilitate a Community Arts project. For this edition of the journal I have invited a number of socially engaged practitioners to annotate and amend the list. The list is not a suggestion of best practice or an attempt to erase or smooth over the inherent complications and different approaches to facilitating Community Arts projects but more of a provocation. I see it as a work in progress, like the archival materials and historical processes I borrow from, to be constantly (re)negotiated, annotated and amended by those who use it. The list is a trigger and an invitation to share ideas and demystify processes and practices, the start of a conversation, with the suggestion that it can only 'work' when in a process of modification. The versions of the list produced subsequently operate as evidence of the conversations and exchanges that have taken place since its inception; the annotated form suggests a dialogue rather than a fixed position, something which is constantly in motion.

Below is the original list, followed by three annotated versions. Please feel free to annotate the list and suggest amendments and send it back

Full sized image can be found here.

LOOKING BACKWARDS IN THE PRESENT, A LIST, A PROVOCATION *OR* SOMETHINGS I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FACILITATOR AND THE PARTICIPANT IN A COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT

1. There are roughly three kinds of community arts project:
   - Those initiated, made by and for the participants – usually with a sense of urgency from within. For example Squatters making tapes to protect their housing or Tenants associations making films about the state of their home to show to the council.
   - Those initiated by outsiders invited in to work with them on a specific project or theme or to share a skill of some sort. For example young people learning to use video cameras or artists helping organize a community festival.
   - When artists with no prior relationship invite themselves into a community with the assumption that the chosen community would in some way benefit from their expertise or knowledge.

2. In order for those projects described as the 'outsider invited in' to be 'effective' there must be some slippage between how the roles of insider and outsider are defined – the participants/insiders need to develop a sense of being not simply just the subject but also the author *and* the facilitator/outsider needs to develop a relationship or a stake in the aims of the participants

3. The relative success of a project is based on the depth of the relationships formed – by this I mean knowing the participants and them knowing the artist.

4. Measures of success must be shared, along with intentions, at the start of a project, these may well change as a project develops and any changes to either of these must be made clear and communicated to the group.

5. Outcomes - if the measure of success or the intention is the creation of a tangible object – video, text, performance, sculpture – the authorship and ownership of this object must also be agreed upon at the start of the project.

6. Both facilitators and participants should propose outcomes and there should be room for these to change and develop as a project progresses.

7. Measures of success should be according to the needs of individuals involved and based on a value system agreed by all participants. For example learning to use a video camera, having a conversation and a cup of tea and being asked ones opinion and listened to on camera might be equally 'valuable' depending on the needs of the individual.

8. Multiple spaces and moments for feedback should be built into any project and the forms which feedback takes should be varied and sensitive to the specific needs of the participants.

9. A shared language must be developed between all participants and facilitators.

10. Time is key - the relationship between the length of time spent on a project and its efficacy are inextricably linked.

Anna Colin, Curator and Co-Founder/Director Open School East

Full sized image can be found here.

LOOKING BACKWARDS IN THE PRESENT, A LIST, A PROVOCATION

OR

SOMETHINGS I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FACILITATOR AND THE PARTICIPANT IN A COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT

1. There are roughly three kinds of community arts project:
   - Those initiated, made by and for the participants – usually with a sense of urgency from within. For example Squatters making tapes to protect their housing or Tenants associations making films about the state of their home to show to the council.
   - Those initiated by outsiders invited in to work with them on a specific project or theme or to share a skill of some sort. For example young people learning to use video cameras or artists helping organize a community festival.
   - When artists with no prior relationship invite themselves into a community with the assumption that the chosen community would in some way benefit from their expertise or knowledge.

2. In order for those projects described as the 'outsider invited in' to be 'effective' there must be some slippage between how the roles of insider and outsider are defined – the participants/insiders need to develop a sense of being not simply just the subject but also the author *and* the facilitator/outsider needs to develop a relationship or a stake in the aims of the participants.

3. The relative success of a project is based on the depth of the relationships formed – by this I mean knowing the participants and them knowing the artist.

4. Measures of success must be shared, along with intentions, at the start of a project, these may well change as a project develops and any changes to either of these must be made clear and communicated to the group.

5. Outcomes - if the measure of success or the intention is the creation of a tangible object – video, text, performance, sculpture – the authorship and ownership of this object must also be agreed upon at the start of the project.

6. Both facilitators and participants should propose outcomes and there should be room for these to change and develop as a project progresses.

7. Measures of success should be according to the needs of individuals involved and based on a value system agreed by all participants. For example learning to use a video camera, having a conversation and a cup of tea and being asked ones opinion and listened to on camera might be equally 'valuable' depending on the needs of the individual.

8. Multiple spaces and moments for feedback should be built into any project and the forms which feedback take should be varied and sensitive to the specific needs of the participants.

9. A shared language must be developed between all participants and facilitators.

10. Time is key - the relationship between the length of time spent on a project and its efficacy are inextricably linked.

c 16/2/16 20:21
Comment: This first kind of project tends to have strong **local, grassroots** and **activist** components (as your example shows straight after, but I do think these three words need to feature in the definition).

c 16/2/16 19:24
Comment: I would define this. Them as in local communities, as in community artists, or both? The idea of artists inviting other artists and of peer-to-peer mentoring is important in the history of the community arts movement (and art history in general).

c 16/2/16 19:25
Comment: I would introduce the figure of the commissioner at this stage. It seems to me that artists don't invite themselves in a community as much as they get invited by commissioners to insert themselves in a given community. If we are talking about legitimacy, consideration of how long the commissioner has been active in this community, and how, is also important here.

c 16/2/16 20:22
Comment: This is a huge topic. To avoid repetition – and without wanting to be self-promotional – some aspects of this topic are covered in the contribution I have put together for this same issue of Stages in collaboration with 5 other people. We talk about the benefits of being an outsider, authorship and embedded participation, among other subjects.

c 16/2/16 19:53
Comment: I think this is really nicely and concisely put. 'Depth' is more all-encompassing and complex than 'trust', which tends to take centre stage in discussions about success.

c 16/2/16 20:41
Comment: I would place further emphasis on evaluation for want of a better word. Taking stock of what has been learnt in the process, and of what should be repeated or avoided in the future, is key to the flourishing of any collective project.

c 16/2/16 20:36
Comment: Time is indeed key. So key I would have it higher up on the list.

c 16/2/16 20:39
Comment:
The terms 'antagonism' and 'tension' are absent from this list, despite often occupying a core position in such projects. I would advocate for their productive and transformative potential.

Full sized image can be found here.

Michael Birchall, Curator of Public Practice Tate Liverpool

Full sized image can be found here.

LOOKING BACKWARDS IN THE PRESENT, A LIST, A PROVOCATION

OR

SOME THINGS I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FACILITATOR AND THE PARTICIPANT IN A COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT

1. There are roughly three kinds of community arts project:
   - Those initiated, made by and for the participants – usually with a sense of urgency from within. For example Squatters making tapes to protect their housing or Tenants associations making films about the state of their home to show to the council.
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9. A shared language must be developed between all participants and facilitators.

10. Time is key - the relationship between the length of time spent on a project and its efficacy are inextricably linked.

Michael Birchall 14/2/16 18:42
Comment: How can we discern between the facilitator and the participant, if the artist is themselves part of that community group they begin working with? I wonder, then, how embedded practices may manifest themselves in these areas and generate sustainable works.

Michael Birchall 14/2/16 18:44
Comment: To what end is this made 'for' the participants; is this always something that they actually want?

Michael Birchall 14/2/16 18:46
Comment: Exactly. There is an assumption that communities somehow need the intervention of an artists to somehow perform artistic activities for the greater good of the community. However, this can also be led by curators, who to some degree have become the gatekeepers for specific communities in their 'constituencies'. I often then question what is the role of the artists and the curator who bring in artists who are not connected to a specific locale.

Michael Birchall 14/2/16 18:49
Comment: I like this, that there is shared ownership of the work. But what happens when a project moves beyond it's original audience, i.e. a community group, and transcends into the museum system. There needs to be a greater sense of who controls or maintains their stake in a specific project.

Michael Birchall 14/2/16 20:06
Comment: This relates to my comment above.

Michael Birchall 14/2/16 18:53
Comment: I think here you are talking about an emphasis on process rather than specific outcomes. This is perhaps the greatest problem faced with institutions who work with community groups in the commissioning of socially engaged art. A project may span 6 months, yet the emphasis is often placed on the 'final project', such as a video. Yet, the process involved in getting to this specific moment is just as important and equally part of the project. I'd very much like to see processes being shared and shown (in the conventional sense) throughout the duration of a project.

Anna Colin Biography

Anna Colin is an independent curator based in London. She co-founded and co-directs Open School East, a space for collaborative learning in East London, which brings together a free study programme for artists and a multifaceted programme of events and activities programmed by and open to a broad range of voices. Anna also works as associate curator at Lafayette Anticipation: Fondation Galeries Lafayette in Paris, and is co-curator, with Lydia Yee, of the touring exhibition British Art Show 8 (2015-16).

Olivia Plender Biography

In my work as an artist, I often set up situations in which I expect something from the audience. I collaborate, make workshops, performances, installations, videos, comics, magazines, lectures and sometimes curate exhibitions. I endeavour to understand how people form group identities. I began by looking at the margins, at fringe social movements, non-conformist religion and communalism in all its many forms. Subsequently I moved onto mainstream phenomena such as nationalism and consumer culture. Later I began to scrutinise the education system and it's relation to the work ethic and ideas of

value. I am interested in who has the right to speak in public, how the 'rational' is defined, which voices are taken seriously and inversely I listen to those voices that are not. My work often focuses on the ideological framework around the narration of history; what we think we know about the past inevitably shapes what we believe is possible in the future. Currently I am running a series of workshops at Open School East, London, and embarking on research into the East London Federation of Suffragettes. In collaboration with local women's organisations, I am hoping to find out what relevance that history has today.

Michael Birchall Biography

Michael Birchall is Curator of Public Practice at Tate Liverpool, and Senior Lecturer in Exhibition Studies at Liverpool John Moores Univeristy. His PhD research has focused on socially engaged art since the 1990s, and the curatorial role in this process as a producer in Europe and North America. He has held curatorial appointments at The Western Front, Vancouver, Canada, The Banff Centre, Banff, Canada, and Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Germany; and was previously a lecturer in Curating at Zurich University of the Arts. His writing has appeared in Frieze, Frieze d/e, thisistomorrow, Modern Painters and C-Magazine as well as various catalogues and journals.

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[1] Magagnoli, Paolo. *Documents of Utopia: The Politics of Experimental Documentary*. New York: Wallflower, 2015. p.9

[2] Hayes, Sharon. "Temporal Relations." Not Now! Now! Chronopolitics, Art & Research. Ed. Renate Lorenz. Berlin: Sternberg, 2014 p.71

[3] Waugh, Thomas. *Show Us Life: Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1984.

[4] The majority of which have been in collaboration with Louise Shelley at The Showroom. As part of the Communal Knowledge programme I have been working with four local groups under the name *People Make Videos* to address the history of community video practices in London from the 1970s. For more information please
see:
http://www.theshowroom.org/projects/ed-webb-ingall-recording-programs-for-repeated-playback-uk-community-video-from-the-1970s-now

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Ed Webb-Ingall

Ed Webb-Ingall is a filmmaker and writer with an interest in exploring histories, practices and forms of collectivity and collaboration. His current research examines the ways in which video technology operated within social contexts and how concepts of mobility and access intersect with political platforms of community-based activism and forms of representation. He is currently a mentor at Open School East, London and is carrying out a two-year residency at The Showroom, London. Recent projects include co-editing *The Sketchbooks of Derek Jarman*, published by Thames and Hudson and *We Have Rather Been Invaded*, a collaborative film project that looks at the legacy of Section 28, commissioned by Studio Voltaire, London. He is also a TECHNE PhD candidate at Royal Holloway University, England, where his research focuses on the history and practice of community video in the UK between 1968 and 1981.

Five Takes on Collaborative Practice and Working with Artists, Non-artists and Institutions: Introduction

Anna Colin

Like everyone else contributing to this issue of Stages, I was asked to reflect on the Community Arts? Learning from the Legacy of Artists' Social Initiatives conference, and to keep the conversations that were started there going. What struck me most during this event was the deep divide between 1970s-80s Community Arts practice and present-day socially engaged practice, the resulting absence of a common vocabulary, some strong positions in defence of each 'camp' and occasional resentment. I invited five artists, organisers and curators of different generations to share their experiences, views and expertise on the topic. Ania Bas and Wendy Harpe were both present at the conference: Ania as a speaker and Wendy as a co-host and speaker. Ana Laura López de la Torre, Emily Pringle and Marijke Steedman weren't, but their positions and approaches have informed my own for varying lengths of time. Together they hopefully present a diversity of voices and a healthy dose of dissent.

I asked each of them to introduce their relationship to Community Arts, socially engaged and gallery education practice, and suggested discussing the following keywords: intent, subject (which perspective am I speaking from and whom am I addressing?), legitimacy (what is my own position within the community I am working with or representing, and how is it problematised?), urgency (following a few claims in the audience that it is a prerequisite for Community Arts practice), and language. While most of these got touched on, new words cropped up with varying frequency: funding, validation, instrumentalisation, confrontation, responsibility, authorship, class, gender, race, generational divide, institutions and commissioners. In the transcribed conversations, the contributors provide a definition of the practice they identify with or have studied closely, and contextualise their position with lived experiences and concrete examples of practice. I take the opportunity to thank them for contributing their time and ideas.

As for my own position, in a nutshell, it is reflected both in the subjects I have chosen to attend to and in the selection of interlocutors: five inspiring women whom, for the most, I have had the privilege to work with. Like theirs, my practice is collaborative, inquisitive, political and feminist, and deeply invested in learning and the meeting of differences.

Anna Colin

Anna Colin

Anna Colin is an independent curator based in London. She co-founded and co-directs Open School East, a space for collaborative learning in East London, which brings together a free study programme for artists and a multifaceted programme of events and activities programmed by and open to a broad range of voices. Anna also works as associate curator at Lafayette Anticipation: Fondation Galeries Lafayette in Paris, and is co-curator, with Lydia Yee, of the touring exhibition British Art Show 8 (2015-16).

Take One: "Affection, Protection, Direction”

Wendy Harpe

Karen Bowden delivering knots to Knotty Ash as part of Thou Shalt Knot, Knotty Ash (Liverpool), 1982. Photo courtesy of Black-E Archive.

Community Arts is not an art form but a form of practice, and by and large it can be applied to most situations. When Bill Harpe and I started the Black-E back in 1968, we had two principles in mind. One had to do with class. We both come from very working class backgrounds and we found ourselves working in the arts, for a middle class audience. I realised I was developing a project for a place that my mother would never ever set foot in. I thought we could absolutely do with being somewhere where this wasn't the case.

Meredith Monk performing Education of a Girl Child, Black-E, 1972. Photo courtesy of Black-E Archive.

The second was the belief that it would not only just change the community to be exposed to the arts, but it would also change the arts to be based in a community. Our intention was to see what happened if we brought together artists and local communities. It was never our view that we would come with the arts and educate people roundabout as to what the arts were, neither did we say we would stop doing what interested us, just because the people roundabout didn't like it. Instead, our view of Community Arts has been about encouraging creativity in both the people who are there as workers and the people who are there as users, in thus far as these two can be differentiated.

The Last Poets performing at the Black-E's 20th Birthday party, Black-E, 1988. Photo courtesy of Black-E Archive.

However, this didn't come without complications and the start of the Black-E was quite violent. Kids used the building a lot and once they were in they didn't want to leave. They couldn't see a reason why they shouldn't dominate the building the whole time. One day, a kid came and said he wanted to come in, and I said he couldn't because we were busy. He responded that I had to let him in because if I didn't, he would have to go downtown instead, and he would rob and get arrested, so it would be my fault if he went to prison, because I hadn't let him in.

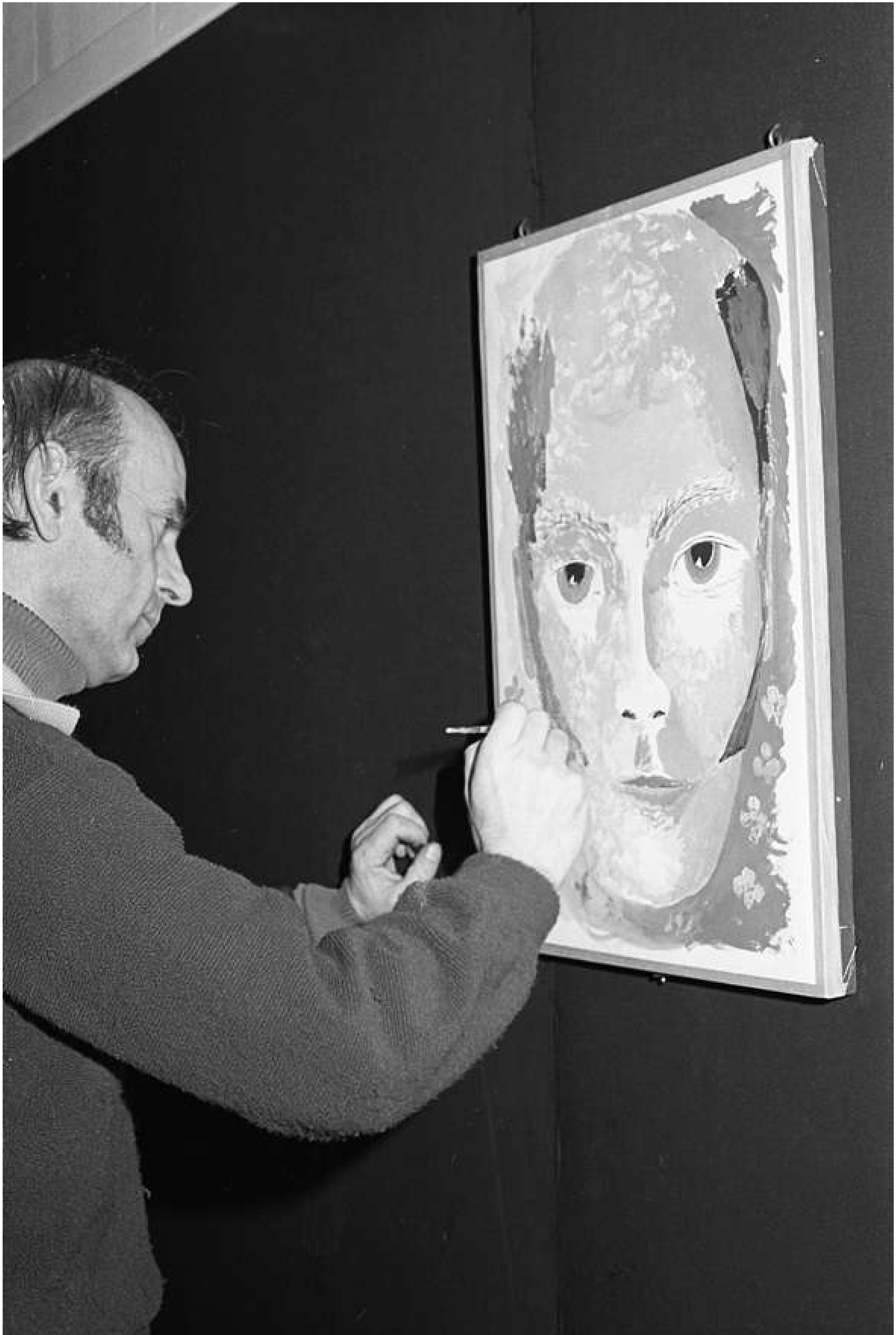
Negotiating time for the things we had to do, our own work and public use was complex to begin with. There was also a huge difference between the people who came to the arts events, which we did from the beginning, and the kids who came to play football, swing on swings or do whatever we were putting out for them to do. It took two to three years before the two started to really come together. Bit by bit, we started providing the young people with things they would engage with. As Bill always said: 'we gave them what they didn't know they wanted.' That's what's happened. Now we never get arguments about wasting time on art events.

Young girl in performance of A Spring Tree, Black-E, 1984. Photo courtesy of Black-E Archive.

The arts community has proved less open than the local community, and every now and then we are told the Black-E could be a great art centre if the riff-raff was kept out. The art world hasn't found it easy to come to terms with an organisation that is a home for young people and which also promotes or creates contemporary art activities across art forms: so it tends to ignore us.

The Black-E is artist-led and has been since it started. Though at the time, I didn't see myself as an artist, whereas Bill already identified as a dancer and choreographer. I was an administrator with a fine ability to pick good art. I promoted the first Mark Boyle event before it went to the Roundhouse in London, and we worked with John Latham before he was well known. We invited the composer Meredith Monk to

come for two weeks in 1972. She performed her own work, worked with us and invented games for the kids. These are just some of many examples of artists we have collaborated with or promoted over the years.



Man creating a portrait in The Rembrandt Game, Walker Art Gallery (Liverpool), 1978. Photo courtesy of Black-E Archive.

Today we are in a difficult situation; we have just received the largest funding cut to any regularly funded organisation on Merseyside – a cut which we might not survive. One of the reasons for this is that a lot of organisations are now doing projects around participation, so there is less need for us to do it. However we do this full-time, and other organisations do it occasionally when it interests them. When we first started, the only thing that existed in terms of outreach and community-based work was theatre and education. There have been important changes, now most art large institutions have an outreach or education alongside everything else they do.

I used to run the Bluecoat. We had something called the Bluecoat Arts Forum, which was a membership organisation. The music organisations were very prominent; there were about 200 in Merseyside at that time and they met regularly. The Philharmonic was a regular attendee and at one meeting they said they had engaged 5,000 young people in the last two months. Now organising school concerts, or providing free or cheap tickets to concerts isn't what I call working with young people, it's a way of building their future audience. Most education programmes run by arts organisations, as far as I can see, are actually about getting people to understand the arts within the institution and not about whether the people they engage with could become major artists themselves or whether they might have something to say that is more interesting than what the institution might have to say.

Karen Bowden delivering knots to Knotty Ash as part of Thou Shalt Knot, Knotty Ash (Liverpool), 1982. Photo courtesy of Black-E Archive.

Wendy Harpe

Co-founder of the Black-E in Liverpool

Wendy started as an art administrator working as assistant to The director at the Cardiff Commonwealth Arts Festival 1965. Ran the Bluecoats Arts Forum which promoted contemporary work across the art forms including bring the 1st outdoor sculpture exhibition to Liverpool. Founded with Bill Harpe and Peter Moores The Blackie in 1968 and worked there full time until 1984 and on one off projects in the years that

followed. I went on to Chair the Trustees and am still a Trustee. Am currently archiving the 40 plus years of the Black-E's work. In the interim worked at the GLC 1980s , The Arts Council Of Great Britain (1990s) and The BBC (1998-2006).

Take Two: "Between Community Arts and Socially Engaged Practice"

Ania Bas

Ania Bas, PX Story (inside), Commissioned by Yorkshire Artsapce, 2014. Image by Article Works

I perceive the starting point of Community Arts practice to be very different from that of modern-day socially engaged practice. It seems to me that what happened in the 1970s was generated without or outside of institutions. People coming together formed organisations rather than institutions, to make something happen or to tackle issues, often local ones. There were different models, but I have been more exposed to the Jubilee Arts model of being settled and embedded in one place, and occasionally venturing out to local areas or abroad where the same issues recurred and the practitioners felt that they could be part of that conversation.

A lot of work I make is distinctly connected to an institution or commissioner, which implies power dynamics, or power structure. To whom am I accountable? Who is the project manager? Who holds the purse strings? There can be interesting tensions, including with the people I am working with and who can be framed in different terms: participants or collaborators. This relates to the issue of ownership, which for me is an important notion in the context of this conversation. Who is the author? Who is ultimately responsible? Within the Community Arts movement, authorship was more diffused due to the tendency to work collectively. Today, institutions often put pressure on the artist to attach their name to a project. Who is the artist that is engaging the community? This is almost the first thing you learn about a project, even when the project is framed under a collective voice, but institutions tend to silence that voice. Of course there is sometimes a need for anonymity and certain collaborators choose not to have their name made visible because they worry about the consequences of publicly voicing opinions. When I worked on PX Story (commissioned by Yorkshire Artspace in Sheffield in 2012) I wanted to name everyone I had been collaborating with but then I was challenged by one of the participants who said in her contribution to the book that I had to take responsibility for it. 'You made it happen, now you need to take credit for it in case any of the content creates upset'. I had imagined the authorship to be shared, but the book ended up having just my name on the cover as the convener of voices.

Returning to the tensions of being a commissioned artist, the contract is often the sticking point. You first have conversations about what's possible for the project and its production, and then comes the time

to sign the contract – usually quite late in the day when work is already under way – which relates to the process in extremely stiff terms. Recently, I had to sign a contract that stipulated that the work could not in any way be of a political nature. That happened half way through, so what to do? Do I refuse to sign it and still complete the project? Do I stop the project? Do I consult the people I work with and we decide collectively what this contract means for the integrity of the project?

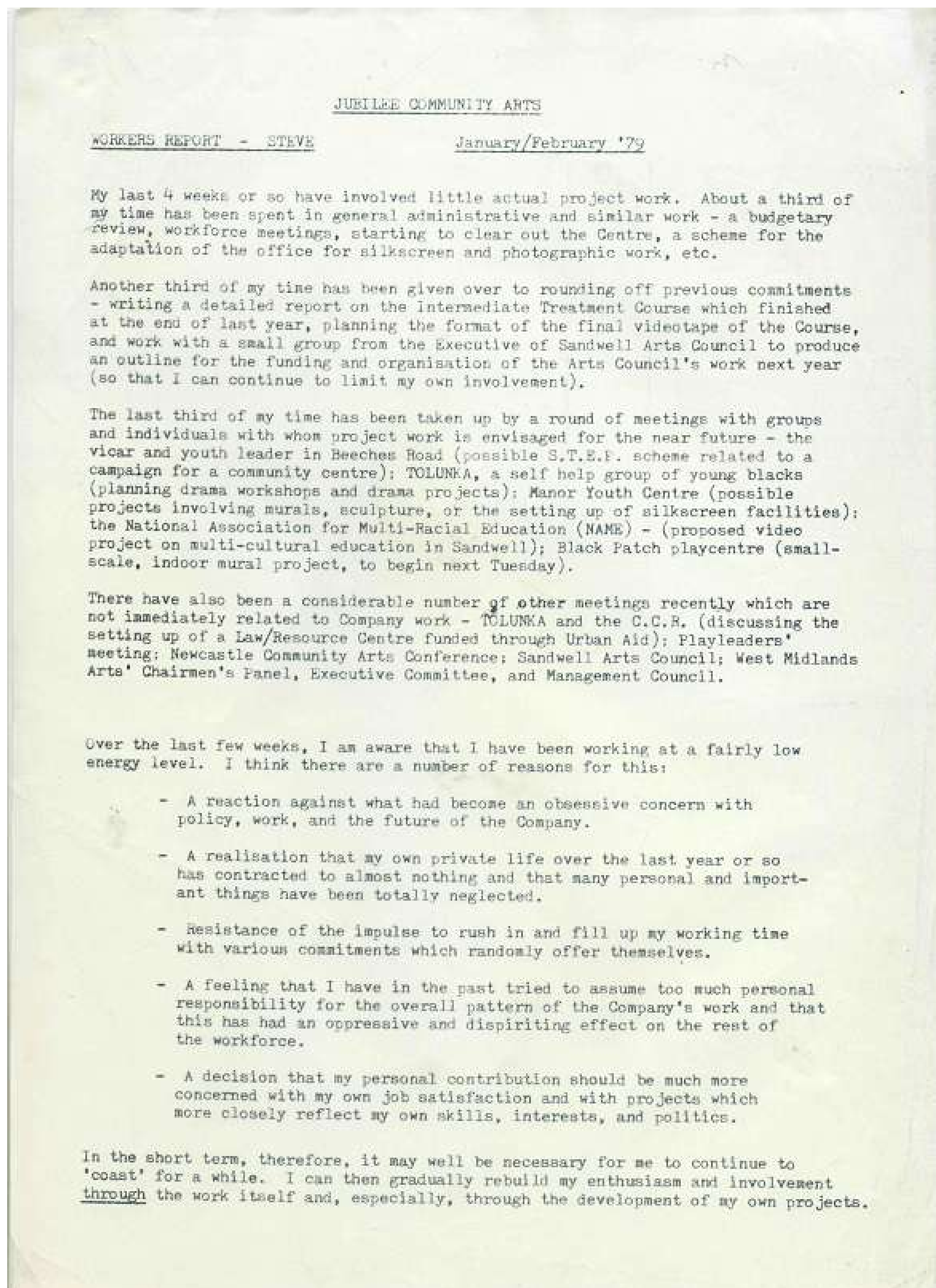
Ania Bas, PX Story, Commissioned by Yorkshire Artspace, 2014. Image by Article Works.

You asked me to reflect on the position of the outsider or newcomer. I do see the value of being a middle person, someone who is interested in conveying, for example, the history of a locality they do not belong to. The newcomer may bring a fresh and sharp outlook on a given situation without emotional baggage or connection. Being external may give you the advantage of not being caught up in some inner tension, for instance why certain people on the block wouldn't talk to one another. People stick to historic reasons, however recent they are, and someone like me can question that and perhaps help shift attitudes. At least there is the potential.

To return to the original point about the difference between Community Arts and socially engaged practice I think of the former as activist practice – activism being the prime element that drives people to do their work. I would not call myself an activist. I do look for appreciation in the arts rather than elsewhere and identify art as my field of operation. Some might say that the work I have been doing with the Tower Hamlets Artist Teacher Network is activist work. I'm more interested in the situation when a group of people, as it is the case with the arts teachers, come together and realise they have strength and that they don't need to accept everything that is proposed and delivered to them by, for example, the gallery sector. Public galleries wish to work with schools but tend to impose their agendas on teachers and I'm interested in how the art teachers can negotiate these conditions and work on projects they are also interested in. I don't think it's activism but rather about building strength.

Recently a collective, that I am part of, has been commissioned to work on a new work and for the first time we have had conversations with institutions that didn't see this project in the service of their

current programme or utilised it to enhance their public engagement strategy. The fact they saw it as an artwork instead was a significant step for me.



JUBILEE COMMUNITY ARTS

WORKERS REPORT - STEVE January/February '79

My last 4 weeks or so have involved little actual project work. About a third of my time has been spent in general administrative and similar work - a budgetary review, workforce meetings, starting to clear out the Centre, a scheme for the adaptation of the office for silkscreen and photographic work, etc.

Another third of my time has been given over to rounding off previous commitments - writing a detailed report on the Intermediate Treatment Course which finished at the end of last year, planning the format of the final videotape of the Course, and work with a small group from the Executive of Sandwell Arts Council to produce an outline for the funding and organisation of the Arts Council's work next year (so that I can continue to limit my own involvement).

The last third of my time has been taken up by a round of meetings with groups and individuals with whom project work is envisaged for the near future - the vicar and youth leader in Beeches Road (possible S.T.E.P. scheme related to a campaign for a community centre); TOLUNKA, a self help group of young blacks (planning drama workshops and drama projects); Manor Youth Centre (possible projects involving murals, sculpture, or the setting up of silkscreen facilities); the National Association for Multi-Racial Education (NAME) - (proposed video project on multi-cultural education in Sandwell); Black Patch playcentre (small-scale, indoor mural project, to begin next Tuesday).

There have also been a considerable number of other meetings recently which are not immediately related to Company work - TOLUNKA and the C.C.R. (discussing the setting up of a Law/Resource Centre funded through Urban Aid); Playleaders' meeting; Newcastle Community Arts Conference; Sandwell Arts Council; West Midlands Arts' Chairmen's Panel, Executive Committee, and Management Council.

Over the last few weeks, I am aware that I have been working at a fairly low energy level. I think there are a number of reasons for this:

- A reaction against what had become an obsessive concern with policy, work, and the future of the Company.
- A realisation that my own private life over the last year or so has contracted to almost nothing and that many personal and important things have been totally neglected.
- Resistance of the impulse to rush in and fill up my working time with various commitments which randomly offer themselves.
- A feeling that I have in the past tried to assume too much personal responsibility for the overall pattern of the Company's work and that this has had an oppressive and dispiriting effect on the rest of the workforce.
- A decision that my personal contribution should be much more concerned with my own job satisfaction and with projects which more closely reflect my own skills, interests, and politics.

In the short term, therefore, it may well be necessary for me to continue to 'coast' for a while. I can then gradually rebuild my enthusiasm and involvement through the work itself and, especially, through the development of my own projects.

Workers report January/February '79, Jubilee Arts Archive, 1979. Photo: Ania Bas

'Workers Reports' are testimonies from Jubilee Arts employees prepared most probably for board

meetings. Ania Bas was one of the artists working on the Jubilee Arts Archive project in 2014 and found three separate reports, amongst other documents, which revealed the challenges facing the community artist of the time.

Founded in 1974, Jubilee Arts was a community arts organisation based in the metropolitan borough of Sandwell in the West Midlands. The Jubilee Arts Archive 1974-94 contains a substantial collection of negatives and slides – over 20,000 – conserved by Sandwell Community History and Archives Service along with standard 8 film, VHS video and miscellaneous print materials. The photographs were taken primarily as documentation of their projects in Sandwell and the Black Country - and sometimes further afield. They were made by both professional and amateur photographers as well as communities.

Ania Bas

Ania Bas is an artist and through her practice she creates situations that support dialogue, exchange, and explore frameworks of participation. She is interested in the ways that narratives shape understanding, mythology and knowledge of places and people. Her work is presented through texts, fiction, events, walks, performances, useful object and publications. She is a co-funder of The Walking Reading Group (2013-16) and was an Open School East associate (2013-14). Her artworks have been commission by the New Art Gallery, Walsall (2009), Whitechapel Gallery, London (2010), Yorkshire Artspace, Sheffield (2012), Radar, Loughborough (2105). Currently she works with PEER gallery in London developing a new local audiences programme. www.aniabas.com

Take Three: "From Community Practice to Gallery Education"

Emily Pringle

My interest in Community Arts practice started out when I was at art school in Wimbledon in the late 1980s, early 1990s. It was very traditional, I was in the painting department, making work in my studio, and at the end of it all the aspiration was to find a studio and have shows. However, one of the tutors at Wimbledon was the artist Richard Layzell, who worked in community settings. I got really interested in what he was doing; it made sense to me that you could do a practice with people, rather than in the isolation of a studio. I come from a family of teachers and at the time I was thinking about how to be involved in education without becoming a teacher, which I didn't want to be. There was a scheme run by the Arts Council, which was about training artists to work in an educational context through a funded short course, so I did that. Then I started working as an artist doing residencies in schools. At the same time I joined a Community Arts organisation called the Southwark Arts Forum in the early 1990s and worked with them on an off for five years; it was all voluntary.

Southwark Arts Forum was a really interesting model of a locally-rooted organisation. It was about enabling a community to articulate its own culture and giving voice to people to be able to express themselves and have cultural agency, so very much inspired by the Freirean model. The notion of fine art wasn't explicit in the discourse, it was much more about a model of cultural democracy as articulated by Owen Kelly. Southwark Arts Forum had been started by artists and was run by artists. It had a grant from Southwark Council and the Arts Council, a paid coordinator who was responsible for fundraising and for keeping the show on the road, and all the rest of us popped in and out, and had individual projects that we might be organising under the auspices of the Forum. I sat on the steering committee, it was all pretty ad hoc, we used to meet monthly and organised various events including an annual carnival in Burgess Park. We also did music and mural painting, and provided support for other artists.There was a sense that the Forum could be a place where people would come, share ideas and find a kind of support network. I wouldn't say it was as overtly political and activist as some other practices of the time, the Forum was seeing itself more as servicing the community at the tail end of the first wave of the Community Arts movement. It's very telling it had funding from the Arts Council and the local authority. For some critics of Community Arts practices, Owen Kelly among them, that was the sell-out point; as soon as Community Arts organisations started getting funding from the Arts Council, the whole radical agenda was diluted. And I do remember an awful lot of our committee meetings were about how much funding we needed to raise just to keep the show on the road, rather than what other projects are we going to do.

The tension between Community Arts and fine arts was tangible. There were artists who had their own community-based practice and were involved with the Forum who had a kind of resentment about why the Arts Council didn't recognise their work as a legitimate form of art practice. It was seen as something different. But this period of Community Arts predated that instrumentalising agenda that came with New Labour: it wasn't fine art in the service of making people 'better'. It was about how to support a community to get in touch with creativity and allow that creativity to take form in ways that are authentic to the community. It was also about building long-term relationships with other partners in the borough, against the parachuting model.

I lessened my involvement when I got a job at the Chisenhale Gallery in 1995 and moved away from Community Arts to gallery education, although at the time there was a very close crossover between the two. I would say that gallery education at that stage was informed by a similar ethos to that of Community Arts. In the early days, gallery education was very much about supporting people to come into the gallery space and engage with the art, while enabling them to create their own creative response to it. And to a certain extent, I still think that's the model that gallery education operates on in this country. I have a particular interest in documenting the history of gallery education because it is a very hidden practice and it's the same for Community Arts practice, with people working away, sometimes through choice, not wanting a profile but just wanting to do interesting work. But they do rely on funding to do their work, and although it is practitioner-led, it has to have some kind of institutional policy support. I find interesting how

artists have learnt how to work with the policy trends, particularly in the 1990s period with the huge instrumentalisation of art practice and gallery education as an arm of the social services without compromising their work. Many artists I know excelled at shifting their language to fit what the funders wanted, but their practice didn't fundamentally change.

Emily Pringle

Head of Learning Practice and Research, Tate

Emily trained as a painter and worked for many years as an artist, educator and researcher in a range of cultural and community settings in the UK and internationally. She has a particular interest in the role of the artist in education contexts. Her publications include 'The Gallery as a site for Creative Learning' in The Routledge International Handbook of Creative Learning (2011). She is currently Head of Learning Practice and Research at Tate where she is responsible for strategic programme development and overseeing research and evaluation. She is the editor of the publication 'Transforming Tate Learning' (2013) which documents the development of research-led practice across Tate Learning and is the convenor of the Tate Research Centre: Learning (www.tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/learning-research).

Take Four: "Beyond the Mural"

Marijke Steedman

'Heroes Wall & Wild West Wall' Marlon Brown, West Dulwich Station, 2011. Photo courtesy of Marijke Steedman.

I probably have quite a bit in common with Emily Pringle in terms of my relationship with the field of community art practice because we both worked in the field of gallery education and of pedagogical practices being initiated through galleries. What's interesting and complex about it is that the historical roots of these practices in galleries are very much connected to threads of community art practice that was largely self-organised and connected more specifically to artists' practices within community groups. I suppose one slightly negative take on it is that when galleries started to set up education posts, some of these people who occupied these positions (largely practitioners themselves) became at some point co-opted into institutional practice and public funding streams.

I think of my work and my approach to curating in very political terms so it's always felt very important for me to track back into the trajectory of artist-initiated and community-led art practices as a way of reflecting on the meaning of what I have been doing within galleries. Before working for Create, I worked at the Whitechapel Gallery where I commissioned a number of projects including Reclaim the Mural, which lasted almost three years. It was with a group of artists – Benedict Drew, Emma Hart, Dai Jenkins, Dean Kenning and Corinna Till – who together set up a project that asked whether it was relevant and appropriate to make a mural today. It gave them, me and the Whitechapel Gallery a springboard to explore the legacy of the London mural movement and to understand how the Whitechapel Gallery as an institution was connected to that history; what the motivation were for the artists who were trailblazing that movement in the 1970s and 1980s; how it was all funded and what role funding had in creating that movement.

'The Battle of Cable Street' Dave Binnington, Desmond Rochfort, Paul Butler and Ray Walker, St George's Town Hall, Cable Street, 1983. Photo courtesy of Marijke Steedman.

We organised some events that brought together some of the original mural artists to come and engage in a discussion about these experiences with artists practicing today, who potentially associate with the notion of the socially engaged art practice. What was interesting was how difficult it was for that earlier generation of artists to engage in this conversation – there were coming at their practices from such different places. The mural artists had varying commitments but at the heart was a desire to politically challenge the art school and the gallery systems – a lot of them had come out of painting at the Royal College of Art. Their second commitment was to mobilise communities to articulate their needs and to use art as a way to take control of their political circumstances. As for the younger generation of artists, who were deeply inspired and curious about the original movement, they were reacting politically with reference back into the art world and the political nature of the art world itself.

'The Vision of Angels' Stan Peskett, Goose Green, East Dulwich, 1993. Photo courtesy of Marijke Steedman.

The gulf between these two generations and types of practitioners quickly grew and the mural artists got really exasperated with the younger artists. The former would say: 'What we did was all about action, we were trying to change the world, and you lot sit around talking about theory and ideas. Nothing you do is going to result in change. 'But from the younger generation's point of view, action without thought and action without theory is dangerous and risks generalising and essentialising communities. What the younger generation was engaged in was a very reflexive practice. If you read between the lines, you realised that some of the original mural painters had been actually fairly reactionary about some of the radical approaches to artmaking and objecthood in the 1970s and 1980s; they had for instance strongly reacted against video art and conceptual art. What's really dynamic and interesting for me is the strands that connect the art world and arts practice that's framed within the terms of community, as well as the deep divisions between the two.

'Poplar Rates Rebellion Mural' Mark Francis, Hale St, Poplar, 1985. Photo courtesy of Marijke Steedman.

There was a point at the Whitechapel when the two were particularly successfully connected, at least from my perspective. Back in the 1980s there was a man named Martin Rewcastle who was working as the education programmer. He was doing quite dynamic things in the gallery that would be very difficult to achieve now, and the reason for that was he wasn't called a curator and he didn't connect himself to the trajectory of exhibition making or art history. Instead he aligned himself much more closely with notions of community development and teaching. He invited local artist groups and muralists to take over all of the spaces and to set up artist-run printmaking studios, poster workshops, and all the things we associate with the Community Arts movement. From what I could glean from the archive, he did it in a very ad hoc and unchoreographed way. There wasn't much thought put into the way it was presented within the space, instead all of the emphasis was about disturbing expectations about who was able to express their expertise within the gallery. It would be impossible for this to happen in the same way today; if it did it would come through a curatorial lineage and I suppose the closest the Whitechapel has come to that was with the exhibition The Spirit of Utopia in 2013. Some of the projects successfully activated the gallery and engaged viewers' participation, and the space was treated with careful curatorial consideration, but unfortunately what it did lack was any echo of practices operating outside the art world, and beyond the walls of the institution.

'The Battle of Cable Street' Dave Binnington, Desmond Rochfort, Paul Butler and Ray Walker, St George's Town Hall, Cable Street. 1983. Photo courtesy of Marijke Steedman.

On a very different, yet crucial note, the conversation on race in the Community Arts movement shouldn't be overlooked. There are many ways of approaching it and I will do it here through Grant Kester's book Conversation Pieces, which makes an interesting but complex point about class as well as race relations. He talks about the existence of an index of authenticity in the evaluation and critique of a Community Arts project. For instance, the value and integrity of a project would increase the closer it got to what was deemed authentic, i.e. dealing with 'real people' and their 'real lives'. And the greater the social differences between the artist working with the community and the community itself, the larger acclaim given to the project. If we take the example of a white artist coming to work with Bengali communities, the degree to which that artist manages to create meaningful relationships with these communities is the scale on which the success of the project is measured. This is obviously deeply problematic and cynical, and in the 1980s and 1990s there was a clear missionary zeal about working with multicultural communities without a voice in the art world.

Marijke Steedman
Marijke Steedman is the Curator for Create. She has a particular interest in the systems that influence how art is produced and paid for such as formal education, town planning and the role of local authorities. Previously she developed the Community Programme at Whitechapel Gallery, and before that worked at Tate Britain. She has worked closely with many artists including Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, Nedko Solakov, Jens Haaning, Emma Hart, and Matt Stokes and has worked with writers including Lars Bang Larsen and Grant Kester. She edited the Whitechapel Gallery publications *Gallery as Community: Art, Education and Politics* and *Reclaim the Mural.*

Take Five: "Participate in What is Already Going On"

Ana Laura López de la Torre

Democracy Collaborative project initiated by Ana Laura Lopéz de la Torre, Uruguay, 2015. Photo courtesy of Ana Laura Lopéz de la Torre.

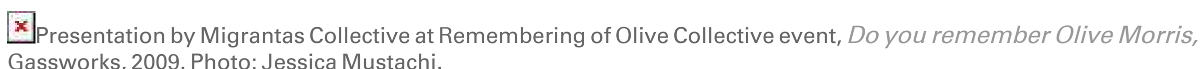
Action Space (created in London in 1968 and renamed Action Space Mobile in 1981) was my main introduction to the history of Community Arts practice in the UK. Many generations of practitioners congregated around the millieu of Action Space, including performance artists Ken Turner, Roland Miller, Anne Bean, Mine Kaylan, Rob La Frenais, who is now curator at The Arts Catalyst, and Mary Turner, one of the founders who has the group's archive and has written a book about it. For me and my fellow artists Anna Best and Ella Gibbs, who introduced me to ex-members of Action Space, these were important influences, or at least I can say that I could recognise in their work some of the same impulses and convictions that move me.

Democracy Collaborative project initiated by Ana Laura Lopéz de la Torre, Uruguay, 2015. Photo courtesy of Ana Laura Lopéz de la Torre.

I've always felt like an outsider in that conversation about community grassroots art versus socially engaged practice, because I don't identify with either. In terms of who is entitled to work on a specific project, history or community, I always do things out of my own position and interests, and that's why for me not being commissioned is important. I don't want to do the work for anybody, I want to follow my interests and conviction and I have found that when I do that and I am clear about my intentions, these issues are not a problem. For me, and I follow the conceptualisation of both Sophie Hope and Judith Stewart on that, the commissioning factor is what defines socially engaged practice and how it gets articulated within the art world. And community art has also partaken in the commissioning circuit, perhaps commissioned by different bodies, but public funds have gone into it too.

Democracy Collaborative project initiated by Ana Laura Lopéz de la Torre, Uruguay, 2015. Photo courtesy of Ana Laura Lopéz de la Torre.

In 2006, I initiated the project *Do you remember Olive Morris?*, which revisited the figure, actions and affiliations of the British Black feminist activist Olive Morris (1952-79). Two years later, the arts organisation Gasworks got involved and in retrospect, it became an issue, because even when it wasn't a commissioner, it somehow ended up playing that role. I try to avoid the idea of the project or the commission because then you are almost contractually obliged to carry it through. Also, if you get rid of the idea of the project, you get rid of the time pressure, and time is a big concern of mine. With the Olive Morris project, for me the last part – the exhibition at Gasworks and the publication – was the least enjoyable and rich because it was about holding all things in balance; there was a lot of pressure and politically I was uncomfortable at times. I had to keep everyone on board and satisfied, managing expectations; it was exhausting. There was, for instance, a conflict between the time that the Remembering Olive Collective needed to discuss the events, and the print deadlines to announce the events and make them visible. In a way everything was more manageable until the art institution came on board, as I suddenly became the lead artist and that raised questions about authorship which weren't present before. This sense of property that artists and institutions sometimes have over ideas is unhealthy and uninteresting to me. For me the most remarkable thing about this project is to see how women, including myself, were transformed through the whole process, to see how it has changed our lives and the way we behave and act politically in the world, as women, as artists, as activists, as academics.


Presentation by Migrantas Collective at Remembering of Olive Collective event, *Do you remember Olive Morris,* Gassworks, 2009. Photo: Jessica Mustachi.

I view art as an incredible space to do things out of the grid, but my main interest in life is political, militant. I'm not interested in having a career as an artist or in becoming famous. Of course I appreciate recognition and hearing from someone I respect, that what I do means something to them. I also use my institutional credentials to get some of the things I want and need to carry out my work. I am not against that, but it's not what motivates me. When you move on the terrain of community or activism, your credentials are: who you are, what you've done, how long you've been doing it for, how well you know your politics, and how you're going to be able to sustain your position.

Remembering of Olive Collective members at AGM 2010. *Do you remember Olive Morris,* Gassworks, 2010. Photo courtesy of Ana Laura Lopéz de la Torre.

I'm from the 1980s, I'm more of a punk. I'm not going to change the world in a messiah-like way and I don't need institutional validation, unlike the generation who were active in the 1960s and the 1970s. They now want credit for what they failed to achieve because at the time they chose certain things over others; for me there is a contradiction in being against the art system back then, and now wanting the same system to give them their dues. By the same means they are dismissing and silencing what the younger generations do, just because they have a more pragmatic or collaborative approach to institutions. Up until the 1950s (and even later in Uruguay) the Communist Party was very influential in the way people, a decade later, thought about tactics of organising. To me the talk of horizontality that was prominent at the time was all fake, the way people organised was brutal, it was incredibly pyramidal and patriarchal, and women had little agency. After punk, a different mindset started to seep through, the true culture of the working class, something closer to what Raymond Williams points to when he talks about a"common culture"[1]. I think even when in the 1960s and 1970s the working class was active in the social struggles, the forms were designed with a middle class mindset and under the intellectual leadership of middle class marxists. The 1980s youth culture brought a different kind of sensibility, in which you were nothing

without the collective, we were not interested in leadership or in winning over power, just in creating spaces where we could just be the way we wanted to be. At least this is my perspective and experience growing up in Uruguay, in a working class family not involved in party politics. In my family it was always made clear to us that you only achieved things through the support that you got from others, and you duty was to do the same; you as an individual were not that important, someone else was always in more need than you. And that has had a huge impact on my practice, this is what solidarity and working class culture mean to me, to this day.

Remembering of Olive Collective members Shiela Ruiz and Altair Roelants. Feminist Library, (London), 2010. Photo courtesy of Ana Laura Lopéz de la Torre.

Through the process of writing my PhD, I came across a couple of artists who would not be considered part of a canonical history of socially engaged or community art, but what they did was really close to what I try to do as an artist. One is Guillermo Vitale (1907-92), an amateur mosaic artist from Montevideo who was essentially a neighbour making public art and using his work as a vehicle to bear witness of the struggles and achievement of his community. The other one is Benito Quinquela Martín (1890-1977), an Argentinian artist, who also transformed his neighbourhood of La Boca. He was a leading figure of the figurative painting movement in Argentina, in fact he was a best-selling painter throughout his life. He used his proceeds to fund the part of his practice that involved developing traditions, institutions and the identity of his neighbourhood. This made me realise that the technical means or media is not what matters, it doesn't matter if you are a conceptual artist or a mosaic artist. It is about your focus, your commitment, where that sits. I also realised something quite simple but important about participation: in the art world we try to generate opportunities for people to participate in something we have created but I think what I'd rather do is participate in what is already going on. The contribution and the sense of my work come from that realisation. In order to achieve the things that I aspire to politically, I

have to participate in the life of communities I am part of, with my artist's mind as an equal to others with different skills and mindsets, and not as a facilitator, a convener or a manager of others' creativity.

[1] Williams, Raymond. Culture and Society 1780 - 1950. 1958. London: Penguin, 1985.

Ana Laura López de la Torre

Artist and director of Centro Cultural Florencio Sánchez in Montevideo, Uruguay.
Ana Laura López de la Torre is an artist, writer and educator. Her practice is involved with ideas of the "common good", both in terms of what is already common to people – what we are compelled to share, for example a public space – and of what else we might be able to share voluntarily through generosity, collaboration and exchange, by pooling resources and producing communal knowledges. She is the Director of the Centro Cultural Florencio Sánchez, a municipal cultural centre in Cerro, a historical neighbourhood in the periphery of Montevideo. She have realised projects for organisations including the Whitechapel Gallery, Gasworks, Tate Modern, Tate Britain, South London Gallery (UK); La Casa Encendida (Spain); Demokratische Kunstwochen (Switzerland); 9th Mercosol Biennial (Porto Alegre, Brazil).

Colophon

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